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Deconstructing the "Woman of Sentiment": Parody as Agency in the Poetry of Phoebe Cary

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The work of nineteenth-century American poet Phoebe Cary presents a complex puzzle of exigence and purpose that combines social structure, political climate, and personal history. Known for her somber and spiritual sentimental poetry, Cary shocked readers and reviewers alike when she published her collection *Poems and Parodies* in 1854, which contained a series of scathing and hilarious parodies based on popular sentimental poetry. In my thesis, I work to untangle the various contextual elements surrounding Cary’s writing in order to gain a better understanding of the dual nature of the poet and her work. Through an examination of nineteenth-century American culture, sentimentalism, Cary’s career, and a close reading of selected parodies, I argue that by intentionally undermining patriarchal, sentimental conventions, Cary both reinstates agency and plurality to women through her female speakers and asserts her own agency as an autonomous artist.

DEDICATION

To witty women – then and now.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to his nineteenth-century anthology, *The Female Poets of America,* editor Rufus Griswold writes, "It is less easy to be assured of the genuineness of literary ability in women than in men" (7). This difficulty, he surmises, comes as a result of women's natural inclination to possess the attributes often ascribed to male writers of great merit – being in touch with personal feelings, showing an interest in beauty and morality, and having aspirations for themselves, as well as for mankind as a whole (7). However, Griswold's suggestion that female writers somehow make less of an effort to produce effective writing is unfounded. Women writers, particularly poets, in nineteenth-century America created works that were not simply outpourings of personal emotion but were instead witty, political, intentional, and carefully crafted.

One female poet whose work can be argued to embody all of these qualities is Phoebe Cary (1822-1871). Cary was an American poet writing during the height of sentimentalism in the mid-nineteenth century. Publishing and growing to popularity alongside her sister Alice, Cary came to be known for her touching, often somber, poetry, particularly her works dealing with religious faith. It is on account of this reputation that Cary's first solo collection, *Poems and Parodies* (1854), came as such an unexpected shock to critics and public audiences alike. As the title suggests, the volume contains a number of Cary's typical sentimental poems; it is the parodies, however, that took readers by surprise. Each parody is based on a well-known sentimental work from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including poems by William Wordsworth, Robert Burns, William Cullen Bryant, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. This fact on its own likely would not have produced such derision, but the harshness and unrelenting candor with which Cary approaches these poems and their subject matter proved unacceptable to antebellum readers, especially male reviewers. Yet, the distaste

for Cary's parodies was not limited to men. Even Kate Sanborn, a proponent of nineteenth-century women humorists, expressed disapproval for Cary's attacks on popular sentimental poetry. In her book *The Wit of Women* (1886), a collection of women's humorous writing from the period, Sanborn comments that she "never fancied" Cary's "Kate Ketchem," a parody of Whittier's "Maud Muller," concluding that "it seems almost wicked to burlesque anything so perfect" (186). In "Kate Ketchem" and many of her other parodies, Cary approaches sacred subjects like marriage and love, which are treated with great respect in sentimental poetry, with complete irreverence. This critical stance toward sentimental subjects would have seemed unwarranted coming from Cary, as she and her sister were considered sentimentalists and had made their careers producing such writing. At first glance, the reasoning behind the dual nature of Cary's work is not necessarily clear, but when we consider her work in the context of sentimentalism and the culture of nineteenth-century America, Cary's motivations and designs start to make sense.

Between 1820 and 1880, the sentimentalist movement was wildly popular in both the culture and literature of the United States (as well as in Britain). Sentimental literature is characterized by its expression and evocation of emotions, such as nostalgia, grief, and wonder; and its contents range from musings on nature to the bereavement over deceased children. While by no means were all sentimental poets women, this genre seems to have been a literary niche in which female poets found both acceptance and success. The literary marketplace became unprecedently saturated with women's sentimental poetry and fiction, a situation that brought out frustration and contempt in some male writers. Arguably, the most well-known objection comes from a letter written by Nathaniel Hawthorne to his publisher, William Ticknor, in 1855: "America is now wholly given over to a damned mob of scribbling women, and I shall have no

chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash – and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed" (Hawthorne qtd. in Frederick 231). Yet Hawthorne, it seems, was part of a vocal minority. Women's sentimental writing met with a great deal of critical and commercial success throughout the period and continued to be published at a swift pace. One reason that women felt so at home in this sub-genre was because of its association with the domestic ideology that took hold in American society after the Industrial Revolution. Domesticity defined the acceptable roles and attributes for women; they were to be meek and good, and they held a responsibility to maintain high moral standards for themselves their families, and society. Sentimentalism, with its conventional expression of feeling, became a natural and socially acceptable platform for women to discuss their experiences and concerns. This trend is particularly evident in women's reform writing, in which they take on issues ranging from abolition to temperance.

Nonetheless, not all nineteenth-century women welcomed domesticity and sentimentalism. Many women found the narrow view of womanhood perpetuated by these ideologies to be oppressive. Domesticity put a great deal of pressure on women to act and feel certain ways; and, while it may have given women sway within the home, men still fully controlled the political, economic, and social landscapes. The newfound "power" women gained in no way threatened or challenged the dominance of the patriarchy; they were still being held to the standards of men. Many women writers saw and understood this fact. Some, like Caroline Kirkland and Frances Whicher, even went as far as to openly mock sentimentalism and the women writers who wrote sentimental literature. Somewhere between sentimentalism's female proponents and dissenters, however, was another group of women writers who were skeptical of the subgenre and the ideals it encouraged but who also understood that being successful in the

literary landscape of the period meant publishing sentimental work. Though these women did not buy into sentimental culture, they knew their careers depended on meeting public demand, so they wrote what was expected of them, occasionally slipping in a subtle quip to suggest that they were approaching their work with a critical eye.

Phoebe Cary is a clear example of a female writer who falls into the camp of skeptical sentimentalists, though her approach to criticism is much more blatant than those of other women writers in the same category. Cary built her career on writing sentimental poetry, establishing a name for herself alongside her sister. Yet in *Poems and Parodies*, she tears down the conventions of her own subgenre and throws into question her identity as a sentimental poet. Cary offers commentary through her parodies by retaining the structure and some of the language used in the original poems, then altering the meaning by inserting new characters, reversing roles, or exchanging serious subjects for comedic ones. By changing or rearranging elements of an existing text, Cary opens a dialogue between the original poem and her own, creating space for her to share her perspective. Among the chief concerns of Cary's parodies are the patriarchal conventions that pervade sentimentalism. Through her implementation of parody, Cary reveals how popular, male-authored poems offer representations of women that diminish or deny female agency, while Cary herself portrays women as having desires and a voice. Moreover, Cary's parodies exemplify mastery of her craft. Her careful manipulation of existing works, especially when compared to her own sentimental writings, flies in the face of men like Griswold, who believed women writers were instruments without agency or talent.

The work of Phoebe Cary presents a complex puzzle of exigence and purpose that combines social structure, political climate, and personal history. In the following chapters, I will attempt to untangle these various elements in order to make sense of the dual nature of Cary and

her work. Through an examination of nineteenth-century American culture, sentimentalism, Cary's career, and a close reading of her work, I will argue that by intentionally undermining patriarchal, sentimental conventions in her parodies, Cary both reinstates agency and plurality to women through her female speakers and asserts her own agency as an autonomous artist.

CHAPTER 2. ON SENTIMENTALISM

An Overview of Sentimentalism: History and Conventions

The nature and value of sentimental literature prove to be persistent sticking points for those who study the literature of nineteenth-century America. Widely popular in mid-1800s America, the literature and culture of sentimentalism is "interested in the experience, display, effect, and interpretation of emotion (pleasurable or otherwise) and in stirring up emotion in readers" (Blair and O'Brien). Hearkening back to eighteenth-century England, we can trace the origins of sentimentalism to a literary and philosophical movement known as "the cult of sentiment" (Chapman and Hendler 3). At its start, the cult of sentiment was mostly perpetuated by male writers and their characters who "epitomized the 'man of feeling'" (3). In their collection *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture* (1999), Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler describe the man of feeling as a man who is "feminized by affect," embodying the "discourses of both manly virtue and benevolent motherhood" (3). Thus, the cult of sentiment promoted a sort of androgynous ideology in both literature and philosophy.

For those eighteenth-century philosophical thinkers who deal with the ideas of sentiment and sensibility, such as Adam Smith and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, sympathy for others is a marker of morality and kindness; it signifies human goodness (Howard 70). This ideology is mirrored in the English literature of sensibility, which includes works by Laurence Sterne, Samuel Richardson, and Henry MacKenzie (Howard 71). By the late eighteenth century, however, the culture and literature of sensibility began to wane in popularity, and it was during that time the term "sentimentality" came to be used as pejorative in a reaction against the "elevation of emotional sensitivity to the status of moral touchstone" (Howard 71). Despite sentiment's declining popularity in England at the turn of the century, June Howard suggests in her essay

"What is Sentimentality?" (1999) that the moral philosophy of sensibility continued to have considerable influence on British writers such as Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins and became greatly important to nineteenth-century culture and literature of the young United States (72). In *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977), Ann Douglas argues that at least some of the popularity of sentimentalism in America grew out of the combined efforts of Protestant ministers and middle-class, Northern women (48). Douglas writes that Protestant ministers lost public authority after the disestablishment of religion in the early nineteenth century and a surge of evangelical sects took hold, while women lost their authority as the country shifted to a separate-spheres economy (49). These changes, Douglas contends, led ministers and women to use literature as a vehicle to promote their own values. Moreover, as I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, increased levels of education among the middle-class created a demand for literature that was accessible but also offered readers a sense of refinement (Bennett 4). This cultural climate provided ideal conditions for sentimental literature to flourish.

The hallmarks of sentiment appear in much of America's antebellum literature, even in the works of writers who are not commonly classified as sentimentalists, like Hawthorne and Melville. The elements and functions of this literature are the focus of Joanne Dobson's essay "Reclaiming Sentimental Literature" (1997). Dobson suggests that literary sentimentalism in America revolved around "an emotional and philosophical ethos that celebrates human connection, both personal and communal, and acknowledges a shared devastation of affectional loss" (266). This evaluation recalls sentimentalism's roots in eighteenth-century moral philosophy, which valued sympathy toward others. These values manifest in sentimental literature through an emphasis on relationships, which can take the form of family, community, or social responsibility (267). The conflicts in this literature arise when such connections are

threatened or extinguished. To the sentimentalist, the greatest loss is "the tragedy of separation, of severed human ties" (267). In literature, the theme of threatened relationships frequently takes the form of the death of a child, lost love, estranged family ties, or an alienating community. At its heart, sentimentalism generally concerns itself with domestic issues.

It is sentimental literature's focus on connection, Dobson argues, that determines its conventions. As a body, sentimental literature deals with a set of "conventional subjects, themes, characterization modes, narrative and lyric patterns, tropes, tonal qualities and linguistic patterns" that work together to promote the importance of connection and the detriment of its loss (268). In an effort to communicate and kindle connection within their audience, sentimental writers utilize tropes "designed to elicit feelings of sympathy and concern" and language that is accessible (268). These tropes, like deathbed and graveyard scenes, orphaned children, widows and abandoned wives, and separated families, would have been familiar to nineteenth-century readers, making them ideal vehicles via which sentimental writers conveyed their messages about the value of connection in a comprehensible way. Moreover, by using these tropes to speak to larger issues of relationships and disenfranchisement in broader society, such as poverty and slavery, antebellum writers employ sentimentalism as a mode for creating reform literature, as exemplified by works like Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (272).

The Feminization of American Sentimentalism

By the middle of the nineteenth century, sentimentalism had become a fixture in both American culture and literature. However, unlike its British predecessor, American sentimentalism came to be almost exclusively associated with the feminine world of domesticity, motherhood, and morality. In *Sentimental Men,* Chapman and Hendler suggest that this change in sentimental culture evolved in conjunction with the emergence of the "separate spheres"

ideology in which public spaces were deemed exclusively masculine while private, domestic spaces were assigned to the feminine (3). During this shift, sentimentalism became less associated with "public virtue and benevolence" and more aligned with "women's moral, nurturing role in the private sphere of the bourgeois family" (3). Men began to view the home as a shelter from the bustle and competitive nature of the public sphere. As such, the home became a center for feeling and morality and women the keeper of both.

Before the rise of the separate-spheres ideology, society viewed women as lesser versions of men. However, as domesticity took hold in nineteenth-century America, women came to be seen as "fundamentally different from and opposed to men" (Thomson 128). This shift in ideology simultaneously empowered and limited women. In one sense, having their differences acknowledged and accepted gave women the space to express their thoughts and feelings without being judged by socially sanctioned male standards. In other ways, being associated with domesticity forced women to fit into a narrowly defined set of "feminine" characteristics in order to be considered socially acceptable. In essence, they were expected to be the "site and source of feeling, religion, morality, childbearing, purity, and order" (Thomson 129). As a result of this limited scope of femininity, women found themselves saddled with the responsibility of maintaining the morality of their children, husbands, and communities.

Though they were largely excluded from the marketplace and public sphere, some nineteenth-century women used their elevated positions within the domestic sphere as a means to break into the public sphere. "[A]uthorized by religion and a supposedly natural feminine moral sense," these women took on the cause of social reform, carving out a legitimate space for themselves in the public arena that even men could not take issue with (Thomson 130). Nineteenth-century American literature reflects this cultural shift by way of sentimentalism.

Many women, Thomson explains, capitalized on the connections between the moral and sympathetic duties of domestic femininity and sentimental literature's valorization of human connection to produce writing that was welcomed into the literary landscape of the time (131). In the same way that domesticity offered both freedom and constraints to women, sentimentalism gave women a medium through which to express themselves and their ideas but only so long as they adhered to the approved "feminine script" of emotions – love, pity, joy (131). Thus, sentimentalism can be seen as a "primary discourse of nineteenth-century femininity," demonstrating the gender roles and expectations that came out of domestic ideology, the ways women chose to embody that ideology, and the ways in which they chose to subvert it (128). Being aware of how this form simultaneously hindered and gave agency to women is essential to understanding nineteenth-century women writers' complicated relationship with sentimentalism.

Women Writers and Sentimentalism

After arriving at a foundational understanding of sentimentalism – its history, conventions, and association with femininity, we finally turn to nineteenth-century women writers themselves. Considering the duality of sentimentalism, how it both limited and empowered women, in what ways did these writers choose to engage with sentimentalism? How did they subvert its conventions? It comes as no surprise that they did so in diverse, often complex, ways. Some women embraced domestic ideology and, in turn, sentimentality. They saw this shift in culture as an opportunity to "forge a vital version of womanhood," one that held a separate but supposedly equal place in society (Thomson 129). Because domesticity operated on the idea that women were naturally and divinely imbued with compassion and morality, women were able to take on a "central position of power and authority in the culture" that they had not been afforded before (Tompkins 125). However, this new position still did not allow

them to take part in the public sphere, which housed all of the political and economic power. It is for these reasons, Jane Tompkins argues, that nineteenth-century women had to seek out other ways to define themselves, "which gave them power and status nevertheless, in their own eyes and in the eyes of the world" (160-161).

One way to establish this power was through domestic literature, in which women writers could attempt to "reorganize culture from the woman's point of view" (Tompkins 124). In much sentimental literature, women play the central roles and the subject matter pertains to women's interests – religion, motherhood, home, and family. In *Sensational Designs* (1985), Tompkins explains that in these works "[m]en provide the seed, but women bear and raise the children. Men provide the flour, but women bake the bread and get the breakfast" (145). The removal of men from the center of things, she claims, is a "radical" shift that clearly signifies the power women have within domesticity (145). However, even though women take on a more central role in this literature, the female characters are often still depicted as subservient – to God and, by extension, men. Tompkins contends that these women, who were powerless in a political and economic sense, made themselves into "vehicles of God's will," which they believed afforded them power that transcended their worldly position (163). Because they saw their subservience as being dutiful to God, submission was an act of empowerment rather than powerlessness. Tompkins expands on this argument by suggesting that their submission was also about mastering the self, which she maintains is "an assertion of autonomy" (162).

Though they had no control in the public sphere, nineteenth-century women fully controlled the management and morality of their households. Tompkins writes that domesticity gave women a "concrete goal" to work toward, as well as a "way of thinking about their work that redeemed the particularities of daily existence and conferred on them a larger meaning"

(168). Much sentimental literature reflects this arrangement, illustrating the thought and care women exhibit toward their domestic duties and their relationships with family and friends. If domestic ideology provided many nineteenth-century women a purpose and a sense of empowerment, sentimentalism was the medium through which they could share and record their voices and their experiences. In writing this literature and embracing and propagating their knowledge of domestic, moral, and divine issues, they could take on the role of expert and leader in ways that were socially acceptable.

In contrast to those who welcomed domesticity, some female writers of the time were less convinced of the so-called opportunities that other women seemed to find in separate-spheres ideology. Likewise, they were skeptical of the sentimental writing that met approval according to domesticity's standards. Understanding these writers' disapproval of sentimental writing requires looking back at the conventions of the form I discussed earlier in this chapter: a set of common subjects, widely accessible language, familiar tropes, and conventional forms and structures. To women writers who embraced the literature and culture of sentiment, these characteristics were positive, even welcome. Sentimentalism made writing available to women, opening the door for them to participate in the public sphere in a way that still allowed them to maintain the level of morality and meekness required of them by domestic femininity. However, to those who were skeptical of sentimental ideology, these conventions were the very thing that prevented them from accepting sentimental literature as serious writing. To the critic, Bennett explains, sentimentalism relied on "well-worn phrases, narrow emotional range, exaggerated refinement, and its tendency to subvert its own intensity through melodrama and other forms of verbal excess" (11-12). Sentimental writing's consistent content and form gave it a processed, packaged feel that writers who saw themselves as trying to produce meaningful art found

distasteful. To some, the process of attempting to create a literary culture that was accessible and appealing to the broader public resulted in the familiar tropes becoming stereotypes and sentiment growing stale.

Writers of the period, such as Caroline Kirkland and Fanny Fern – and even more well-known authors like Herman Melville – saw the commercialization of sentiment as turning feeling into a commodity. In their evaluation, the sentimental formula for poetry and fiction introduced a situation (i.e., the death of a child or the loss of a family connection), then guided the reader to the appropriate emotional response, whether it was sadness, remorse, or something else. It is this prescriptive nature that so often resulted in nineteenth-century anti-sentimentalists and twentieth-century critics' deeming the emotions expressed in sentimental literature inauthentic. Moreover, because sentimental literature was being written for a generic middle-class audience and mass marketed, there was a tendency for writers to lean on generalizations and stereotypes. This trend extended to the representations of women and femininity that appeared in sentimental writing.

Emerging from separate-spheres ideology, popular sentimental literature promoted and sold a version of womanhood that looked and felt like the embodiment of domesticity. Lauren Berlant explores the role of sentimentalism in the "female culture industry" in her 1992 essay, "The Female Woman: Fanny Fern and the Form of Sentiment" (267). She argues that "expanding cultural resources of industrial capitalism" allowed for the conditions necessary to "make women into a 'new' consumer group" that sentimentalists could appeal to by addressing and promoting domestic subjects (267). Those women who felt empowered by their revered position within the domestic sphere would have been eager to consume literature that replicated and validated the version of femininity they were working toward mastering. For this reason, Berlant suggests, "the meaning, the pacing, and the spaces of everyday domestic life" in

nineteenth-century America became defined by "a new capitalist ethos of personal instrumentalization," where the women were responsible for ensuring there was "no affective, no intellectual, no moral, and of course no economic waste" in her household and in her community (267). Not only did this ideology burden women with a level of perfection that is impossible to attain, but it also severely limited their acceptable roles, thoughts, feeling, and actions.

Like domesticity, sentimentalism had a dual nature. In some ways, it offered nineteenth-century women representation, shared identity, and a sense of power. In other ways, however, sentimentalism boxed women in by defining them and their femininity in the terms of patriarchy-approved domestic values. Yet, as Berlant describes the dual nature of sentimentalism, it becomes easy to see what women found appealing about this literature. She argues that, within this new female culture industry, women were "made to seem dominant, even hegemonic, in American culture" (267). Instead of being relegated to the "subcultural margins" as a victim or a problem, sentimentalism recognized woman as "an 'expert' in her moral, maternal capacity to understand and to authorize people in her intimate everyday life" and validated her by publishing texts that dealt with her life and her interests (267). Sentimentalism made women feel seen and heard in a way they previously had not been. Complications arise, however, when we consider that all of the representations of women as mothers, wives, homemakers, and moral compasses and the emotions they express do not challenge or complicate the dominance of the patriarchy in any way. Berlant suggests that sentimentalism relied on "a series of generic strategies – which might be called 'modes of containment'" developed by the "American female culture industry" in order to give women an illusory sense of empowerment while still keeping them firmly within the dominant power structure (268). The intent of these strategies was to "testify to the heretofore 'private' trials of womanhood, to demystify patriarchal practices, and to consolidate

female collective identity without necessarily abrogating 'woman's' loyalty to heterosexual culture" (268). The result of this effort was a packaged, stereotypical version of womanhood that painted women as delicate, naturally moralistic, and overcome with feeling, instead of representing their wide range of experiences and emotions.

When we consider the commercialized nature of sentimental literature and its limited representations of women, it is not surprising that some nineteenth-century women writers took serious issue with it. Perhaps the most outspoken, unequivocal opponents to sentimentality and its portrayal of women were nineteenth-century female humorists. These writers saw the sentimental poetess and the content she produced to be a direct affront to their own work and value systems, and they combatted it with the most powerful tool they had at their disposal: humor, which, Nancy Walker (1981) argues, is the "antidote" to the passive patriarchal control perpetuated in sentimental novels and poetry (6). Humor, being a "direct and open expression of perceptions," suggests a "position of strength and insight" (6). As such, it became an ideal vehicle for female writers to subvert and talk back to the conventions of sentimentality and their depiction of women writers and characters.

This rebellious writing often manifested as satire, particularly as satirical representations of female sentimentalists. One obvious example of the parodied sentimental poetess appears in a collection of sketches by Frances M. Whicher titled *The Widow Bedott Papers* (1856). The collection features a character called Sally Hugle, who is a spinster writing poetry for the local newspaper. One of the other characters, Aunt Maguire, offers this description of Sally's poetry:

> She generally calls 'em "*sunnets*" — Jeff [Aunt Maguire's son] says they ought to be called *moonets*, cause they're always full o' stuff about the moon and stars, and so on. She's always groanin' away about her *inward griefs*, and *unknown miseries*. I don't know

> what to make on't. Sally Hugle never had no partickler trouble as I know on — without 't was her not bein able to ketch a husband. (Whicher 130)

This excerpt dually illustrates Whicher's concerns with sentimentality and the women writers who participate in it. The mentions of "the moon and stars" and Sally's "inward griefs" recall the set of standard themes that typically appear in sentimental literature. Moreover, Aunt Maguire's comment that Sally "never had no partickler trouble" to prompt writing about such melancholy subjects suggests that the emotion behind her poetry is inauthentic. In this scene, Whicher comments on what she sees as the contrived nature of sentimentality.

Similar parodies of the sentimental poetess appear throughout the century in the work of women writers like Marietta Holley, Caroline Kirkland, and Gail Hamilton. These female humorists weaponize humor to attack the person and the product of the sentimental female author. The aim of such work is to "deny the image of woman as a weak, frail vessel of Christian piety, and to posit instead an image of the 'witty' woman: one who sees through sham and stereotype, for whom courage and strength of mind are positive virtues" (Walker 7). The widespread nature of this satire suggests that these female writers had no interest in being associated with the popular "soggy sentimentalist[s]" of the day (Walker 20). In fact, the stereotypical female sentimentalist became the "embodiment of all that these women knew themselves not to be: weak, dependent, illogical" (Walker 20). The fact that they satirize the poetess and not merely her poetry demonstrates their dislike not just for the conventional form of sentimentalism but for sentimental culture and its standards for femininity.

It is clear enough, in regard to sentimentalism, that some nineteenth-century women writers found their voices through sentimental literature, while others found greater fulfillment in speaking out against it. The situation becomes markedly more complicated, however, when we

note that a number of the female writers who expressed criticism toward sentimentality – like Lydia Sigourney, Frances Osgood, and Phoebe Cary – were considered sentimentalists themselves. Thus, an interesting paradox arises. If these writers had negative opinions of sentimentality and its conventions, what motivation did they have to produce sentimental writing themselves? One clear-cut answer to this question lies in these writers' desire to make a living through their work. The business side of sentimental poetry is the subject of Paula Bernat Bennett's article "Laughing All the Way to the Bank: Female Sentimentalists in the Marketplace" (2002), in which she discusses the popularity of sentimental poetry in nineteenth-century American culture. She argues that the combination of the rise of capitalism, the popular press, and widespread education among the middle-class created a demand for "genteel verse" that afforded readers a sense of "refinement" (12). In turn, this climate gave "middle-class tastemakers" the opportunity to publish and popularize an American version of England's literature of sensibility for the early nineteenth-century lay reader (Bennett 11). At the forefront of these so-called tastemakers was Rufus Griswold, an editor and literary historian who worked for a number of prominent periodicals throughout the nineteenth century, including *The New Yorker* and *Graham's Magazine*. During his career, Griswold shaped America's literary landscape through his publications and editorial work, with his anthologies, *The Poets and Poems of America* (1842) and *The Female Poets of America* (1849), being some of his most influential work ("Rufus Wilmot Griswold"). Due in part to figures like Griswold, the demand for sentimental literature was strong and widespread among readers, and writing that did not conform to sentimental standards was not published, nor did it receive critical approval. As such, in order to make successful careers out of writing, writers had to approach it from a business perspective; if their audiences wanted sentimental literature, then they would provide it.

Writers such as Sigourney, Osgood, and Cary, Bennett suggests, took part in sentimentality fully conscious that the sort of writing they were doing had its shortcomings. Evidence of their critical views on sentimentality ranges in explicitness: Sigourney offers the occasional, subtle, self-reflexive quip, while Cary brazenly published hilarious but cutting parodies of her contemporaries' work. What these writers have in common, though, is their use of humor to "distance themselves from their art, and equally important, from the genteel social and domestic values it promoted" (12). Sigourney, who was arguably the most successful female poet of her time, felt that her economic situation "required her to reproduce 'slight themes' in order to please editorial appetite" (Walker, C., xxvii). In one of her most notable comments, Sigourney suggests, "If there is any kitchen in Parnassus, my Muse has surely officiated there as a woman of all work and an aproned waiter" (qtd. in Walker, C., xxvii). This statement demonstrates the poet's critical attitude toward her contributions to sentimentalism, "serving rather than defining popular taste" (Walker, C., xxvii). Yet, while she wrote to appease a sentimental audience, Sigourney managed on occasion to slip into her poetry her own skeptical opinions. Some of her "tartest" lines appear in the poem "Madame Damask":

> Madame Damask complained of her household and care,
>
> How she seldom went out even to breathe the fresh air;
>
> There were so many young ones and servants to stray,
>
> And the thorns grew so fast if her eye was away . . . (qtd. in Bennett 15)

Here, Sigourney undermines the sentimental tropes of dutiful womanhood and domesticity, replacing them with a frustrated and superficial woman.

Furthermore, Frances Osgood believed that the social and literary climate of the nineteenth century was stifling because it required female writers to self-regulate their creative skills and ambitions. Osgood's displeasure about this situation is made clear in her poem "The Reply," which is addressed to "One who said, 'Write from your heart,'" and opens with these lines:

Ah! woman still

Must veil the shrine,

Where feeling feeds the fire divine,

Nor sing at will,

Untaught by art,

The music prisoned in her heart! (qtd. in Walker, C., xxvii)

In this stanza, Osgood refutes the idea that women poets can write with their hearts. Their art is dictated by patriarchal expectations for women and women's literature. Furthermore, in a great deal of her other works, Osgood takes on a "comic persona" in order to comment on her literary and social concerns. In approaching these topics through humor, the poet is able to safely share her opinions while maintaining her good standing as a woman of sentiment.

This method of employing a dual persona also plays a major role in the writing of Phoebe Cary, whose work I will discuss at length in the following chapters. Cary expressed her opposition to the conventions of sentimentality more blatantly than either Sigourney or Osgood. Known for writing traditional sentimental poetry, Cary shocked reviewers and readers alike with the publication of a series of parodies aimed at the heart of sentiment. Her parodies, while

humorous, offer uninhibited critiques of the literary landscape in nineteenth-century America, particularly its male authors.

The clever ways in which these writers participated in and manipulated the sentimental form suggest a rhetorical sophistication and business savvy rarely associated with female sentimentalists. In their respective ways, Sigourney, Osgood, Cary, and certain other female writers, found strategies for using the popular platform of sentimental literature to build successful careers, while also carving out space to share their critiques of sentimentality and the domestic ideology from which it came. The following chapters offer a case study of Phoebe Cary's parodies that explores how she draws on her skills as a sentimental writer and a humorist to bring attention to and challenge the subgenre's content and form.

CHAPTER 3. ON PHOEBE CARY AND THE COMPLEXITIES OF HER WORK

Biographical Background on The Cary Sisters

Despite their popularity among mid-nineteenth-century readers, Phoebe Cary (1824-1871) and her sister Alice (1820-1871) are little known today. In fact, most of the information we have about their lives and work comes from a single biography, *A Memorial of Alice and Phoebe Cary* (1874), written by Mary Clemmer Ames at the behest of Alice and Phoebe's brothers. According to Jenni Salamon, born into humble beginnings, the Cary sisters grew up on a farm near Cincinnati, Ohio. Their parents, Robert and Elizabeth Jessup Cary, raised the sisters in the Universalist church, early engendering in them progressive ideas about society and politics, values which would later appear in their writing and their activism. Growing up in such a rural area, the Cary sisters did not receive a formal education. Nevertheless, their mother always encouraged their interests in writing and literature, and both sisters began publishing poetry at young ages in local newspapers and magazines as early as 1838 (Salamon). As girls, the Cary sisters faced difficult circumstances; in addition to being victims of crippling poverty, Phoebe and Alice witnessed the deaths of two of their sisters, followed shortly after by the death of their mother in 1835. With their mother's passing, the Cary sisters lost virtually all of their external support. In 1837, their father remarried to a woman who did not get along with the Cary children and who disapproved of Alice and Phoebe's literary endeavors. They wrote by night, "hiding their manuscripts under the staircase" to avoid the resentment of their stepmother (Cherciu 329). However, these challenging conditions did not hinder the sisters' literary progress, but instead motivated and inspired them to produce work that allowed them to join the ranks of popular nineteenth-century poets.

After a decade of appearing in local publications, the Cary sisters' work drew the attention of several well-known writers of the age, including Edgar Allan Poe, Horace Greeley, and John Greenleaf Whittier, as well as editor Rufus Griswold. In 1849, Griswold included several of the Carys' works in his anthology, *The Female Poets of America* (1849), before helping them publish their own collection of poetry in 1850 (Salamon). The success of *Poems of Alice and Phoebe Cary* provided the sisters with enough resources to relocate to New York City, where they quickly became members of the city's literary elite. In New York, Phoebe and Alice supported themselves by publishing poetry and prose in periodicals and magazines. They became famous during this time for hosting Sunday evening salons, which played host to a variety of famous literary, political, and social figures of the nineteenth century, including P.T. Barnum, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and writers from Poe's "literati" (Cherciu 329). Among this circle, Phoebe was known for her "vivacity" and sharp wit, her barbed quips often recorded by salon guests (Cherciu 329).

Moreover, both Alice and Phoebe were feminists and women's rights activists, a fact that is sometimes subtle but ever-present in their writing. For a time, Lucia Cherciu writes, Alice served as the president of Sororsis, a women's club in New York, while Phoebe worked as the editor of *Revolution*, a newspaper about women's rights organized by Susan B. Anthony (330). In her biography of the sisters, *A Memorial of Alice and Phoebe Cary* (1874), Ames writes that Phoebe "believed religiously in the social, mental, and civil enfranchisement of women" (192). She thought it "the right of every woman to develop the power that God has given her, and to fulfill her destiny as a human creature – free as a man is free. Yet it was in woman *as* woman she believed" (192). That is to say, she thought women's contributions should be valued on the basis

of their femininity rather than their conformity to masculine ideology. These opinions, as we will see, appear in a great deal of Phoebe's writing, particularly in her parodies.

Though the sisters often published jointly and enjoyed commercial success, Alice's work almost always overshadowed Phoebe's in reviews and publications. In her article "Parody as Dialogue and Disenchantment" (2006), Lucia Cherciu notes that "even when reviewers acknowledged Phoebe's work, they always compared her with her sister, and many times only noticed her as a minor character in Alice's story" (328). Even today, with the recovery movement of nineteenth-century women's writing well underway, Alice's poetry receives more attention and anthology space. A quote in Ames's biography of the Cary sisters, which we should note only dedicates one-third of its pages to Phoebe, suggests that Phoebe was very aware of the secondary role she played to Alice: "'I am sure I have never lived out my full nature, have never lived a complete life. My life is an appendage to that of Alice. It is my nature and fate to walk second to her'" (qtd. in Cherciu 328). However, it is clear to anyone who studies their lives that the success of one sister was dependent upon the other's. Not only are they one another's first audience, but the voices of their poetry also complement and complete each other, a trait Cherciu terms "dialogic" (329). Alice's poetic voice "often appears self-contained, coherent, and homogeneous," while Phoebe's constantly wavers and questions (Cherciu 330). Alice favored regional material and conventional forms, while Phoebe shifted among voices, subject matter, and form as it suited her motives. Of course, the most distinguishing difference between the sisters is that Phoebe came to be a parodist, while Alice steadfastly remained a sentimentalist.

In "Parody as Dialogue and Disenchantment," Cherciu muses whether Phoebe, finding she was always judged against Alice, chose parody as a way to subvert the writing for which her sister was praised (330). This theory seems entirely plausible, given that Phoebe's parodies

challenge the very foundations on which Alice's sentimental poetry is built. In negating these conventions, Phoebe separates herself from her sister and finds her own voice. Utilizing her famous wit, "sobering skepticism," and "resistance to self-deception," she creates poetry that affords her autonomy and distinctly identifies the work as hers and hers alone (Cherciu 326).

Though Alice was consistently popular among critics, Cherciu explains, Phoebe saw mixed reviews. Her sentimental writing never received the acclaim of Alice's, though a number of critics found her poetry to be versatile and more representative of the common experience than Alice's (339). Moreover, the publication of her parodies, which targeted a variety of popular nineteenth-century poets, resulted in a wave of backlash that damaged her reputation. The Cary sisters continued to write and publish poetry until Alice became ill and required Phoebe's constant care. The sisters died within six months of one another in 1871; Alice was 51, and Phoebe was 46. Like most women's writing from nineteenth-century America, the Cary sisters' work was lost until the feminist movement of the 1970s began to recover and revaluate women's writing from the period. Even with the recovery movement, Alice tends to overshadow Phoebe critically and in anthologies. However, the view towards Phoebe's parodies has shifted over time, and most often the poems chosen to represent her work are taken from her humorous writing. It seems the candor and wit in her parodies, the dramatic realism that offended critics of her time, sit better with a modern audience.

The Duality of the Cary Sisters

The lives and work of the Cary sisters display a certain fascinating duality and suggest that their poetry may be more complex than meets the eye. Though both Phoebe and Alice published conventional sentimental poetry, the versions of themselves the women presented in their private lives did not at all reflect their somber and serious poetry, much less Whicher's

portrayal of the sappy sentimental poetess, Sally Hugle. They were smart, successful women with a wide social circle, and they were well-aware of the demand and expectations for sentimental literature at the time.

They were also undoubtedly aware of the widespread nineteenth-century notion that women's poetry was "a natural expression of truth, an overflowing of feeling, an unadulterated picture of the heart" (Cherciu 333). There is evidence to suggest that Alice capitalized on this idea of the inspired poetess to market her poetry to editors. In a letter to Rufus Griswold in 1848, Alice writes that she and Phoebe "write with great facility, often producing two or three poems a day, and never elaborate" (qtd. in Cherciu 333). She goes on to identify the sources that inspire their writing:

> With nothing from which to draw but our hearts, subjected to the toils and privations of poverty and orphanage, with neither books nor literary friends to encourage our predilections, we have been, and still are, humble worshippers of the Temple Song. (qtd. in Cherciu 334)

After setting herself and her sister up as mediums of some sentimental muse, Alice subtly comes to the true purpose behind the letter – publishing a book of their poetry so that they will have the financial resources they need to support themselves. Similarly, in a letter addressed to Whittier, Alice tells him, "As it is we only write from irresistible impulse, and I may truly say we have never bestowed labor or pains on the production of a single article, as from their many imperfections, you will readily believe" (qtd. in Cherciu 338). This statement, like the one above, serves to paint Alice and Phoebe as poets driven by inspiration, their verse flowing from them as naturally as air. Lucia Cherciu contends that Alice strategically made assertions like these to market Phoebe and herself to editors like Griswold and nudge their work into the mainstream.

Alice's methods seem to have been effective because, as Cherciu notes, Griswold "quoted liberally" from her letter in the introduction to *Female Poets of America,* using her sentiments as evidence of women poets' wellspring of inspiration (334).

Alice's letters suggest a level of consciousness and savvy rarely associated with the work of the Cary sisters or other female sentimentalists. The idea that Alice and Phoebe were tailoring their personae to appeal to the public invites us to look at their poetry as constructions crafted with great rhetorical skill rather than outpourings of unadulterated emotions and to consider that their work may be more complex than it initially appears. Phoebe's parodies directly contradict the façade of pure inspiration that Alice worked to build. In fact, by manipulating existing forms and conventions of sentimental poetry, Phoebe goes out of her way to remind readers that poems are constructed artifacts. In the eulogy she wrote for Alice, she claims that their first collection, *The Poems of Alice and Phoebe Cary*, "was for the most part but the feeble echoes of well-known poets, or at best sentimental fancies or morbid plaints of sorrow more imaginary than real" ("Alice Cary," qtd. in Cherciu 327). She goes on to confess that whatever Alice wrote, she did so "under the pressure of necessity." These statements tie back to Paula Bernat Bennett's discussion on the business of sentimental poetry discussed in the previous chapter; writers who sought to support themselves with their writing had adopt the sentimental mode, and it seems the situation was no different for the Cary Sisters.

Phoebe Cary's Writing

Though the works of both Cary sisters are almost always viewed in relation to one another, Phoebe Cary had her own voice, which rings clear in the poetry she published on her own. Four years after the publication of the sisters' joint volume, *The Poems of Alice and Phoebe Cary*, Phoebe came out with her own collection entitled *Poems and Parodies* (1854). As the title

suggests, this volume comprises partially traditional sentimental poetry, while the rest is made up of parodies. This collection "combines mainstream sentimentalism and bitter sharp irony; transparent, sometimes conventionalized grief and raucous laughter; pious dirges and unabashed affirmations of women's sexuality" (Cherciu 325). When the collection was published, it was the parodies, rather than the sentimental poetry, that received critical attention – most of it negative. As Johnathan Hall notes in his encyclopedia entry on the Cary sisters, reviewers of the 1850s did not appreciate Cary's somewhat harsh treatment of the popular works of the period. He writes that her "frivolous" approach to serious topics "apparently crossed over some invisible boundary of Victorian earnestness and into the realm of offensive" (68). These critics found Cary's irreverence toward sacred subjects such as death and marriage to be unthinkable for a "woman of sentiment" (Hall 68). Thus, it is not surprising that *Poems and Parodies* did not fare well critically or commercially and, in fact, gained a somewhat notorious reputation.

Despite the notoriety of the parodies, they are not the work for which Cary was best known in her time. Her most widely admired poem was a hymn titled "Nearer Home," which was written around the same time as *Poems and Parodies* but was not collected until several years later in Cary's only other solo volume, *Poems of Faith, Hope, and Love* (1868). This poem, along with several others of her religious lyrics, appeared in church hymnals, Sunday school cards, and household scrapbooks ("Cary sisters"). "Nearer Home" was often sung at funerals, including both Alice's and Phoebe's. In 1876, Canadian composer Robert Ambrose wrote music specifically for "Nearer Home," and the Cary-Ambrose score became one of the best-selling pieces of sheet music of the nineteenth century ("Cary sisters"). In the last years before her death, Cary also co-edited a compilation of hymns with Charles Force Deems titled *Hymns for All Christians* (1869).

After the deaths of the Cary sisters, their biographer, Mary Clemmer Ames, saw to the publication of three more volumes that included their poetry, one of which was the biography that included a handful of the sisters' later poems. In 1873, the same year the biography was published, Ames collected and produced both *The Last Poems of Alice and Phoebe Cary* and *Ballads for Little Folk*, a collection of poetry and illustrations for children on the topics of nature and animals. As the diversity of these collections suggests, Phoebe Cary wrote an array of poetry in all manner of styles and intents. Over time, critical preference for Cary's work has shifted, and the works we see anthologized today are not her well-loved hymns but the parodies for which she was criticized in the nineteenth century. The same subversion that antebellum reviewers found appalling now appeals to modern scholars, appearing as a daring "form of revolt and active intervention" amongst a sea of sentimental dirges and marking Cary as a uniquely witty nineteenth-century female writer (Cherciu 333).

Parody as Agency

Humor has long played an important role in women's writing. One of the major forms humorous writing has taken on historically is the satirical complaint, the conventions of which were solidified in the eighteenth century. Lauren Berlant defines the complaint as "an international mode of public discourse that demonstrates women's contested value in the patriarchal public sphere by providing commentary from a generically 'female' point of view" (268). Because the complaint was regarded as a feminine form of writing, it was not taken seriously; and, for this very reason, women were able to use the platform as a space to discuss and archive the social negation they experienced within a patriarchal society without much recourse. With satirical poetry among their "most effective weapons," women, from the eighteenth century on, used the "open space" in poetry columns of newspapers and periodicals to

express their thoughts on social and political issues, with no technique proving more effective than the parodic response (Bennet, "A Muse of Their Own" 67).

In *A Theory of Parody*, Linda Hutcheon describes parody as "repetition with critical distance" (6). She argues that the intent of parody can differ; sometimes it is meant to poke fun at or degrade a particular work, but other times it seeks to criticize the conventions of a particular art form, as well as society's acceptance of those conventions. The critical distance parody provides is crucial to achieving whichever effect the author intends. While the act and form of parody require incorporation of conventions, its function is "one of separation and contrast" (Hutcheon 34). The parodist recreates particular elements of a work and alters others as a way to create new layers of meaning. The traces of the original text suggest that the "new creation is implicitly to be both measured and understood" against the former (Hutcheon 31). In the sameness and the differences, the reader is invited to simultaneously question how the changes alter the meaning of the work, as well as what implications the original standards offer. For example, if a parodist chooses a poem with a male speaker, then alters it to give the poem a female speaker, what changes? What does the reader learn by considering the content of the original poem from a different perspective? As both "a re-creation and a creation," parody makes criticism into "a kind of active exploration of form," asking readers to question what they know and potentially change their view of the work or form under scrutiny (Hutcheon 57). Considering the implications of the original text against the reimagined parodic version encourages critical understanding and responses to popular forms and subject matter.

The principle of critical difference Hutcheon emphasizes is key to understanding why parody was the medium of choice for many nineteenth-century women writers who wanted to make their voices heard. In the space between the original text and the parodic reimagination,

writers are able to identify and challenge norms and conventions in a way that encourages readers to reevaluate the implications of the original text. Parody "exposes the limitations of the discourse" of whatever medium is under question and "ultimately institutes a new reality" (Cherciu 333). Thus, many female poets who wanted to call into question the patriarchal conventions of sentimentality – such as prescriptive emotions and limited roles for women – saw parody as the most effective vehicle for their criticism. Though parody itself was common in nineteenth-century literature, its "inherent violence, aggression, and engulfing wit made it less predictable as a women's genre" (Cherciu 331). Women writers' adoption of this attitude of aggression, as well as its element of unpredictability, was necessary to take on and disrupt the dominant ideological structure of sentimentalism as a cultural practice and a literary movement.

By its nature, parody gives its author a voice; it is dialogic. It opens a space for dialogue between itself and the original text, as well as between the parodist and the reader. This dialogue provides the parodist with an opportunity to be critical of not just the conventions of a work but of a society that accepts and perpetuates those standards, inviting others to do the same. Thus, it is not surprising parody was seen by nineteenth-century women writers as a platform for social and political change. Hutcheon argues that the role of self-conscious texts is to "rework those discourses whose weight has become tyrannical" (Hutcheon 72). In the case of these women writers, sentimentalism had become a "tyrannical" discourse that demanded adherence to its patriarchal conventions. By pointing out such areas of concern, parody "acts as a consciousness-raising device"; it identifies the limitations of form and conventions to discourage the "acceptance of the narrow doctrinaire, dogmatic view of any particular ideological group" (Hutcheon 103). Employing parody's "consciousness-raising" abilities, women writers took on

sentimental forms, then altered them from the inside out to highlight where they fell short, inviting readers to question sentimental norms.

Hutcheon acknowledges that parody has a dual nature, simultaneously implying "authority and transgression" (69). In one sense, parody can be seen as a threatening force that questions the legitimacy of other texts by undermining their literary norms. Yet, at the same time, parody's "transgressions ultimately remain authorized" by the "very norm it seeks to subvert" (75). In order to question literary or cultural norms, the parodist is required to participate in them to some degree. After all, one cannot question an idea without first being aware of it and having a clear understanding of its principles. Even if it is functioning in a mocking manner, parody must "[inscribe] the mocked conventions onto itself" to be effective (Hutcheon 75). In part, parody's unavoidable perpetuation of dominant conventions is what makes it publishable and socially acceptable. As Hutcheon notes, a parodist's simply attacking the norm would be "self-destructive" (44). This strategic positioning of oneself within the dominant ideology in order to maintain credibility is reminiscent of Paula Bernat Bennett's discussion of female writers who produced sentimental literature to support themselves but maintained a critical stance toward it. Parodists draw power and legitimacy from established forms and conventions, then subvert these norms to make a statement. In the act of subversion, these writers find their voices; they develop agency.

Phoebe Cary is one such female writer who finds her voice within parody. In her parodies, Cary establishes agency by separating herself from her sister and her sister's poetry, as well as from the patriarchal conventions and norms of sentimentalism. As I have discussed previously, Cary's sentimental poetry was constantly compared to and overshadowed by her sister's. However, when Cary published her own solo collection, *Poems and Parodies*, it seems

she made every effort to differentiate herself from Alice. Though the first half of the collection touts an array of traditional sentimental poetry, the latter half viciously undercuts the former with a series of hilarious but scathing parodies built from the content and form of sentimental poetry. Lucia Cherciu, who describes the juxtaposition in *Poems and Parodies*, writes, "The first half of *Poems and Parodies* creates an atmosphere of loss, mourning, unrequited love, and powerlessness, to become the object of her irony in the rest of the volume" (332). The strategic contrast between the parodies and sentimental poetry in the collection is indicative of Cary's critical consciousness toward her own writing, as well as her sister's. In creating poetry that emphasizes the shortcomings of the sentimental form, Cary undermines the work for which she and, even more so, Alice had come to be known. She questions the norms Alice perpetuates in her poetry and, as a result, asserts her independence as both a poet and a person.

Moreover, Cary's parodies call attention to concerns she has about sentimental poetry and the larger culture of sentimentalism. Primarily, Cary seems concerned about the patriarchal nature of many of sentimentalism's conventions, as well as its preservation of a stereotypical image of women writers. As I have discussed earlier, it was common for nineteenth-century female poets to be viewed as conduits of inspiration; their writing was seen not as a mark of skill or craft, but as a product of some awesome muse. By suggesting that female poets were not wholly responsible for producing their own work, this notion undermined their agency. Phoebe Cary, however, did not accept this view of the female poet. In her parodies, she manipulates and chooses the elements with great intention, demonstrating full control over her art.

In *Poems and Parodies*, the juxtaposition between the sentimental poetry and the parodies shows how in control of the end-product Cary truly is. On their own, the traditional sentimental poems could be written off as the offspring of inspiration. However, by purposefully

subverting and destroying the forms and conventions that appear in the first half of the collection with the parodies, Cary makes it clear that she is very much aware of the choices she made when she wrote the sentimental poems and that she is just as capable of deconstructing them as she is building them. This "uncanny combination" of sentimental poetry and parodies "unsettles the distinction between authentic and spurious, original and copy, inspiration and craft" that is made to seem inherently clear by the inspired poet ideology (Cherciu 331). By its dialogic nature, parody draws attention to the fact that art is not a natural but a constructed artifact. In making this reality unavoidable, Cary refutes the patriarchal notion that women writers are somehow less skilled than male writers and reclaims her agency as a poet.

Through her parodies, Cary reflects on the "canonic (male) tradition in order to create a space for women's writing" (Cherciu 326). Predominately, her parodies identify and challenge the patriarchal conventions that pervade sentimentalism – the depictions of women as agents of morality, the outpouring of emotions, the ideals of marriage and love. Unsurprisingly, every poem Cary mimics in *Poems and Parodies* has a male author, with the exception of one poem by Felicia Hemans. Cary offers commentary through her parodies by retaining the structure and some of the language used in the original poems, then altering the meaning by inserting new characters, reversing roles, or exchanging serious subjects for comedic ones, a process Cherciu describes as "grafting meaning" onto other texts (14). By altering or rearranging elements in an existing text, Cary opens a dialogue between the original poem and her own, creating space for her to share her perspective. The parodies in *Poems and Parodies* challenge well-known poems of the period by authors like Bryant, Poe, Longfellow, and Whittier, as well as older poems by writers like Wordsworth, with which nineteenth-century readers would have been familiar, exposing their "underlying distortions" (Cherciu 333). Because Cary almost exclusively satirizes

poetry written by men, her version of parody becomes a "revisitation and revision of patriarchy" (Cherciu 333). Through her use of parody, Cary reveals how these popular, male-authored poems offer representations of women that diminish or deny female agency.

Cary appropriates the conventions and language of existing sentimental poetry to create parodic space for herself and her voice. Through this channel, she is not only able to differentiate herself and her poetry from Alice and her work but also to challenge the patriarchal norms of sentimental poetry and its representations of women and the female poet. She uses humor as a tool for sparking conversation between her work and the works of well-known male poets from the period, and, in starting this dialogue, Cary opens up a space for sharing her perspective on the male poets' treatment of women in sentimental poetry as both authors and subjects. Cary's parodies also offer alternative roles for women that provide them agency. In her work, she harnesses the power of humor to identify her concerns about sentimentalism in literature and challenge its representations of women as subjects of poetry and as poets.

CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION OF SELECTED PARODIES

In an 1854 review of *Poems and Parodies* in *Graham's,* one critic described Phoebe Cary's parody of William Cullen Bryant's "The Future Life" as "a profanation" (qtd. in Hall 68). He goes on to say, "In all poetry these are the last lines we could imagine a woman of sentiment selecting for the exercise of her humor." However, as Johnathan Hall points out, challenging her role as a "woman of sentiment" is precisely what Cary intended to do. Her parodies, though they were not received well commercially or critically in the nineteenth century, are incredibly clever and offer a compelling, critical lens through which to view sentimentalism and its literary conventions. Predominately, the parodies explore and challenge the stereotypical representations of women and female poets that permeated sentimental culture. The following discussion highlights three parodies in which Cary appropriates poems by her male peers, Poe, Longfellow, and Bryant, then alters them by rewriting them from a realist, female perspective. By reworking these poems, Cary gives agency to the female characters that appear within them and asserts her own agency as a skilled and autonomous artist.

Poe's "Annabel Lee" and Cary's "Samuel Brown"

One example of a Cary parody that comments on the patriarchal conventions of sentimental poetry is "Samuel Brown" (1854), which is based on Edgar Allan Poe's "Annabel Lee" (1849). Set in a "kingdom by the sea," "Annabel Lee" presents a male speaker who is lamenting the loss of his beloved Annabel Lee (Poe 251). He describes their love as being so deeply intense that it sparks jealousy in the angels in heaven, who in turn bring about Annabel Lee's death. Yet, the speaker insists that even death cannot "dissever" his soul from Annabel Lee's, and the poem closes with the speaker lying in Annabel Lee's tomb next to her corpse (252). In "Samuel Brown," Cary begins to graft meaning onto Poe's poem by moving the setting

from a fairytale seaside kingdom to New York City and exchanging Poe's male speaker for a female speaker. By setting "Samuel Brown" in New York, Cary brings the poem out of a fantasy realm and into reality, suggesting that her poem will not reflect the romantic notions that pervade "Annabel Lee."

Through "Samuel Brown," Cary calls attention to the silencing of the female voice in "Annabel Lee." Because Annabel Lee is dead, the reader can hear the story of the love affair only from the male speaker's perspective. The speaker claims that he and Annabel Lee "loved with a love that was more than love —"; this assertion cannot be confirmed, however, as Annabel Lee is unable to speak in this dramatic monologue (Poe 251). Furthermore, the circumstances surrounding Annabel Lee's death remain unclear. The speaker asserts that the angels killed her out of envy; however, this unrealistic account suggests that the speaker is paranoid and unstable, a notion that is further evidenced by his sleeping next to Annabel Lee's corpse at the poem's end. These elements of the poem mark the speaker as unreliable and leave the questions surrounding Annabel Lee's death unanswered. In her article "Poe, Women Poets, and Print Circulation" (2007), Eliza Richards maintains that the speaker's adoration of Annabel Lee comes only as a result of her death, when she becomes a "fetish object evacuated of female subjectivity" (218). This statement suggests that the speaker prefers women who have no agency, who cannot speak out in opposition to him.

In "Samuel Brown," Cary comments on the lack of female agency in Poe's poem by giving her version of the poem a female speaker. Also, unlike in "Annabel Lee," in which the speaker and his beloved are supposedly children caught up in innocent love, Cary's female speaker and Samuel Brown are adults who act out of lust. Both the fact that she has a voice and the fact that she is in a consensual adult relationship gives the speaker far more agency than is

ever afforded to Annabel Lee. Moreover, the female speaker and Samuel Brown have a mutual relationship, unlike the male speaker who loves Annabel Lee because she "lived with no other thought / Than to love and be loved by [him]" (251). Even after Samuel Brown gets married, he and the speaker find time to "sit in the park" and "walk down on Broadway" with one another, and when they are apart, the speaker seems content on her own (Cary 149). Cary's female speaker also "openly expresses her sexual desire" for Samuel Brown, further indicating her independence (Richards 218).

Cary does not limit female agency in "Samuel Brown" to the speaker alone. The uptown woman who marries Samuel Brown also seems to wield her own kind of power. During the woman's courtship of Samuel Brown, the speaker describes her as coming out of a carriage, "Coquetting and getting" Samuel Brown, indicating that this woman has the ability to entice Samuel Brown into marrying her instead of the speaker whom he loves (Cary 148). Comparing "Samuel Brown" to "Annabel Lee," Richards suggests that by replacing Poe's "chilling and killing my Annabel Lee" with "coquetting and getting my Samuel Brown," Cary "substitutes direct, aggressive female desire" for the violence Poe's speaker attributes to the angels (Richards 218). Instead of displacing the envy as Poe's speaker does, the woman in Cary's poem freely expresses her desire for Samuel Brown.

Moreover, the poem suggests that, in addition to her coquettishness, the woman who marries Samuel Brown is from "up in town" and thus has more money than the speaker and Samuel Brown who live "down in town," which allows her to take Samuel Brown from the speaker (Cary 148). Though the poem makes it clear that Samuel Brown continues his relationship with the speaker even after his marriage, the uptown woman still maintains some control over him, as he relies on her money. With the dynamic between Samuel Brown and his

wife, Cary reverses traditional gender roles. As Richards points out, "Samuel is like a kept woman while the female resembles an adulterous male lover . . ." (Richards 218). This reversal calls attention to the constructed nature of gender, particularly those constructs which appear in literature.

In "Samuel Brown," Cary reimagines Poe's "Annabel Lee" in order to draw attention to the patriarchal conventions within the poem. By instituting a female voice where there was previously not one, Cary welcomes comparison between the representation of women in her poem versus Poe's. In the disparity between the two representations, Annabel Lee's lack of voice and agency becomes readily apparent. This disillusionment "makes mincemeat of Poe's sentimentalized romanticism — which presents the only good woman as a dead one" (Bennett, "A Muse of Their Own" 64). In contrast, in "Samuel Brown," Cary acknowledges female agency by representing her female speaker and the uptown woman as "active sexual (desiring) agents." In this way, Cary uses her parody to not only call attention to the treatment of female agency in sentimental poetry, but also to provide an alternative representation of women that acknowledges their autonomy.

Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life" and Cary's "A Psalm of Life"

Another way Cary gives agency to women through her parodies is by transforming male-authored sentimental poems into poems that deal with the expectations placed on women in nineteenth-century American society. As such, a number of her parodies express themes of marriage and courtship. Parodies such as "John Thompson's Daughter" (based on Thomas Campbell's "Lord Ullin's Daughter") and "Girls Were Made to Mourn" (based on Robert Burns's "Man Was Made to Mourn"), expose the pettiness, triviality, and materialism that result from conventional ideas of courtship and marriage. Moreover, Cary's critiques are not directed

only at the men who perpetuate these customs but also toward the women who blindly participate in them. Evidence of these criticisms appears in Cary's poem "A Psalm of Life," which takes its title, form, and much of its language from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem of the same name.

Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life," subtitled "What the Heart of the Young Man Said to the Psalmist," is a highly emotional work meant to inspire its readers into action. Relying on a heavy use of exhortations and exclamation points, Longfellow's speaker expresses his concerns about the psalmist's urging people to look forward to their eternal lives rather than engaging in their lives in the present. The speaker contends that "the grave is not [life's] goal" and that men must "act in the living Present" in order to leave a legacy for the ones who come after them (Longfellow 150). In contrast, Cary's version of "A Psalm of Life," which is subtitled "What the Heart of the Young Woman Said to the Old Maid," deals not with the moral and philosophical questions of having a fulfilling life but instead argues that marriage is the key to giving a woman's life meaning. In making this switch, Cary grounds her poem in reality, suggesting that corporeal concerns take precedence over existential musings.

In Longfellow's poem, the speaker worries over not appreciating and taking part in life. He entreats the psalmist, "Tell me not, in mournful numbers / Life is but an empty dream! / For the soul is dead that slumbers" (Longfellow 149). He goes on to say that while the body is meant to return to the earth, the soul carries on. Thus, he concludes that there is no reason to be concerned with the past or future and that men should instead focus their energy on making progress in their lives each day. The overall message of the poem is philosophical in nature; it is an emotional plea for purposeful living.

In contrast, Cary's poem undermines the passion and the somberness Longfellow develops by transforming his poem into a tongue-in-cheek discussion on the importance of marriage. From the start, Cary's poem is less effusive than Longfellow's; she replaces many of his exclamation points with semicolons and uses a blunt tone in place of his inspiring one. Instead of worrying over the state of her soul, Cary's speaker is desperate to marry, because, as she sees it, "the girl is dead that's single" (Cary 193). As such, every act she commits is done with the hope "that each to-morrow / Nearer brings the wedding-day" (Cary 193). Cary exchanges Longfellow's speaker's mission of acting in the name of personal progress with her speaker's desire to meet social expectations. This change not only draws attention to the sentimental nature of Longfellow's poem but also points to the superficial motivations perpetuated by nineteenth-century expectations of marriage.

Cary continues to reverse Longfellow's sentimental approach when she rewrites his speaker's advice urging his fellow men to live their lives with intention. In the original version, Longfellow's speaker exclaims:

> In the world's broad field of battle,
>
> In the bivouac of Life,
>
> Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
>
> Be a hero in the strife! (150)

Cary transforms Longfellow's "already burlesque exhortation" into advice for old maids: "Be not like dumb, driven cattle! / Be a woman, be a wife!" (Cherciu 336; Cary 194). Because of the poem's tone, it is clear that, while her speaker is encouraging marriage and insulting old maids, Cary herself is suggesting that it is the women who accept gendered expectations of marriage

that are the true "dumb, driven cattle." Furthermore, rather than advising others to live "Heart within, and God o'erhead!" as Longfellow's speaker does, Cary's speaker encourages her fellow women to go forth "[h]eart within, and MAN ahead!" (Longfellow 150; Cary 194). By replacing God with "MAN," Cary's poem suggests that her speaker, as well as the other women who subscribe to the speaker's way of thinking, allow all of their actions to be driven by the pursuit of finding a husband.

Moreover, rather than leave behind an example of a life well-lived as Longfellow's speaker aims to do, Cary's speaker strives to leave behind an example of marriage so compelling that it will encourage a "forlorn, unmarried brother" who is "[s]ailing far from Hymen's port" to "take heart, and court" (Cary 194). The disparity between the motives of the two speakers, as well as Cary's not-so-subtle sexual metaphor, undercut Longfellow's over-the-top romanticism and emphasize the superficiality of patriarchal traditions of marriage. Though Cary's speaker undermines the high ideals of Longfellow's poem with her worldly aspirations, she also shows herself to be shallow, inviting the reader to be critical of her and the society that has molded her. The young woman concludes her advice to the old maid with a call to action:

> Let us be up and doing,
>
> With the heart and head begin;
>
> Still achieving, still pursuing,
>
> Learn to labor, and to win! (195)

These lines suggest that the speaker sees marriage as some kind of game or competition to be won. Her longing to have a husband stems not from passion or love but from the desire to meet expectations and be deemed a successful, acceptable woman by society. With her parody of "A

Psalm of Life," Cary simultaneously subverts sentimental conventions and challenges gendered expectations for women. Unlike the approach she takes in "Samuel Brown," in which she gives a previously silenced woman a voice and, thus, agency, in this poem, Cary creates a female speaker who is a mouthpiece for the patriarchy. In using this construction, Cary demonstrates how societal expectations shape women and how those women then perpetuate that ideology. In this parody, the poet makes her own voice heard and turns a call for courtship and marriage into a call for women to approach these institutions with a critical eye.

Bryant's "The Future Life" and Cary's "The City Life"

Perhaps Cary's most ill-received parody was her reimagining of William Cullen Bryant's poem "The Future Life" entitled "The City Life." Bryant's poem deals with a speaker whose lover has died and explores the feelings of despair he experiences at the thought of not recognizing his beloved in the afterlife. Not unlike Poe's "Annabel Lee," the conversation in "The Future Life" is one-sided; we hear only from the male speaker because his female counterpart has died. The speaker addresses his deceased lover directly:

> If in meadows fanned by heaven's life-breathing wind,
>
> In the resplendence of that glorious sphere,
>
> And larger movements of the unfettered mind,
>
> Wilt thou forget the love that joined us here? (183)

He worries that his lover will forget him and the earthly relationship they shared. In contrast, Cary's speaker in "The City Life" is, again, a woman. Her lover is not dead but has left her in the country to start a new life in the city. Unlike Bryant's speaker, the woman does not express concern about losing her lover or his affection as much as she exhibits regret over the loss of his

material possessions and jealousy toward his new situation. By transposing Bryant's separated lovers from heaven to the city and giving the speaker materialistic rather than heartfelt concerns, Cary characteristically crafts a poem that squashes sentimentalism with realism, passion with cynicism.

As the content dictates, the language in Bryant's poem paints an ethereal heaven and an angelic woman to inhabit it. Throughout "The Future Life," the speaker offers descriptions of his departed lover that paint her as nothing short of perfect. She is both "meek" and patient, handling the speaker's "harsher nature" with grace (183). She is also beautiful and good, and it is because of these qualities that the speaker wishes her to teach him the "wisdom which is love" that he is incapable of understanding on his own (184). She is his moral compass. In essence, the speaker's lost lover epitomizes the ideal woman as dictated by domestic ideology. By contrast, Cary's speaker characterizes her lover not by his many admirable attributes but by his material possessions. The speaker in "The City Life" worries that she will not meet her lover's "one-horse carriage" or see the hat she "love[s]," whereas Bryant's speaker fears he will miss his beloved's "gentle presence" and voice (Cary 182; Bryant 183). Rather than remembering her lover's face, Cary's speaker thinks of his "black-satin vest" and "morning gown" and how much grander they will seem in New York (183). By exchanging sentimental longing for a lover's beauty and kindness with a longing for material goods and the status they bring, Cary highlights, then undermines, the histrionic somberness of Bryant's poem.

Moreover, she dismantles his angelic model of nineteenth-century womanhood by presenting a female speaker who is shallow and jealous. Not only does the speaker think of her lover in terms of his possessions, but it also becomes clear throughout the poem that she envies his new life in the city. She comments on how much better his new situation is compared to hers:

A happier lot than mine, and greater praise,

Await thee there for thou, with skill and tact,

Hast learnt the wisdom of the world's just ways,

And dressest well, and knowest how to act. (Cary 183)

She covets her lover's ability to take on what she sees as a glamorous life in the city with ease, while she is left with only her "country training" (183). She sees herself as unable to fit into urban society because of her rural upbringing, claiming that work has "left its frightful scar upon [her] hand," thus marking her as an outsider (183). In contrast to the last lines of Bryant's poem, in which his speaker asks his beloved to teach him the wisdom of love, Cary's speaker asks her lover to teach her how to replicate the sophisticated ways of the city so that she might join him there:

Shalt thou not teach me, in that grander home

The wisdom that I learned so ill in this, —

The wisdom which is fine, — till I become

Thy fit companion in that place of bliss? (184)

Whereas Bryant's speaker wants to improve himself so that he might join his lover in eternity, the speaker in "The City Life" is motivated by the prospect of moving into her lover's "grander home." Rather than presenting a meek and wholly good angel in the house, Cary offers a woman driven entirely by material gain. This realistic, if not unpleasant, representation of femininity destabilizes nineteenth-century essentialist depictions of women who limited their actions and emotions to what was considered acceptable.

In “Samuel Brown,” “A Psalm of Life,” “The City Life,” and many of her other parodies, Cary reinstates agency for women within poetry and for female poets themselves. Her skillful manipulation of popular sentimental works by well-known male authors offers proof that she, not the muse, is fully in control of the writing she produces. Moreover, her parodies give voice to women who are otherwise silent or absent, offering a new perspective on the conventions of the original texts. These female speakers offer alternatives to the limited representations of womanhood perpetuated in sentimental poetry by authors like Poe, Longfellow, and Bryant. Rather than accept the supposition that women must be delicate and wholly good, Cary shows that women are human, and, like all humans, they experience a wide range of thoughts and feelings and have both negative and positive qualities. In presenting women this way, Cary “[rips] aside the veil from the quasi-religious mystique surrounding middle-class women – presumably elevating them but, in fact, silencing them – *and* from the language of hyper-refinement and delicacy that kept this mystique alive” (Bennett, “Laughing All the Way” 21). With unflinching candor, Cary challenges sentimental expectations of gender and literature in a way that is blatant enough to be undeniable. When we consider how damning Cary’s criticism is, it is not surprising that nineteenth-century reviewers and audiences felt offended by her work. After all, her parodies strike precisely at the heart of the ideological structure that kept the patriarchy in its place of power.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

In the introduction to the section on Phoebe Cary in *American Women Poets of the Nineteenth Century*, Cheryl Walker writes, "Though several of Phoebe's poems are charming upon first reading, they are not so rewarding in rereading as are [her sister] Alice's best ones" (198). Though Cary's work may indeed be "charming," Walker does a disservice to the poems and the poet to suggest that their merit ends there. Cary's work, as the previous chapters have illustrated, is written with great intention. She uses parody to identify and challenge the patriarchal conventions of sentimental poetry, returning agency to the women whose voices were often silenced or ignored. Moreover, by calling into question sentimental norms, Cary separates herself from the "woman of sentiment" figure, redefining what female poets can be and asserting her own agency as an independent artist.

Despite its lack of commercial and critical success, *Poems and Parodies* offers a collection of rhetorically conscious parodies that are both clever and rife with political and social commentary. The ease with which Cary moves from sentiment to parody in this collection is indicative of her complexity as an artist. The duality of her writing not only invites us to think critically about the sentimental writing of other authors but also seems to welcome a reconsideration of Cary's own sentimental work. In context, Cary's work can be seen as an early example of a burgeoning movement of women writers whose work openly rebelled against the constraints placed on women by domestic ideology. This trend in women's writing, which took hold in the late 1850s, saw bitter and damning reactions to romanticized notions of womanhood, like those famously expressed in Coventry Patmore's 1854 work, *The Angel in the House* (Bennett, "The Descent of the Angel" 591). Much like Cary, writers such as Sarah Piatt and Elizabeth Drew Stoddard wrote some poetry based on the writing of male authors, examples of

which include works by Patmore and Tennyson; however, they approached these works with anger and cynicism rather than humor, illustrating the damaging effects domestic ideology had on women. They recognized the distance between the charmed life that women were promised by domesticity and the realities of everyday life that nineteenth-century women faced. It was "within this epistemological gap, this ironic awareness" that writers including Piatt and Stoddard situated themselves, creating poetry that emphasized the shortcomings of domesticity ("The Descent of the Angel" 594). The disillusionment these women write about, Paula Bernat Bennett argues, shows signs of the modernist views that would arise shortly after the turn of the century (594). If this is indeed the case, it comes as no surprise that Cary's parodic work, which was written some years prior to this movement, did not strike a chord with her contemporary audience.

The fact that Cary's parodies did not sit well with nineteenth-century readers has not, however, affected their reception with twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars. In fact, her humorous poems are more frequently anthologized today than any of her traditional sentimental writing. Yet, the contemporary anthologizing of Cary's work, as well as the work of other nineteenth-century American women poets, has only become a reality in the last few decades. Despite their widespread popularity in their time, American women poets of the nineteenth century and their work became largely unknown after the turn of the century. Though there are a number of circumstances that coalesced to cause this situation, the most obvious and frequently cited explanation is the rise of new criticism in the twentieth century. New critical standards for aesthetics differed significantly from those in the nineteenth century, viewing art as a "separate realm with its own, sometimes antisocial, values and resonances" rather than an "intensification of familiar aspects of life" (Walker, C., xxvii). As a result, the predominantly sentimental writing

of nineteenth-century women was categorized as trivial and self-indulgent and was subsequently cast out of the realm of serious literature.

Such was the case until the explosion of the feminist movement in the 1970s, which brought with it a renewed interest in recovering and reevaluating the lost work of nineteenth-century American women writers. This movement sought to reconsider the value of this writing without the hegemonic standards of new criticism coloring the assessment. Instead, these scholars approached nineteenth-century women's writing from the political, social, and economic context of the time, using feminism as a lens through which to better understand their motives. Much of the scholarship that has come out of this movement takes a positive view of women's sentimental literature. Scholars like Jane Tompkins, whose work I have discussed previously, speak of the power and the platform sentimentalism afforded to nineteenth-century women. It gave validation to their thoughts and feelings, as well as to their domestic roles as wives and mothers. It gave women a forum to write about their interests and experiences. Explaining the project of recovering nineteenth-century women's writing, Cheryl Walker, a scholar on the forefront of the recovery movement, writes:

> The greatest strength of nineteenth-century American women's poetry – and the reason for continued interest in it – is that it represents the liberation of primitive literary energies, that is, it comes from a group of women who have only recently begun to feel themselves empowered to speak and who thus write with an urgency and dedication that separates them from most of their male counterparts. (Walker, C., xxxix)

This assessment offers an excellent summary of the disposition toward female sentimentalists taken in a great deal of the current scholarship in this area.

However, there are those who disagree with this evaluation. Ann Douglas, for one, goes to great lengths in *The Feminization of American Culture* to show the damaging effects sentimentalism and domesticity had on American women in the nineteenth century, citing its patriarchal nature and the limitations it placed on women. Moreover, we have evidence in the form of literature written by nineteenth-century women that illustrates these negative effects. It is clear in the work of writers like Phoebe Cary, who was immersed in nineteenth-century culture, that women's sentimental poetry did not represent a "liberation of primitive literary energies" for all female writers. Cary's parodies reveal the limitations and expectations placed on women and perpetuated by sentimental literature. While it may be the case that some women felt empowered to speak out with the voice afforded to them by sentimentalism, Cary quite obviously found that voice inadequate. Her parodies offer more alternative roles and emotions for women than those permitted by domesticity and sentimentalism, which so many women found constricting. Cary's work represents women in their plurality – unhappy, shallow, tired, hungry, sensual. Furthermore, by crafting these parodies and placing them alongside her sentimental writing, she extends this propensity for plurality to herself. Cary asserts that she is not merely a "woman of sentiment" but a smart, funny, skilled, and fully-realized woman of agency.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: "Samuel Brown" by Phoebe Cary

It was many and many a year ago,
In a dwelling down in town,
That a fellow there lived whom you may know,
By the name of Samuel Brown;
And this fellow he lived with no other thought
Than to our house to come down.

I was a child, and he was a child,
In that dwelling down in town,
But we loved with a love that was more than love,
I and my Samuel Brown, —
With a love that the ladies coveted,
Me and Samuel Brown.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
To that dwelling down in town,
A girl came out of her carriage, courting
My beautiful Samuel Brown;
So that her high-bred kinsman came
And bore away Samuel Brown,
And shut him up in a dwelling-house,
In a street quite up in town.

The ladies not half so happy up there,
Went envying me and Brown;
Yes! that was the reason, (as all men know,
In this dwelling down in town,)
That the girl came out of the carriage by night,
Coquetting and getting my Samuel Brown.

But our love is more artful by far than the love
Of those who are older than we, —
Of many far wiser than we, —
And neither the girls that are living above,
Nor the girls that are down in town,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Samuel Brown.

For the morn never shines without bringing me lines
From my beautiful Samuel Brown;
And the night 's never dark, but I sit in the park
With my beautiful Samuel Brown.

And often by day, I walk down in Broadway,
With my darling, my darling, my life and my stay,
To our dwelling down in town,
To our house in the street down town.

Appendix B: "A Psalm of Life" by Phoebe Cary

What the Heart of the Young Woman Said to the Old Maid.

Tell me not, in idle jingle,
Marriage is an empty dream,
For the girl is dead that's single,
And things are not what they seem.

Married life is real, earnest;
Single blessedness a fib;
Taken from man, to man returnest,
Has been spoken of the rib.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Nearer brings the wedding-day.

Life is long, and youth is fleeting,
And our hearts, if there we search,
Still like steady drums are beating
Anxious marches to the church.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a woman, be a wife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act, —act in the living Present:
Heart within, and MAN ahead!

Lives of married folks remind us
We can live our lives as well,
And, departing, leave behind us
Such examples as will tell; —

Such examples, that another,

Sailing far from Hymen's port,
A forlorn, unmarried brother,
Seeing, shall take heart, and court.

Let us then be up and doing,
With the heart and head begin;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor, and to win!

Appendix C: "The City Life" by Phoebe Cary

How shall I know thee in that sphere that keeps
The country youth that to the city goes,
When all of thee, that change can wither, sleeps
And perished among your cast-off clothes?

For I shall feel the sting of ceaseless pain,
If there I meet they one-horse carriage not;
Nor see the hat I love, nor ride again,
When thou art driving on a gentle trot.

Wilt thou not for me in the city seek,
And turn to note each passing shawl and gown?
You used to come and see me once a week, –
Shall I be banished from your thought in town?

Is that great street I don't know how to find,
In the resplendence of that glorious sphere,
And larger movements of the unfettered mind,
Wilt thou forget the love that joined us here?

The love that lived through all the simple past,
And meekly with my country training bore,
And deeper grew, and tenderer to the last,
Shall it expire in town and be no more?

A happier lot than mine, and greater praise,
Await thee there; for thou, with skill and tact,
Hast learnt the wisdom of the world's just ways,
And dressesest well, and knowest how to act.

For me, the country place in which I dwell

Has made me one of a proscribed band;
And work hath left its scar – that fire of hell
Has left its frightful scar upon mt hand.

Yet though thou wearest the glory of the town,
Wilt thou not keep the same beloved name,
The same black-satin vest, and morning-gown,
Lovelier in New York city, yet the same?

Shalt thou not teach me, in that grander home,
The wisdom that I learned so ill in this, –
The wisdom which is fine, – till I become
Thy fit companion in that place of bliss?

Appendix D: "Nearer Home" by Phoebe Cary

One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er;
I am nearer home to-day
Than I ever have been before;

Nearer my Father's house,
Where the many mansions be;
Nearer the great white throne,
Nearer the crystal sea;

Nearer the bound of life,
Where we lay our burdens down;
Nearer leaving the cross,
Nearer gaining the crown!

But lying darkly between,
Winding down through the night,
Is the silent, unknown stream,
That leads at last to the light.

Closer and closer my steps
Come to the dread abysm:
Closer Death to my lips
Presses the awful chrism.

Oh, if my mortal feet
Have almost gained the brink;
If it be I am nearer home
Even to-day than I think;

Father, perfect my trust;
Let my spirit feel in death,
That her feet are firmly set
On the rock of a living faith!

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