

CHAPTER ONE

BEFORE 1880, THROUGH EXCUSES ONLY

She is in the swim, but not of it.

—*Journalist* magazine

In 1890, only 4 percent of American journalists were women, and percentages in other writing fields were even lower. Those few who made a serious commitment to writing found their course severely constrained—by their education, family responsibilities, social codes, and isolation from other writers. Because of these limited freedoms and connections, American women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wrote by relying on some form of justification or rationalization, which varied with the decades, and they usually wrote professionally for only part of their adulthood. Cast in the insubstantial role of Non-Writer, a subset of the care-giving Woman, these writers were meant to address only women readers on narrowly defined women's topics such as homemaking while the genres and pronouncements of male Writers were shaping American intellectual culture. Although their choices were few, for women working within a patriarchal system without supportive networks or groups, these excuses and restrictive definitions did provide some space for writing.

DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

In the colonial period, women's labor was frequently needed, in towns and certainly on the frontier, and it provided their means of securing a living when

left without father or husband. Some better educated single women and widows worked in journalism—writing, editing, printing, and distributing newspapers while also taking on contract printing jobs. Elizabeth Glover of Cambridge, whose husband, the Reverend Jose Glover, died on the boat to America, operated the first printing press in North America (Marzolf 2). She supported her five children by printing colonial pamphlets and bulletins until she married Harvard's president, Henry Dunster, in 1641. The first reason or justification that could propel American women to authorship was this necessity to earn a living when left without a male provider, an acceptable excuse that enabled a few white middle-class women to write and publish both political and literary pieces.

Ann Smith Franklin, widow of Benjamin Franklin's brother James who had been publisher of Boston's *New England Courant*, inherited his printing business in 1735 when his death left her without other means of supporting her children, and she ran the newspaper for thirteen years aided by her daughters Elizabeth and Mary. In 1736, she also became official printer for the Rhode Island General Assembly, issuing 500 copies of its *Acts and Laws* in 1745, a folio volume of more than 300 pages. She also printed almanacs, religious tracts, and local literary efforts, along with her own almanacs published under her husband's pseudonym of "Poor Robin." She continued working with her son James Jr., who finished his apprenticeship with Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia and returned to Newport in 1748. In 1762, when her son died, she took over his newspaper, the *Newport Mercury*, and assumed sole control of the printing business, running both until her death the following year.

Anne Catherine Hoof Green, who bore fourteen children, took over her husband Jonas's newspaper and printing business at his death in 1767, aided by two of her sons. She continued his *Maryland Gazette*, the only newspaper in Maryland, without a break and regained her husband's contract as official colony printer. An important chronicle of pre-Revolutionary fervor, her paper published news of colonial reaction to the Townsend Act and accounts of the Boston Tea Party as well as John Dickinson's *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer*, a series of tracts against British taxation policy that stirred opposition to Parliament, both in the colonies and in England.

Clementina Rind, whose husband had been Jonas Green's partner on the *Maryland Gazette*, took over his *Virginia Gazette* at his death in 1773. She expanded his regular fare of reports on foreign and domestic politics, shipping news, and advertisements by including essays and poems from local contributors and from London newspapers and magazines. To improve her region, she also published news of scientific developments, philanthropic efforts, and plans

for improving education, especially at the College of William and Mary. To attract and keep a female audience, she regularly included poems concerning women, news with a women's slant, and vignettes of European high society and of home life in other colonies. In 1774, she purchased a new set of types from London and began to serve, until her death later that year, as the official Virginia colony printer (James I 662–63; II 80–81; III 161–62).

For these white women who had the requisite literacy skills, writing provided a means of supporting themselves and arranging careers for sons and unmarried daughters. Shielded by this justification, they could aggressively seek private and governmental contracts for printing books and pamphlets, purchase new equipment, and run newspapers that combined political news, essays on women's issues, and literary works. Since most colonies had only one newspaper and few printing presses and since the husband had already assumed the role of printer, they might not be competing with any established businessmen and thus their efforts might appear all the more acceptable to men. But, although ambition during a family crisis was generally deemed appropriate, ongoing careers were not; women were expected to turn their operations over to adult sons or to discontinue working if they married.

Because journalism and printing could offer immediate and ongoing income, very few women ventured into other genres to earn a living. Those few who chose scholarship and textbook publishing encountered great difficulties in entering these male-dominated domains. Hannah Adams, born in Massachusetts in 1755, was perhaps the first American woman to make scholarly writing her profession, "as the last resort, to attend to my manuscript, with the faint hope that it might be printed, and afford me some little advantage," she wrote in her autobiography, a step she took after her father's bookstore failed and she had tried to support her family by weaving bobbin lace and tutoring college students (*Memoirs* 12). With poverty providing the exigency, she could pursue the love of research and writing that had begun in her childhood. Even with her acceptable justification well known, however, she encountered great difficulties when her works challenged the money-making projects of established male authors. Her second book, *A Summary History of New-England* (1799), embroiled her in a ten-year controversy when her abridgment intended for the schools, and thus as a moneymaker, conflicted with the Reverend Jedidah Morse and Elijah Parish's attempt to reach the same readers. Morse moved quickly to forestall her, an act that he defended in several derogatory tracts concerning her ambitions and writing skills. In response, she wrote an account of the conflict and sent it to many influential people, a few of whom, such as politician Josiah Quincy, offered her financial

help. In reviews of the two books published in the *Monthly Anthology* in July 1805, Reverend William Emerson, Ralph Waldo Emerson's father, praised her work for being more clear and correct and even accused Morse and Parish of copying some of her information.

Reviewing this case in a 1993 article, literary scholar Michael W. Vella criticized Adams for the contrasting tones that she adopted, but he did not consider the connection between her public declarations and a woman writer's need to position herself as a Non-Writer seeking income during a crisis. In Adams's letters to politicians and lawyers concerning this case, Vella finds "a false self-effacement, a posturing of a helpless female, something of a martyr." To provide an example, he notes her tabulation of the difficulties she faced: "my being entirely destitute of pecuniary recourse, my retired situation, ignorance of the world, incapability of conducting business myself, and the want of friends who were able and willing to assist me." Vella judges such declarations as hypocritical since Adams pursued her rights as an author aggressively and could speak persuasively, as she did privately to her lawyers about injustices wrought against women: "To the curiosity of the idle, and the envy of the malicious their sex affords a peculiar excitement; arraigned not merely as writers, but as women, their characters, their conduct, even their personal endowments become the objects of severe inquisition" (30–32). Adams's "posturing," which Vella labels as a "fundamental ambiguity" in her character, was perhaps her only means of negotiating her way through a world in which frank public declarations of her strengths and rights would have left her without the support she needed, support that would only be accorded to the meek female Non-Writer. After succeeding at her quest to gain recognition for her talents and financial needs, Adams next published *The Truth and Excellence of the Christian Religion Exhibited* (1804) and then *History of the Jews* (1812), choosing the latter subject because fewer of her contemporaries had written on Judaism and thus it offered the chance for greater profit with less opposition.

During the colonial period, women also wrote poetry and fiction although generally as a private commitment and not as a means of earning a living. Since poetry could offer little hope of profit, it seemed especially immodest and unwomanly to seek its publication beyond broadsheets aimed for ladies' clubs or recital hours. Anne Bradstreet's brother-in-law secretly published her poetry in London in 1650 under the immodest title of *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*, surprising and shaming her, as she recorded in a poem printed in a second edition of her work, *Several Poems Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning, Full of Delight* (1678):

At thy return my blushing was not small,
 My rambling brat (in print) should mother call,
 I cast thee by as one unfit for light,
 Thy Visage was so irksome in my sight.

("The Author to Her Book" 7–10)

Although she continued to revise her poems and choose others for publication, this second edition did not appear until six years after her death. Like Bradstreet, Ann Eliza Bleecker (1752–1783) showed her work to only her family and friends. Her poems and stories, on idyllic rural life as well as the atrocities of the French and Indian wars, were sent after her death to *New-York Magazine* by her daughter Margaretta V. Faugeres, who also published *Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker* in 1793.

Other writers had more contact with the larger public, but not ongoing careers. Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton (1759–1846) and Judith Sargent Murray (1751–1820), for example, secured magazine publication for their poems and essays, but not as a means of financial independence. By hiding her identity and thus maintaining her modesty through the pseudonyms "Constantia" and "Philenia," Morton contributed her poetry to the column "Seat of the Muses" in the monthly *Massachusetts Magazine*. She also published three longer poems, on Indian life and New England patriotism. Murray, who also used the pseudonym "Constantia" to publish her poetry in the *Massachusetts Magazine*, wrote a column, "The Gleaner," for that magazine from 1792 to 1794 for which, like Addison and Steele in *The Spectator*, she created various characters and anecdotes to discuss contemporary education, politics, and manners. Two of Murray's plays were performed in Boston at the Federal Street Theatre in 1795 and 1796—her play *The Medium*, published as *Virtue Triumphant*, was the first to be written and performed in America.

In the eighteenth century, publication occurred even more rarely for an African American woman. Lucy Terry of Deerfield, Massachusetts, wrote many poems, but the first publication of her work did not occur until 1895, seventy-four years after her death, when her "Bars Fight, August 28, 1746," a poem about a successful Indian raid, appeared in a history of Deerfield (Stetson 3). Having been sold from a slave ship in Boston at age eight, Phillis Wheatley began writing poetry at age fourteen; her *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* was published in England in 1773, where she had been sent to improve her health. A poem published in 1776, dedicated to George Washington, brought her further acclaim but, like Morton and Murray, she never secured financial independence through writing. Her attempts to publish a second volume of her poetry in America met with failure (Robinson 98).

IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the colonial period, the boundaries were firmly inscribed: women could acceptably seek publication to solve financial problems—if their efforts did not rob any men of their livings and if they maintained a self-effacing presence. The early nineteenth century would bring changes not in these definitions but in the opportunities available to the few women attempting to work within these constraints. After 1820, a better possibility of earning a living by literary production and scholarship, for both men and women, resulted from new methods of producing and selling writing. Before then, publishing houses were undercapitalized, unstable businesses with no efficient means of distribution; they generally sold books in a small area, with publicity coming from short reviews in newspapers. Since books from England could be reprinted without copyright infringement, publishers had little incentive to contract with native authors. However, during the 1800s, developments in press technology and paper production, better organization of booksellers, and more sophisticated publicity techniques combined with a drastic rise in literacy rates among men and women to greatly increase opportunities for American writers. In 1820, book sales in the United States totaled \$2.5 million; by 1850, the figure rose to \$12.5 million (Wroth and Silver 123). In 1891, the passage of the Chace Act extended copyright protection to foreign authors, taking away the monetary incentive for privileging foreign works. As magazine and book publishing developed, this expanded industry involved small but growing numbers of women, who primarily addressed the expanding female audience. As the century progressed, new educational opportunities for women were leading to growing numbers of readers to buy books. By 1850, more than 50 percent of white women could read and write; by 1880, one-third of African American women were receiving some elementary and secondary training. In New England, where settled towns made for the greatest number of opportunities, more than 75 percent of girls between the ages of five and nineteen were in school by the 1860s (*Historical Statistics* 370; Coultrap-McQuin 22; Kelley 8–9).

Between 1820 and 1850, a few popular authors such as Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Caroline Howard Gilman, Lydia Howard Huntley Sigourney, and Maria McIntosh began making their livings from writing prose and poetry for the enlarging group of readers, with their frequent short productions appearing in periodicals, newspapers, and books. As critic Susan Coultrap-McQuin has noted, this choice was generally available only to white, middle-class women, most often from New England (21). Sisters Alice Cary and Phoebe

Cary earned enough from newspaper, magazine, and book publication of their poetry to move from Ohio to New York in 1850 and “by 1856, through stringent economies buttressed by their literary productions, the sisters had earned enough money to afford a pleasant house on 20th Street” (E. James 1: 296). When David Child’s earnings from his Boston newspaper dwindled, his wife Lydia Maria Child published a guide on homemaking, *The Frugal Housewife* (1829), which went through seven editions by 1832, when it was renamed *The American Frugal Housewife* for distribution in England and Germany. Maria McIntosh, having sold her Georgia property after her mother’s death and moved to New York to live with a half brother, wrote children’s stories that were gathered into a volume issued in America and England. Her first novel, *Conquest and Self-Conquest* (1839), sold 100,000 copies. Susan Warner’s novel *The Wide, Wide World* (1851) was the first book by an American to achieve a million sales. She began the novel when her father’s failing law practice necessitated another source of family income.

As they strove to achieve success, these writers frequently reminded readers of their financial necessities, and thus of their excuse or justification for writing and publishing. Editor of the very successful *Godey’s Lady’s Book* Sara Josepha Hale, left penniless with four children when her husband died, maintained that she engaged in literary and editorial work “foreign to the usual character and occupations of her sex” only to “obtain the means of supporting and educating her children in some measure as their father would have done” (Douglas 93). Emma Dorothy Eliza Nevitte (who wrote as Mrs. E.D.E.N.) Southworth entered the writing profession only after her husband deserted her and refused to support their three children; she also frequently reminded her readers and publishers that she had entered the literary arena only out of necessity.

Using financial exigency as a form of protection and legitimacy, these few women writers of the nineteenth century began to occupy an accepted place in society, as modest souls supporting themselves and their families, as “literary domestics,” a label suggested by literary scholar Mary Kelley in *Private Woman, Public Stage*. Etiquette book writers even formulated practical and specific rules for their appropriate conduct and for conduct toward them. Eliza Leslie, who at sixteen had opened a boarding house with her mother to meet the expenses of a large family, authored one of the earliest cookbooks by an American, *Seventy-five Receipts for Pastry, Cakes and Sweetmeats* (1827), as well as books for children, stories for women’s magazines, and etiquette books. Her *The Behaviour Book: A Manual for Ladies* (1853) describes common activities in the lady’s life and rules thereof: for tea visitors, introductions,

conduct on the street, shopping, traveling, conversation, and decorum in church—and for socializing with literary women and joining their ranks. In “Conduct to Literary Women,” she provides suggestions for visits to the serious working writer, attempting valiantly to meet her deadlines and earn her living while also finding time to entertain friends and help neighbors. While making her subject seem like a normal member of the community, Leslie also emphasizes the writer’s dedication and asks readers to treat this hard worker with respect. For visits and for larger parties, she suggests several rules: don’t ask the writer’s opinions of contemporary and thus competing writers; don’t expect her to divulge her research sources or the real identities of her characters; don’t ask to borrow copies of her books since publishers do not provide her with many; don’t make a pun on “littery” if her desk is messy; don’t discuss her income; at large gatherings don’t ask her to entertain your children, pit her against other writers, or introduce her to every dull guest; and speak to her only in private about her work and then do so thoughtfully: “Take care not to speak of her first work as being her best; for if it is really so, she must have been retrograding from that time; a falling off that she will not like to hear of” (256). Leslie also cautions against expecting busy writers to critique manuscripts since “the least talented of the numerous females pretending to authorship, are generally the most conceited and the most obtrusive” (269); usually the established author’s emendations just give offense. In her characterizations and advice, Leslie aims to protect her colleagues from censure: writers are kind and generous—“normal”—women who should be welcomed in society; they should not be stereotyped or abused because of their occupation, one they took up only out of necessity.

In a chapter on “Suggestions to Inexperienced Authors,” Leslie gives advice for young women who might try to become writers if a financial exigency should arise. She surveys the serious work ahead and offers specific advice on choosing subject matter, marketing manuscripts, managing correspondence, and handling proof-sheets. She stresses the long hours of labor, especially in the revision stage, made more taxing by women’s poor preparation: “Few women can write well enough for publication, without going twice over the subject; first in what is called the rough copy, and then making a fair copy with all the original errors corrected, and all proper alterations inserted” (280). In this chapter, Leslie presents new writers, like those with established careers, as women who should be respected for supporting themselves and their families through such a difficult means.

IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY:
THE "TRUE WOMAN" AS WRITER

By 1853, when Eliza Leslie was attempting to increase social acceptance of writing as a means of earning a living, changes in American business and culture had begun to obviate against this choice. As industrialization brought a higher standard of living to the middle and upper classes, it created a separate world of professional work. After 1830, commercial farming began replacing family farming. Manufacture of wool moved from the home to the factory, with management jobs developing there for middle-class men and line jobs for lower-class men and women. Physicians replaced midwives; engineers replaced or supervised mechanics. Men worked as clerks, bookkeepers, lawyers, and bankers in growing cities.

As more families moved to urban centers where work occurred in the male-dominated world of offices, as standards of living rose, and as time-saving household inventions altered home life, most middle-class women were freed from the need to work outside the home or to toil so diligently inside it. They thus began to lose their identity as midwives, home weavers, or endlessly busy mothers, and gradually a new role, a new reason for being, emerged: the ideal of the lady. In this changing climate, women found a new identity and importance, not as laborers but as moral beacons, overseers of a family and of society's best values, an antidote to the growing power of big-city capitalism. Women created the attractive home space out of which public men and their sons could operate, one where happiness and prosperity served as both reward and emblem of the economic competition for success.

After 1850, therefore, women writers had to have some other justification, besides economic necessity, since even women in financial difficulties were expected to adhere to this image of the true woman, demonstrating the appropriate virtues of piety, purity, submission, and domesticity (Welter 152). In this climate, women's writing took on a new power as reinforcement of the mythology of the lady: writing could raise the moral standards of women and help them become truth's embodiment; it could improve their housework and child rearing; and it could greatly expand the influence of all their domestic virtues. Like women in earlier decades who frequently reminded the public of their financial crises, these writers often emphasized their moral calling. Novelist Sarah Edgerton Mayo wrote that she wished to accomplish in her writing "the same amount of good to one individual that I received from a single sermon" (Douglas 109). Harriet Beecher Stowe claimed that she served as an

“instrument” of God: He had written *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* to improve public morality. Thus, after 1850, the justification for women’s writing evolved from economic self-preservation to social and moral didacticism. With this redefinition, the appropriate topic for women’s writing narrowed to moral betterment and the appropriate audience narrowed to other women seeking that betterment (Douglas 80–117).

At the beginning of their careers, many women made their domestic and moral allegiances clear by publishing advice for a happy, well-ordered home. As author Thomas Wentworth Higginson commented, “[I]t seemed to be held necessary for American women to work their passage into literature by first compiling a cookery-book” (Cone 113). Jane Cunningham Croly (“Jennie June”), for example, began with *Jennie June’s American Cookery Book* in 1866. While publicly establishing a moral purpose, these domestic projects could provide a good living: Marion Harland’s *Common Sense in the Household: A Manual of Practical Housewifery* (1871), one of her twenty-five books concerned with home life, became a best seller; the various translations of Lydia Maria Child’s *The Frugal Housewife* went through thirty-five editions.

Another women’s genre, the sentimental domestic novel, dominated popular publishing from the 1850s to the 1880s, pressing upon women their duty to be the moral corrective of capitalism. As historian Ann Douglas notes in *The Feminization of American Culture*, these stories often concerned heroines who were morally strong yet physically dependent and weak: they would sacrifice all for the family and home, but they were ultimately too delicate and saintly to thrive without protection in this cruel world. Susan Warner claimed to have written *The Wide, Wide World* (1851), one of the most popular of these novels, “on her knees” in supplication to God (Douglas 109). In this story, the heroine Ellen is victimized by her father’s economic woes and his neglect of wife and family. When he finally takes her severely ill mother to Europe for a rest cure, he leaves Ellen with a cruel aunt, with whom she must remain after both her parents die abroad. Then for several years she must work as a servant for her cruel relatives in Scotland. Through these trials, she remains steadfast and kind—a separate being who deserves protection from the capitalist world and who is morally superior to it. And she is finally rewarded for her virtues: by marrying a minister’s son from home who will honor her and care for her. Maria Cummins’s *The Lamplighter*, published in 1854, concerns little Gerty, an orphan mistreated by her foster mother but rescued by a kindly lamplighter, aptly named Trueman Flint, and then taught by a wealthy blind woman, Emily Graham. When her boyfriend Willie goes abroad, she spends her life doing good for others, “weeping at sick beds and funerals.” By the novel’s end, Gerty

has found her long-lost father, who turns out to be Emily's stepbrother, and she is reunited with Willie in a cemetery where both are mourning over lost friends: both men vow to protect her and enable her to help others. Such novels create a vision of a purer world, one in which benign power and justice radiate out from the "true woman," who offers fine values for the home and family and who thus, in her small world, can perhaps ameliorate the worst effects of capitalism.

Like Warner and Cummins, Harriet Beecher Stowe also gained popularity with tales of women's limited but saintly influence. In *My Wife and I* (1861) and *We and Our Neighbors* (1873), her heroine Eva van Arsdel is worshipped by her husband for her purity and refined appearance. Through her noble thinking and example, she returns lost animals, redeems drunkards, and generally improves the character of those around her. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, pure women and children obviate against the cruel world of men: Mrs. Shelby detains the slave trackers, Eliza flees with young Harry, Eva protects Uncle Tom, and Miss Ophelia raises Topsy. In their love and sacrifice, these heroines temporarily relocate power from the marketplace to the home and church and offer a vision of woman as an assuager of man's cruelest acts and institutions (Tompkins).

While creating a vision of moral womanhood, many short stories and novels also explicitly concentrated on the evils of men that necessitated this role for women—their message is not to turn against men but to become their gentle reformers. Lydia Huntley Sigourney's 1848 pro-temperance collection of stories and poems, *Water-Drops*, depicts the drunken brutality that was often unleashed against women. In the preface, she speaks of the need to redeem men through kindly "home-influences" and thus to rescue the family from violence:

Are the female sex fully aware of their duties in this matter? Too many of them have, indeed, felt the miseries of the desecrated fireside, and the transformation of the natural protector of themselves and their children into a frenzied foe. Peopled prisons, and blood upon the hearth-stone, have brought into prominence before the public eye, that fearful intemperance from which such sufferings flow.

It has been repeatedly asked, if females are prepared to render all the aid in their power for the suppression of a crime which peculiarly threatens their own sacred interests. What is the nature of the power that they may command? Does it not consist principally in home-influences? (iii–iv)

In Fanny Fern's "The Widow's Trials," a man refuses to offer a job at his newspaper to his widowed niece ("Can't afford to pay contributors, specially new beginners. Don't think you have any talent that way, either. Better take in

sewing, or something.”) and then brags about her and steals her work for publication in his newspaper when she succeeds without his help (*Fern Leaves* 20). The niece forgives him, however, and prays that he can learn to inject a concern for honesty and family into his capitalistic enterprises. Since almost all the readers of these redemption stories were women, what they provided was an opportunity for women to understand and even valorize their own situations—not for men to examine their treacheries and reform themselves.

The few published novels by African American women in the late nineteenth century also concentrated on women’s necessity to be strong, moral forces in a world that they could not transform. These writers, however, rarely give their characters an easy or happy ending (Foster 29; Watson 9). In *Our Nig; or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859), the first novel known to be published by an African American, Harriet E. Wilson’s Frado is abandoned by her white mother after the death of her black father. Frado works as an indentured servant: she is treated hatefully by Mrs. Bellmont and her cruel daughter Mary, but protected and given religious instruction by the son Jack and his Aunt Abby. When Frado’s indenture, a torture she bore with kindness, is finally over, she is too weak to work steadily. She finally marries, but, unlike many heroines of sentimental novels, she is abandoned by her husband and left to find her way alone. In Emma Dunham Kelly’s *Megda* (1891), the main character becomes isolated from her high school friends and the Reverend Stanley because of her lack of religious faith. When her rival for the Reverend’s affections, Ethel Lawton, dies on the night before their wedding, Megda is inspired by her rival’s calm acceptance of death and begins a life of Christian teaching. Four years later she marries Stanley but at the end of the novel they cannot ease the suffering of their friend Maude, who has drifted through life seeking ease and entertainment and who meets death in a state of terror. They agree to raise Maude’s child, but they see that Christianity and their good intentions cannot save black women in an America that does not offer them a clear social purpose and moral stature.

As domestic stories and novels became popular in the second half of the nineteenth century, many women’s magazines regularly published serialized sections of the novels as well as shorter instructional fiction and moralistic poetry. One of the first and most successful of these magazines was *Godey’s Lady’s Book* of Philadelphia, publishing fiction and poetry along with articles on fashion, household furnishings, and domestic ideals. Sara Josepha Hale served as editor from 1837 to 1877, when she was eighty-eight (Marzolf 12). With its large audience of women who sought moral instruction and entertainment, *Godey’s* easily outdistanced most of the magazines for men: in 1860

it claimed 150,000 subscribers to *Harper's* 110,000 (Mott, *A History of American Magazines* 11). Its competitors, like *Patterson's* and *Graham's*, also enjoyed a wide readership. After the Civil War, magazines for African American women also combined short fiction with household advice: *Our Women and Children* began publication in Louisville in 1888 with support from local Baptist preachers to offer instructive stories and articles on education, temperance, and the home; *Ringwood's Afro-American Journal of Fashion*, published in Cleveland beginning in 1892, included love stories along with fashion advice (Bullock 167–69).

Like household manuals and domestic novels, women's magazines celebrated women in the home. Edward A. Bok, editor of the best-selling *Ladies' Home Journal* from 1889 to 1919, looked for fiction that was not overly realistic and that portrayed women as noble creatures who deserved protection. He also included articles on homemaking and child care and many antisuffrage pieces. In editorials, he opposed women's clubs, especially if they were not intended to promote philanthropy, since they would draw women out of their homes and away from their true calling as mothers. He began by opposing all women's employment, but by 1911 his articles featured a few positions, such as minister's assistant and social worker, for which women, as moral beacons and nurturers, might be suited.

Bok asserted his own editorial control, but he did feel that the goal of forming women into steadfast wives and mothers could be furthered by having women address each other in the magazine. He provided opportunities for women to write professionally but only on prescribed topics: Jane Addams wrote on social welfare issues but not suffrage; Esther Lape, one of the first professors at Barnard, wrote on immigration and the Americanization of foreigners, but not on women's education. Inspirational fiction by Kate Douglas Wiggin, Jean Webster, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and Mary E. Wilkins also appeared regularly. Bok's staff included Isabel A. Mallon, who as Ruth Ashmore answered letters and dispensed advice in "Side Talks with Girls," extending a column that Bok began himself, as well as Margaret Bottome, who addressed the spiritual needs of older women in "Heart to Heart Talks." Bok introduced each writer as a courageous crusader who chose to temporarily enter the working world, or preferably to send in writing from home, only for the purpose of extending the morality of other women (Bok 166–80; Steinberg 34–74).

African American women's magazines offered women the opportunity to write—within the acceptable genres. For *Our Women and Children*, for example, Baptist minister and editor William J. Simmons secured school administrator

Mary Virginia Cook as education editor and Greek teacher Ione E. Wood as temperance editor; Ida B. Wells-Barnett, who was then teaching in Memphis, was made editor of the home department but was discouraged from submitting any pieces on racial injustice (Bullock 168).

As in book and magazine writing, women entered newspaper reporting ostensibly to help other women fulfill their God-given moral roles while also providing harmless entertainment that could enliven days spent at home. Since nineteenth-century newspapers primarily reached an audience of men, they rarely had women's pages or sections, but most did include some women's features, society news, and advice columns "with the female slant." A few women found jobs in general reporting: during the Spanish-American War of 1898, Anna Benjamin worked as a war reporter for *Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, and she next covered the Philippine insurrection and the political situation in Japan, China, and Russia. But writing "bright articles, travel impressions or essays on society and manners" that would entertain and improve women readers was the only common means of entering daily journalism (Marzolf 19). Positions were most often part-time and free-lance because newspapers did not need full-time employees for such limited work. Journalism historian Frederic Hudson wrote in 1873 that "These female journalists, pure and bright, are the growth of the last fifteen years in America. They are now to be seen everywhere—in every large city where influential papers are printed" (504). In his choice of "pure and bright" as descriptive adjectives, words he would never have used to describe the cynical newspaperman, Hudson recognized that a woman in journalism was expected to be a separate entity, a moral beacon and sentimentalist.

As they dealt with the narrow confines of their assigned work, these few women reporters found themselves separated from the rest of the staff—in professional purpose, status, and physical space. The trade magazine *Journalist* reported in a January 1889 issue about women in the profession: "[H]er sex makes her solitary . . . her existence is generously tolerated rather than desired, and the most she knows of the satisfaction of being wanted anywhere is the consciousness of not being wanted" (13). The magazine even viewed the struggling young woman writer as being woefully separate from the social world given her to report: "She is in the swim, but not of it, and, recording the flops and flounders of the big fish, she in time descends to a state of mental and moral petrification that is simply awful" (13). In this issue ostensibly focusing on women's achievements, a poem by newspaperman Sam Wilkeson Wistrom illustrated, through a phallic joke, the common belief that women could never truly be journalists:

Why flatter the ladies to enter the field
 Of tripod, brain, muscle and pen?
 No matter how potent a Dixon they wield,
 They'll never make "newspaper men."

Such a poem reflects the definition of Writer that kept women journalists within the confines of moral justifications and a few acceptable genres, in enclosed circles apart from the real writing domain, of "newspaper men."

Although women generally worked part-time or only until they married, some did secure full careers within the appropriate journalistic genres for women. Jane Cunningham Croly ("Jennie June") experienced success by producing a ladies' column for several newspapers, with articles on clothes, parties, and beauty as well as marriage and childcare, which the New York *Dispatch* began syndicating in 1859. In 1856, she married David Goodman Croly, on the *Herald* staff, and three years later they bought and began publishing the *Rockford* (Illinois) *Daily News* where she wrote a column called "Gossip With and For Ladies." In 1860, the Crollys returned to New York to begin working for the *World*: that year Jane also helped found *Demorest's Illustrated Magazine of Fashions*, which she edited for twenty-seven years while still writing on fashion, food, and home decoration for New York newspapers. She was one of the first women to teach college-level journalism, at New Rutgers Institute for Young Ladies, opened by Columbia University.

While most women didn't move beyond the accepted moralistic and entertainment genres, some managed to include realistic advice and social critique within these confines. From the genres open to women, Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer chose advice-column writing, creating the persona of Dorothy Dix, a world-wise moralist who responded to readers' individual needs. Raised in rural poverty on the Tennessee/Kentucky border, she left a bleak home life by marrying her stepmother's brother, but he was financially unstable for all the years of their marriage. After meeting Eliza Jane Poitevent Nicholson, who became publisher of the New Orleans *Picayune* after her husband's death, Gilmer moved to New Orleans and began writing birth and death notices, recipes, and then in 1895 a Sunday column as Dorothy Dix. One of her early columns realistically addressed options available to single women:

It is foolish for girls to think that they have the same chance of marrying that their mothers and grandmothers had. Now, for the girl who is sitting around waiting for some man to come along and marry her, it is a catastrophe to be passed by. She becomes the sour and disgruntled old maid, eating the bitter bread of dependence, the fringe on some family that

doesn't want her. Or else she has to take any sort of a poor stick of a man as a prop to lean upon. . . . Learn a trade girls. Being able to make a living sets you free. Economic independence is the only independence in the world. (Rose D-9)

Her format rapidly developed into responses to letters that poured in. Besides offering traditional advice on courtship, child rearing, and family conflicts, she forthrightly advised soldiers not to marry before they left their hometowns, suggested that women obtain "trial divorces" from violent spouses who could not be reformed, and urged wives to make their own choices throughout their married lives. When Gilmer's popularity grew, William Randolph Hearst invited her to work for him at his New York *Journal*, but after she moved there she soon returned to New Orleans to write a syndicated column until 1950, a year before her death.

Although most women journalists wrote on marriage, home management, and childcare, a few had the opportunity to investigate larger social issues, such as abortion and temperance, that seemed clearly connected to family morality and social reform. Like Dorothy Dix, they used the general umbrella of moral suasion to defend their activism. Jane G. Swisshelm began working in the Senate press gallery in 1850, but she did not stay there long because she caused a scandal by reporting that Daniel Webster, who was then arguing for the strict enforcement of laws concerning the return of runaway slaves, had fathered a mulatto family. This story appeared first in her Pittsburgh *Sunday Visitor*, which she started as a Liberty Party organ in 1848 and wrote for until 1857 when she bought the St. Cloud *Democrat*, another platform for her abolitionist views. She launched the *Reconstructionist* in Washington in 1865 to oppose President Johnson's abandonment of civil rights priorities.

Like Swisshelm, other women founded specialized newspapers to provide a site for their crusades, with their key moral issues changing along with readers' interests and the political climate. As they pursued more rigorous critiques of the status quo, however, they lost readers and encountered public criticism even though they attempted to rely on the familiar cloak of woman as moral reformer. In 1841, Lydia Maria Child had to leave her editorial post at *Juvenile Miscellany*, one of the first children's magazines, because subscriptions dropped after she published an essay against slavery, "Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans," in William Lloyd Garrison's *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. Child claimed publicly that she had written the abolitionist piece only because a wrong had to be righted for the future of all children, but her decision alienated her from her editors and usual audience. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony began their 1868–1869 *Revolution* to protest the

Fourteenth Amendment, the first specific mention in the Constitution of voting as a male prerogative, but soon they also discussed problems of working women, jury service for women, and divorce laws. Stanton and Anthony sent out ten thousand copies of the first issue, but circulation of this increasingly radical journal quickly fell to between two thousand and three thousand. Clara Bewick Colby, valedictorian of the first class of women at the University of Wisconsin, published the *Woman's Tribune* from 1883 to 1909, to chronicle the events of the suffrage movement, but she soon added poetry and fiction to gain a wider audience and stay in business. Her more traditional women's magazine had 12,900 subscribers in 1891 (Marzolf 233). Although losing readership, jobs, and public stature could be painful, for some writers the penalty for activism went much further. Ida B. Wells-Barnett used her salary as a teacher to buy a half interest in the *Memphis Free Speech and Headlight*; she then bought out her partner so that she could write freely about inequality of education, the treatment of minorities by social service agencies, and the opportunities for black men and women in the West. In May 1882, when her paper revealed the identities of members of a Memphis lynch mob, her office and printing press were burned. She then went to New York where she wrote for the *New York Age* and continued her campaign against lynching.

To attempt to gain public acceptance as morality's humble servants and fend off personal attacks, many women hid their own names and instead chose first names or alliterative double names as pseudonyms; they thus indicated that they did not seek fame but just an opportunity to deliver right thinking through an anonymous good-woman's voice. Ida B. Wells-Barnett wrote as "Iola" for newspapers and magazines in Ohio, New York, and Chicago. Sarah Jane Lippincott Clark wrote as "Grace Greenwood" for the *Home Journal*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Saturday Gazette*, and *National Press*. Emily P. Edson Briggs, as "Olivia," became a successful Washington reporter. Mary Abigail Dodge frequently denied that she was "Gail Hamilton," a name she had formed from her middle name and her hometown when she began to write for two abolitionist journals, Washington's *National Era* and Boston's *Congregationalist*.

Since the only publicly declared aim of these writers and editors was to improve other women and to increase public morality, most of them eschewed, whether disingenuously or not, any trappings of a literary career. They tried to efface themselves, to avoid fame and notoriety, because they knew the dangers inherent in being publicly recognized and discussed. When poet Caroline Howard's work appeared in a newspaper without her permission, she wanted it known that she had not sought the fame of publication, a naturally male attribute like wearing pants: "When I learned that my verses

had been surreptitiously printed in a newspaper, I wept bitterly, and was as alarmed as if I had been detected in men's apparel" (James I 110). Mary Clemmer Ames, pressed for funds during her marriage and divorced in 1874, worked for papers in Utica, New York, and Springfield, Massachusetts, and then began writing a "Woman's Letter from Washington" for the *Independent*, an influential New York weekly. Only a few weeks after she took this job, she declared in print that fame did not appeal to a virtuous woman like herself: "That fame is a curse which soils the loveliness of the womanly name by thrusting it into the grimy highway, where it is wondered at, sneered at, lied about, by the vulgar, the worldly, and the wicked." She scorned women who sought admission into the Capitol press galleries and assured her readers that she would not venture there:

Because a woman is a public correspondent it does not make it at all necessary that she as an individual should be conspicuously public—that she should run about with pencils in her mouth and pens in her ears; that she should invade the Reporters' Galleries, crowded with men; that she should go anywhere as a mere reporter where she would not be received as a lady.

Ames argued that women journalists should enter the fray of politics and writing only to improve public morality: "It is her work to exalt the standards of journalism, and in the midst of an arduous profession to preserve intact the dignity and sweetness of individual womanhood" (Beasley, *The First Women* 11).

As they spoke against fame and ambition, and even avoided naming themselves, these women were seeking the safe definition not as artist, but instead as humble and simple do-gooder, and they described their products as anonymous types of reform documents, like religious tracts, in which the doctrine, not the quality of the prose or the personality of the writer, would matter. "Mine is a story for the table and arm-chair under the reading-lamp in the living-room, and not for the library shelves," novelist Marion Harland announced in the foreword to her autobiography, while in an introductory note Fanny Fern dedicated her *Rose Clark* to the same limited uses:

When the frost curtains the windows, when the wind whistles fiercely at the key-hole, when the bright fire glows, and the tea-tray is removed, and father in his slippered feet lolls in his arm-chair; and mother with her nimble needle "makes auld claes look amaist as weel as new," and grand-mamma draws closer to the chimney-corner, and Tommy with his plate of chestnuts nestles contentedly at her feet; then let my unpretending story be read. For such an hour, for such an audience, was it written. (n.p.)

Self-effacement and disdain for their own products furthered the picture of women as anonymous moralists of little talent, as Non-Writers who could never challenge the artistic status of male Writers.

Embued in these appropriate definitions, women writers were also quick to state their limitations as logical thinkers or analysts, and thus to lessen fears that they were taking over that special province of men. Emily P. Edson Briggs, who as “Olivia” covered women’s suffrage, political meetings, inaugurations, and Congressional debates, did not hesitate to remind readers of her limited female sphere and abilities:

This article is not written with the attempt to portray that which makes Charles Sumner the central figure of the American Senate. No woman possesses the gift to explore his mind. Yet there may be those who read *The Press* who feel an interest in the material part of his nature, and who would like to know something about his every-day life—how he looks, how he appears, and the impression he makes upon the womanhood of the day. (Beasley, *The First Women* 13)

Sarah Jane Clark Lippincott, as “Grace Greenwood,” adopted the pose of a clever woman at the dinner table, reporting on the personal style of leaders and repeatedly stating her inability to judge their policies. When she began an article series on Millard Fillmore, she carefully described her work as “purely womanly”:

I will not, of course, presume to pronounce upon the political principles or executive abilities of the new President, but if I may be allowed a purely womanly observation, I would say that, in some respects, he is certainly peculiarly fitted to his new position. He will wear gracefully the honors and dignities of that high station. (Beasley, *The First Women* 15)

In 1871, she started writing a column for the *New York Times*, first during a western trip and then from Washington, claiming that she only “hovered” near the press galleries although she did watch the inauguration of Rutherford B. Hayes from there, seated with the rest of the press corps.

Although Lippincott supported herself through a long and successful career, she defined “true feminine genius” as “ever timid, doubtful and clingingly dependent; a perpetual childhood.” She admired the woman who risked the “vulgarity of unfemininity” and dared “to live up to her own capacity” in the service of a moral cause, but she advised aspiring poets to “never unsex yourself for greatness” (Solomon 37). Lippincott had learned firsthand the necessity of these contradictions. She had succeeded well at writing poetry and

articles on scenery, books, and famous people for *Home Journal* and *Godey's Lady's Book*. But, like Lydia Maria Child at *Juvenile Miscellany*, she lost her editorial position at *Godey's* in 1850 when she began freelancing as an investigative reporter for the *National Era*, an abolitionist journal.

To stem criticisms of their precarious role as moral beacon/working author, women often wrote about the anxiety of being judged as bad wives and mothers since their credibility emanated from the home. Harriet Beecher Stowe circulated an anecdote concerning her ability to give directions to a cook, tend a child, and write at the same time. In Fanny Fern's stories "A Practical Blue-Stocking" and "A Chapter on Literary Women," the surprise endings reveal that women writers can be loving homemakers, with perfect clothes, housekeeping, food, and children. In "A Practical Blue-Stocking," the husband's visiting friend imagines that he will find "inky fingers, frazzled hair, ruffled dress, and slip-shod heels have come between me and my old friend—not to mention thoughts of a disorderly house, smoky puddings, and dirty-faced children"; he is instead amazed to meet a model wife (*Fern Leaves* 100). The Colonel in "A Chapter on Literary Women" seeks a bride but not a literary woman because "I should desire my wife's thoughts and feelings to centre on me,—to be content in the little kingdom where I reign supreme,—to have the capacity to appreciate me, but not the brilliancy to outshine me, or to attract 'outsiders'" (*Fern Leaves* 176). When a female friend tricks him into courting a writer, however, he finds her bright but acquiescent: not all the tribe are "vain and ambitious female writers," he realizes, a type that even his friend would shun (*Fern Leaves* 177). Eliza Leslie includes this axiom in *The Behaviour Book*: "When in company with literary women, make no allusions to 'learned ladies' or 'blue stockings,' or express surprise that they should have any knowledge of housewifery, or needle-work, or dress" since the best writers will be humble in front of men and fully dedicated to the home (259). In fact, Leslie claims, it is more likely that posturing "authorlings and poetizers are apt to affect eccentricity" (263). The real woman writer, appropriately situated as Non-Writer within the accepted definitions of Woman, would never be slatternly or egotistical, a defense these authors created for their literary heroines that they hoped would extend to themselves.

When, for the January 1889 issue, *Journalist* sent an interviewer to the home of Louisa Knapp, who had then edited the *Ladies Home Journal* for six years, his greatest curiosity concerned her keeping of the house, and whether she was a "stern female who doubtless ignored aesthetic possibilities, was indifferent to her husband's comfort and, did genius burn, would hang the baby out of the window in his tall hat, while she wrote of impressive leaders" (2). He was