

“Such Happiness Will Smile No More for Me”: Domesticity, Women’s Writing, and Sarah J. Hale’s Editorial Career

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Introduction

During her tenure as editor of *Godey’s Lady’s Book* from 1837 to 1878, Sarah Josepha Hale presented her audience with articles on fashion, morality, and the art of domesticity, promoting what contemporary readers often interpret as a traditional vision of womanhood. Published while the ideology of separate spheres flourished, Hale’s magazine frequently reflects the notion that women, being innocent and fragile, are more suited to life in the home, whereas only men should occupy the realm of business and commerce.

As such depictions of women appear often in *Godey’s*, one could easily assume that this vision of domestic bliss is all that Hale intended to convey to her readers. Other editorial choices—such as the prominence of women’s writing in the magazine, Hale’s portrayal of writing as a career for women, and the influential role she envisions for female authors in society—suggest that her depictions of womanhood are more complex. From a business standpoint, Hale needed to maintain a stance on female issues that would be perceived as credible by both men and women, but she subtly advocates a public role for women in the arts and letters, a message that she negotiated with prevailing ideas about gender relations in the nineteenth century. Envisioning writing as a means toward financial independence, cultural influence, and personal fulfillment for women, Hale rejects the notion that individuals can find complete fulfillment within the domestic realm using the rhetoric of separate spheres to promote and lend credibility to her revolutionary views.

Sarah Josepha Hale before *Godey’s*

For Sarah Josepha Hale herself, writing became a source of both personal fulfillment and a professional income, contributing to her vision of writing as an occupation that could provide financial independence to women. As Barbara A. Bardes and Suzanne Gossett write in their article “Sarah J. Hale, Selective Promoter of Her Sex,” Hale was widowed at a young age with several children, rejecting a career in millinery for the financial rewards of literary pursuits. Bardes and Gossett write:

Widowed in 1822 at the age of thirty four with five children to support, she tried but failed to earn a living as a milliner and promptly embarked on a literary career as a poet. After a few successes competing for prize money, she was emboldened to publish an anthology of her own verse as well as a two-volume novel, *Northwood* (18).

Bardes and Gosett suggest that because writing remained one of few skilled occupations open to women at the time, it afforded unprecedented opportunities for financial independence, of which Hale took full advantage. As Nicole Tonkovich writes in *Domesticity With a Difference: The Nonfiction of Catherine Beecher, Sarah J. Hale, Fanny Fern, and Margaret Fuller*, Hale often couched such attempts at a financially independent lifestyle in the language of domesticity, perhaps in an effort to render her activities socially acceptable. Tonkovich writes, for example: “Elaborating on her husband’s role in forming her as a writer, she continues, ‘Under his instruction and example, my prose style of writing, which the critics generally allow to be ‘pure idiomatic English,’ was formed” (29-30). As Tonkovich suggests, the social climate of the nineteenth century forced Hale to present her attempts at a public life as being both domestic and womanly, rendering her literary ambitions less threatening to the status quo.

Regardless, Hale established a reputation as a professional writer by publishing her work, which often subtly challenged the gender roles of the time period. As Patricia Okker argues in *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Traditions of Nineteenth Century American Women Editors*, Hale’s novels depict women as being discontented with domestic life, as well as the lack of educational opportunities afforded by their roles as wives and mothers. Okker describes Hale’s novel *Northwood*, for example: “Hale’s view of shared, rather than divergent, traits among men and women is particularly evident in the novel’s exploration of marriage. Lydia and Horace Brainard are relatively unhappy together, precisely because Lydia’s education neglected her intellectual abilities” (43). Suggesting that, in Hale’s portrayal, women often remain unfulfilled without professional opportunities to match their abilities, Okker presents *Northwood* as critiquing the notion that women find complete satisfaction within domestic life. Similarly, Hale’s poetry depicts women’s roles as wife and mother as being valuable, but incapable of providing the fulfillment found in a professional career. At the beginning of her poetry collection *The Oblivion of Genius*, for instance, she narrates in a piece entitled “Dedication”:

And Mothers, while your infant charge you tend,
And caress with soft instruction blend,
And treasure up each prattler’s tale with care,
As sweetest music for their father’s ear,
Oh, you are happy! Happy may you be!
Such happiness will no more smile for me. (iv)

Just as Lydia’s intellectual capabilities were neglected in *Northwood*, the speaker of this poem rejects the role of a mother tending an “infant charge,” as well as that of the wife who “treasure[s] up” her child’s tales for the life of a writer, suggesting that Hale perceived women as needing both public and private life in order to find complete fulfillment. For Hale, professional opportunities and

education often compliment these traditional roles, giving her women characters a more balanced experience.

Hale became editor of *Lady's Magazine* in 1828, envisioning her new occupation as an opportunity to promote both professional opportunities for women and female artistic endeavors, a perspective that coincides with her earlier critiques of women's relegation to the private sphere. As Patricia Okker writes in *Our Sister Editors*, her early editorial work depicted women as being both rational and morally superior to men, suggesting a less traditional vision of gender roles than her work at *Godey's* would imply. Okker writes, for example: "During her editorship of Ladies' Magazine, Hale vacillated between an Enlightenment emphasis on women's intellectual equality with men and a Victorian belief in women's moral difference from men. Initially, the magazine emphasized Enlightenment principles of women's intellectual equality and the importance of women's education" (44). Suggesting that Hale envisioned women as being capable of occupying public roles, Okker's perspective on *Lady's Magazine* is reflected in the work that she selected for publication while editor. A piece entitled "Delivered at the Dedication of Chauncey Hall" by Clement Durgin, for example, emphasizes education and academic knowledge for its female audience—subjects typically perceived as a male domain. Durgin writes, for example:

And when, at last, that tranquil hour shall come,
And we gaze backward as we now gaze on,
May this devoted temple firmly stand,
A mental light-house, in fair freedom's land. (APS Online, 567)

The "mental light-house" and "temple" being metaphors for knowledge, Hale's publication presents learnedness as opposed to femininity as the ideal. Just as Okker suggests, *Lady's Magazine* became a forum from which Hale promoted issues that had become important to her, such as public roles for women, opportunities female education, women's entrance into the professions, and women's literary pursuits, although such issues often remained veiled in domestic rhetoric.

When Hale published her own work and edited that of others, writing as an occupation was in the early stages of being professionalized, an endeavor to which Hale contributed early in her career as editor of *Lady's Magazine*, namely in an effort to provide professional opportunity to women writers. In *Our Sister Editors*, Patricia Okker suggests that Hale, in promoting her own writing, experienced the financial and structural limitations inherent in the publishing industry firsthand, in the end being inspired to change the literary landscape. She describes Sarah Josepha Hale's experience as an editor before her career at *Godey's*,

In this anti-professional climate Hale began editing the Ladies' Magazine in 1828. She immediately enacted three specific policies that significantly contributed to the professionalization of literary pursuits. First, while most magazine editors relied on pirated material, Hale accepted only original submissions. Second, she rejected the ideal of the anonymous writer and encouraged attribution, thereby allowing writers to build the reputation necessary for professional status. Finally, Hale supported an author's right to be paid for the written work. (87)

As Okker suggests, authors remained limited by the configuration of the publishing industry, in which authors remained unpaid and retained little control over their work. Parodies of the writing profession often appeared in the periodicals of this time period, reflecting many writers' desire to professionalize literary pursuits. An anonymous author published an article entitled "Animals turned Authors" in *The New-York Mirror*, for example, satirizing the general ease with which individuals published as well as the lack of organization within the industry. He writes, for example: "As for the hog, he could never excel in polite literature, but might favor the world with a critical analysis of the philosophy of Bacon. The peacock would make an excellent contributor to the *Lady's Magazine* and the annuals" (APS Online, Page 120). Although depicting *Lady's Magazine*, Hale's publication, as the epitome of professionalism, this article's metaphor of a zoo suggests that the unprofessional dilettante dominated the publishing landscape at this time.

As Hale worked to professionalize magazine work as editor at *Lady's Magazine*, she also criticized the aspects of the content of the magazine for the message that it sent to female readers, but learned to compromise for financial reasons—an idea that would remain prominent throughout her career. As Isabelle Lehuu writes in "Sentimental Figures: Reading Godey's *Lady's Book* in Antebellum America,"

She had criticized the display of fashion as a symbol of extravagance and European luxury ever since her publishing beginnings in 1828. Nonetheless, she was forced to compromise with the public's demand because of economic necessity and finally introduced a fashion place in the November 1830 issue of the *Lady's Magazine* (76).

As Lehuu suggests, Hale entered her editorship as a reformer, but soon discovered that a more financially successful magazine lent greater possibilities for both social change and her own career. This early desire to effect social change while building a successful and influential business remains present throughout Hale's editorship at Godey's, in which she promoted many of the issues she once critiqued.

Separate Spheres and the Beginnings of *Godey's*

Although Hale envisioned women as fully capable of occupying public roles in the literary world, sentimentality, fashion, and domesticity clearly dominated American print culture at the time. As editor of *Godey's* in 1837, she began to use this rhetoric to promote women's artistic accomplishments, the end result being a more successful and culturally influential business model. As Nancy A. Walker writes in *The Disobedient Writer: Women and Narrative Tradition*, Hale's traditionalism became an asset in challenging gender roles, rendering her more credible in the eyes of an audience. Walker writes, for example: "Such authors as Sarah Josepha Hale, Hannah Gardner Creamer, and Laura Curtis Bullard...were viewed by traditionalists as nearly as much of a threat to the status quo as women who took to the lecture platform to advocate female suffrage" (108). As Walker suggests, this traditionalism benefited Hale from a business standpoint but also gave her greater cultural influence, lending greater credibility to the issues she promoted for women.

Because Hale entered her editorship at *Godey's* after having learned to balance reform with business, the material that she published often promoted women's artistic accomplishments in a manner that would not challenge the status quo. The selections of poetry that she published during her first three years as editor of *Godey's* exemplify this trend, presenting a vision of womanhood that conforms to domestic ideals while inhabiting a public space. In a poem by Mary Russell Mitford entitled "To a Very Young Boy," for example, the female speaker is entitled encouraging a young man's interest in writing, which at first glance may seem traditional—women are often depicted as nurturing children. The poem, however, delves into a less conventional subject, exploring what drives women to create art. Mitford writes, for example:

Let Fame await their tuneful toil,
Unfading laurels crown,
Still Beam the critic's favouring smile,
Unfelt his awful frown... (APS Online, 4)

Suggesting that her female speaker writes for personal fulfillment, as opposed to recognition or worldly rewards, Mitford's feminine *ars poetica* appeared alongside men's writings, lending credence to such endeavors. *Godey's* also features Mitford as the author of "Our Village," a fact that coincides with Hale's efforts at *Lady's Magazine* to build professional reputations for women writers. Similarly, an untitled poem by Eliza Earle depicts the female speaker as a "weary, wandering dove" confronting death, using conventionally feminine imagery to explore substantial subjects.

In promoting her own writing in *Godey's Lady's Book*, Hale also takes great care in negotiating the public and the private, reinforcing the ideal of domesticity while

creating a public space for women's artistic and academic dialogue. As Janet Gray writes in *Race and Time: American Women's Poetics from Antislavery to Racial Modernity*,

Genteel women's culture, in shying away from political strategies and aims...reinstated a divide between public and private. Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of *Godey's Lady's Book* from 1837 to 1877 and a leading figure in this dominant branch of women's public culture, promoted the domestic sphere as a utopian space of human well-being... (47).

The creative work that Hale chose for publication in *Godey's* heightens this tension between the public and private that Gray describes in *Race and Time*. Although Hale's essays in *Godey's* often address such politically significant subjects as education and religious freedom, she qualifies her arguments by stating that they are written from the perspective of a wife or mother—an undoubtedly private individual. Exemplified by her essay, "How to Begin," Hale offers a specific treatise and well-read treatise on physical education for young girls, which she writes from the perspective of a mother rather than an editor, situating herself as neither a public woman nor a completely domestic one. She writes, for example: "How shall I begin the work of educating my children? I read everything I can on the subject; but there are few rules for everyday conduct given. Almost every writer on education is content with laying down general principles...I am left entirely to my own judgment respecting the manner of carrying out education" (APS Online, 41). Attempting to qualify her having taken a public stance on the benefits of female education, Hale emphasizes her domestic roles over her professional qualifications. This self-characterization reflects the dangers for women in assuming an explicitly civic role during this time, the alternative being a role that, like Hale's, remains at once public and domestic.

Public Life, Literature, and Limitations

Although situating herself within the private sphere, Hale demonstrated to other women that one can gain both cultural influence and financial independence through literary work without losing femininity or one's connection to the domestic sphere. Portrayals of Hale in periodicals of the time reflect other women's admiration for her work, suggesting also that the burgeoning number of such female editors remains a uniquely American opportunity. An anonymous author writes in *The Southern Literary Gazette*, for example: "A new epoch may be noted in the Literature of the United States, at this time; and one, calculated, as well from its novelty as interest, to excite no little wonder or admiration. We mean the editorship of sundry literary Journals, by Ladies. We know of but one instance in Europe..." (APS Online 167). A variety of periodicals echoed this sentiment during the 1830s and 1840s, a phenomenon that suggests that Hale remained a role model to other women seeking to enter the professions.

While *Godey's* mentions a variety of public roles for women, literary and teaching careers are the only non-domestic occupations that Hale explicitly endorses, perhaps in an effort to not be perceived as too radical. As Nicole Tonkovich argues in *Domesticity with a Difference*, however, women's roles in the workplace expanded during Hale's editorship at *Godey's*. Hale responded by rendering such occupations visible in nineteenth century print culture, although these women were often presented as exceptions rather than the norm. Tonkovich writes, for example, "Such acts of representation in image and text thus made the phenomenon of women in the workplace visible and nameable. However, the ways of naming women who worked commonly entailed using the adjective female to modify a collective generic or masculine noun" (62). As Tonkovich implies, Hale presented these women as unusual exceptions to the rule of separate spheres suggesting that Hale's portrayal of women in public roles remained limited in some respects, perhaps in an effort to maintain credibility in the eyes of her audience. Exemplified by her article on women in the professions entitled "A Profession for Ladies," Hale often qualifies her having advocated public roles for women, effectively maintaining a conservative stance that would appease both male and female customers. She argues in "A Profession for Ladies," for instance, that women should concentrate their efforts on promoting literacy for children. She writes,

Here, then, is the profession to which I would direct the energies of my own countrywomen. The field is wide enough for the display of all their genius, and there are sufficient laurels to satisfy the most ambitious. Many distinguished female writers have likewise been distinguished as teachers of children and youth (APS Online, 571).

Read within the context of the feminization of the teaching profession at this time, Hale's remarks reflect a conservative public stance on women's employment outside of the literary field. She advocates a profession dominated largely by women, rather than an occupation that employs exclusively men, reflecting her efforts not to alienate more conservative segments of her audience and customer base.

Additionally, mentions of women's public roles throughout *Godey's*, even of women in the literary world, often reflected socioeconomic status of both Hale and her audience, which remained largely white and middle class in order to promote the business interests of the magazine. As Hale remained selective with the issues she championed, her views on race and class proved at once conservative and socially acceptable to most of her consumers. As Nicole Tonkovich writes in *Domesticity with a Difference*, only white collar and pink collar jobs graced the pages of *Godey's*, and the domestic labor often performed by minority women often remained unmentioned. Tonkovich narrates, for instance: "Hale's list, however, is incomplete. Consistent with the address of *Godey's Lady's Book*, it does not include domestic labor performed for pay,

already a mid-century terrain ceded to racial and ethnic others...Accordingly, Hale's classification is class-specific and altogether omits the domestic occupations of governess, maid, servant, or cook" (63). Suggesting that, just as the "cult of true womanhood" remained an ideal to which only white middle class individuals could aspire, the public role that Hale envisioned for women excluded a number of them. Tonkovich continues to describe this phenomenon, describing Hale's exclusivity as an effort to create a unified vision of the American woman at the expense of diversity. Tonkovich writes, for example, that even Hale's grammar "signals the distortion that results from her attempts to sublimate a plurality of women into the composite singular. The fiction of compositeness, however, undermines Hale's overall aim of delineating varieties of national character, since it leaves her with little to write about individual women" (130). As Tonkovich suggests, *Godey's Lady's Book* attempted to present a feminine paradigm to which women could aspire—an effort that often excluded marginalized groups from print culture.

Literature, Domesticity, and Dialogue

In spite of these limitations, Hale's publication provided a public space for women's literary pursuits, which, although conservative, contributed to a public dialogue between women about traditional feminine roles. Reflected in her own projects, Hale's dedication to the improvement of women's educational and professional opportunities remained a constant in her life. Etsuko Taketani writes in *U.S. Women Writers and the Discourse on Colonialism*, for example, that Hale authored *The Woman's Record*, "a prodigious encyclopedia, with over 2,500 biographical sketches of notable women beginning with Eve, showing that 'women and Christianity emerg[ed] together as a motive force of history" (153). As Taketani suggests, Hale remained dedicated to the promotion of exceptional and artistic women, although her definition of womanhood remained limited by both her own background and the culture she inhabited. An issue of *Godey's Lady's Book* published in January 1843 reads, for instance:

This January Number—as readers will perceive—is entirely the production of lady writers. We are proud to send forth such a proof of the cultivated genius and pure principles of our countrywomen; for, with one exception, the poem of the celebrated Miss Joanna Baillie, this number is from the pens of American ladies (APS Online, Page 56).

As this excerpt suggests Hale created a public space by and for women's writing, an endeavor that challenged the gender norms of the nineteenth century, suggesting that women can retain their femininity and domesticity while taking on some public roles.

Hale's editorial decisions with respect to short stories also exemplify her belief that women can retain their connection to the domestic sphere while occupying

the public realm. Publishing work that deals with women in what would be considered traditional maternal roles by contemporary readers, *Godey's* rendered women's traditional responsibilities suddenly visible in nineteenth century mass culture, an event that challenged the notion of "public" and "private" spheres. "The Wife and Sister" by Mary H. Parsons, for example, immediately establishes its author as a wife by affixing "Mrs." to her pen name. The story, however, responds to a poem published by another male writer, initiating a public dialogue on the subjects of family and motherhood. Parsons begins her story by stating, for instance, that "Eveline Delanoy and her sister Marianne were orphans. Early in life they had been deprived of a mother's care, but that loss had been supplied, so far as it may ever be, by the watchful and tender love of their father" (APS Online, Page 27). Immediately introducing an unconventional vision of motherhood, in which fathers play a greater part in parenting, Parsons responds to a traditional vision of parenting, in which, when a mother dies, "The sweetness of love are gone" (APS Online, Page 27). Suggesting that fathers remain capable of filling the role of a mother, Parsons presents radical visions of both masculinity and femininity, reflecting Hale's penchant for inviting dialogue on traditional roles between women writers—a revolutionary idea couched in the rhetoric of domesticity.

Other works in *Godey's* also promote a public dialogue about women's traditional roles, becoming increasingly diverse throughout the magazine's publication history. Even Hale's own work in *Godey's* at times reinforces the separate spheres ideology and a short story entitled "The Dark Closet" is one example. Hale, in describing her girlhood and explaining why she began school at an older age in the story, writes: "I was not sent to school till I was about seven years old, as my mother thought I was too feeble to bear the fatigue and confinement" (APS Online, 441). As editor, Hale often juxtaposes such traditional depictions of women with more progressive ones. Articles such as "The Philosophy of Shopping" by Mrs. Alaric Watts, place new value on women's traditional roles rather than simply reiterating the limitations that they impose. Watts suggests that managing a household requires great intelligence, also implying that the women who do so remain underappreciated by those involved in the public world. Watts writes that the wife is "throughout, the busy, intelligent actor in this everyday drama of domestic life" (APS Online, Page 33). Depicting women in the domestic realm as capable individuals, rather than fragile ones as Hale's piece would suggest, Watts' narrator even quotes Milton's poetry while completing the shopping for her home.

Other works in *Godey's Lady's Book* invite women to participate in this public dialogue on women's roles, suggesting that literary pursuits remain a source of both personal fulfillment and advancement of one's station. A piece that ran in 1850 in the magazine, for instance, teaches women how to create a professional standing from a dabbling interest in literature. The work, entitled "Writing a Story" by H. J. Beyerle, emphasizes the discipline necessary for individuals in search of a literary career, stating that "writing a story is easier said than done" (APS

Online, 274). The story, however, transitions from a father describing domestic responsibilities—a “squalling baby,” a knock at the door, and a messy house being merely a few examples—to a finished work of short fiction. Suggesting that women readers should not be kept from their literary pursuits by their domestic responsibilities, Beyerle’s story reads as a motivational piece for women interested in joining the dialogue taking place in *Godey’s*. Also featuring “Literary Notices” informing readers of the latest trends in literature, Hale’s editorial decisions reflect a desire to expand and diversify the dialogue she has created in *Godey’s*, which, although conservative in some respects, renders women’s domestic roles suddenly visible and even widely debated.

Women’s Writing as Political

While she sometimes situated her work in a conservative fashion, aligning herself as a traditionally feminine individual, Hale also envisioned women’s literary endeavors as also having a political significance that often reached beyond the literary world. As Janet Gray argues in *Race and Time*, Hale envisioned women as promoting peace and compromise in political life through their artistic endeavors, an observation that Hale’s treatment of sectionalism exemplifies. Gray writes, for example: “Hale took the view that women must address moral issues but must not engage in partisan politics or war-making; practiced this way, Hale believed, female public culture could heal sectional rivalry by melding a common sense of place through writing” (64). Suggesting that Sarah Josepha Hale envisioned literary pursuits as a means toward both cultural and political influence, Gray’s observations prove consistent with Hale’s depictions of political topics in *Godey’s*, which often focus on morally charged political issues, as opposed to partisan politics.

Reflected in the advertisements for new books within the magazine, the histories, political analyses, and social commentary advertised by Hale are much more frequently authored by men than female writers, whose books more frequently treat social issues through personal experience. Although explicitly political works by men like *Memoirs of the Court of England During the Reign of the Stuarts* by John Hanneage Jesse are advertised, few counterparts can be found that are written by women. The books advertised that are written by women still reflect current social issues, albeit in a manner often overshadowed by the traditionally feminine. An issue of *Godey’s* published in 1840 included an “Editor’s Book Table,” advertising less overtly political works, like *Things by Their Right Names, and other Stories, Fables and Moral Pieces, in Prose and Verse* by Mrs. Barbauld, *A Scene in the Life of Joanna of Sicily* by Mrs. E. F. Elliott, and *Glimpses of a Western Life* by Mrs. Mary Clavers (APS Online 94). While all of these advertisements situate the authors as a wife, or a “Mrs.,” many of the ads mention the subtle social commentary within the books, albeit while emphasizing the author’s personal experience over her stance on an issue.

Other books on the Editor's Book Table comment on women's situation, but the reviews and ads depict the potentially radical commentary as too extreme—something not to be taken as seriously as the other more conservative books advertised. A work entitled "Woman and her Master" appears in this advertisement, stating that "[Woman] must take her stand side by side with man, not as his dependent, but his equal: his companion and not his slave" (APS Online, Page 94). The political nature of the work is downplayed, however, stating that her style is "too effusive," ultimately dismissing the book.

These efforts to create a social and intellectual dialogue in which women could participate, albeit a conservative one, are reflected in Hale's depiction of the controversy over the colonization of Liberia, which reformers presented as an antidote to the challenges for American society created by slavery. As Patricia Okker writes in *Our Sister Editors*, Hale's own creative work supported colonization, but presented her participation in the debate in traditionally feminine terms. Okker describes Hale's stance, "...[I]n Liberia Hale repeatedly presented colonization as a primarily religious rather than political plan, describing the early Liberian settlers, for instance, as 'pilgrims'" (81). As Okker suggests, Hale situated her own stance as being pious, as opposed to overtly political. Read within the context of women in the nineteenth century being viewed as morally superior to men, Hale's writing appropriates aspects of traditional depictions of women while contributing to a revolutionary new definition of womanhood—one that encompasses both the public and the private spheres.

The writing by others that Hale published on social issues, too, suggests that she envisioned a political dimension to women's writing, albeit a nonpartisan one. Hale envisioned women as being capable of keeping peace within the public sphere, suggesting that women's proper role spanned both the domestic world and life outside of the home. Janet Gray describes Hale's complex vision of women as peacekeepers in *Race and Time*, suggesting that, because she needed to maintain a credibly feminine stance, she worked so as not to be perceived as an activist, but made her stance known to her reader. Gray writes, for example: "Hale's commitment to the pacification of conflicts that could threaten the republic's unity ultimately eclipsed her moral objections to slavery. By the mid-1840s, Hale was actively purging her staff of the taint of activism..." (65). Suggesting that Hale held a political viewpoint, but situated herself within the confines of traditional domesticity, Gray's argument reflects Hale's complex negotiations of the public and private, which are often reflected in her editorial decisions. Although Hale envisions women as having a nonpartisan political role, as Gray states, she emphasizes her objections as being morally based, coinciding with the traditional depictions of women as moral rather than political beings. Nonetheless, Hale's editorship challenged the rigid gender segregation of nineteenth century, advocating a more balanced role for women in all facets of life.

Consequences for Women, Writers, and Editors

While many historians praise Hale as a feminist or dismiss her as a simple advocate of the separate spheres ideology, her influence on women and female literature remains more complex. As Bardes and Gossett write in their article “Sarah J. Hale, Selective Promoter of Her Sex” that, as also discussed in this paper, many of the stories in Godey’s present women in untraditional lights, ultimately combining the traditional with the unorthodox. Bardes and Gossett argue, for example, that “McCall’s analysis of the fiction in Godey’s compliments several other revisionist interpretations of Hale’s ideology. From a political point, we have argued elsewhere, Hale must be seen in a context more nuanced than feminist or antifeminist” (21). In this passage, Bardes and Gossett recognize Hale as using elements of both feminism and antifeminism to promote women, arguing that contemporary readers often misinterpret her subversive use of traditional femininity. Because Hale can be classified as neither an overt advocate of traditional gender roles nor a vocal opponent, one should read her editorship as an effort to work within the cultural framework she inhabited. By maintaining credibility and promoting her own business interests, Hale wielded a greater cultural influence than would an individual who overtly condemned women’s role society.

Hale’s mixing of the traditional with the untraditional, for the most part, helped to establish mass media depictions of women as hybrid entities. Although Sarah Josepha Hale herself envisioned a public role for women, she recognized the need to legitimize her message, ultimately creating a vision of womanhood that one can classify as neither completely domestic nor explicitly public. As Nicole Tonkovich writes in *Domesticity with a Difference*, this hybrid depiction of womanhood reinforced old stereotypes while creating a public forum for literary women, Hale’s depictions of fashion being a prime example. Tonkovich writes, for example, that “The sense of inclusion in a feminine community united by a current of knowledge of fashion, produced by *Godey’s* simultaneous invention and satisfaction of that interest, is clear in a correspondent’s letter written from the frontier...” (79). While creating a sense of community and inclusion among women through nineteenth century media, an act that can be read as subversive, Hale also reinforces traditional ideas about women being concerned with beauty, dress, and appearance.

The magazines and individual writers that followed *Godey’s* continued to promote these hybrid visions of womanhood, portraying women as being both traditionally domestic and increasingly public beings. As Lauren Berlant writes in her article “The Female Woman: Fanny Fern and the Form of Sentiment,” the force that she dubs the “American Female Culture Industry” remained in its formative stages in mid-nineteenth century America, emerging a lucrative trade with a distinct set of tropes and editorial conventions. Berlant argues, for example:

The American female culture industry developed a series of generic strategies—which might be called ‘modes of containment’—whose

purpose was to testify heretofore 'private' trials of womanhood, to demystify patriarchal practices, and to consolidate female collective identity without necessarily abrogating 'woman's loyalty to heterosexual culture.' The history of these modes of containment would trace the dialectic between their critical incursions into the patriarchal public sphere on the one hand, and their 'sentimental reflex' on the other, which involves the assertion of a feminine value that still exists in a private realm outside social circulation (268).

Implying that female mass culture remained in its earliest stages of development at this time, Lauren Berlant's argument reveals *Godey's Lady's Book* as a predecessor to the women's magazines, as well as the editorial practices, that people know today. As Berlant suggests, *Godey's* established the precarious distinction between public and private life that editors continue to negotiate in portraying women to their audiences.

Depictions of Harriet Monroe, the editor of twentieth century publication *Poetry Magazine*, exemplify the conventions that Berlant describes as originating in mid-nineteenth century magazines like *Godey's*, although her story is merely one example. Ann Massa argues in her article "The Construction of Harriet Monroe and Poetry, A Magazine of Verse" that Monroe reacted against the women of Sarah Josepha Hale's generation, but still was forced to work within the constraints that it left behind for women of her time. Massa writes, for example: "Unpublished materials expand and clarify the autobiography's hints at a combative and unhappy home in which Monroe reacted against a beautiful, sensuous, illiterate mother in favor of an intellectually dynamic and civic-minded father" (115). Additionally, while responding to this relegation of women to domesticity, printing women's literary works alongside those of men, she continued to situate herself as being in part a domestic woman, stating that "motherhood...has always seemed to me the grandest, most complete of all human experiences" (116). In short, Monroe promoted a similar literary dialogue to that of Sarah Josepha Hale, yet still portrayed herself in part as a constituent of the domestic realm, suggesting women's public roles remained at once enhanced and limited by the mixed influence of such publications as *Godey's*.

Conclusion

Throughout her career as editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, Sarah Josepha Hale promoted a public life for women through the literary arts, using creative writing to initiate a dialogue about traditional women's roles. Envisioning literary pursuits as a source of personal fulfillment, financial autonomy, and cultural influence, Hale carefully negotiated public life through the arts and letters with the prevailing depictions of women as being purely domestic. Because credibility and success from a business standpoint allowed Hale a greater degree of freedom in promoting women's writing, she worked within the confines of nineteenth century gender roles, as delineated by the separate spheres ideology. Using both

feminism and antifeminism to depict women in a manner that would seem credible to both male and female readers, Hale's publication ultimately sent mixed messages to women about domesticity. Written in a time period when editorial conventions were initially being established for publications geared toward a female audience, *Godey's Lady's Book* widened the horizons for women while reinforcing many of the limitations imposed upon them by nineteenth century society. This tension between the public and the private that Hale negotiated continued to inhabit publications of the twentieth century, even leaving remnants in the magazines of today. Although Hale's editorial decisions often reinforced stereotypes about women, her promotion of women's writing created a literary forum for women, as well as a sense of community among female readers, initiating a public dialogue about how society defined womanhood in the nineteenth century—a conversation that continues in magazines today.

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