SUSAN PETIGRU KING AND THE CULTURE OF ANTEBELLUM WOMEN IN HIGH LIFE

by

NANCY R. MACE

(Under the Direction of Karen Miller Russell)

ABSTRACT

A gap remains in mass communication scholarship that examines periodical fiction and the portrayal of women during the mid-nineteenth century. This study examines the portrayal of high society women in the short narratives of Susan Petigru King. Secondary research created a theoretical foundation, particularly Barbara Welter's concept of True Womanhood, and secondary research on fictional examples provide a basis for analyzing King's narratives with mainstream magazines of the time. This study found that True Womanhood ideology is not the only female image posited in periodical fiction during the antebellum era. In fact, King frequently challenged such concepts throughout her work as a way to challenge the social mores and culture of high society. Illustrating nascent feminism, King challenged the restrictions placed on women in high society through moral story telling, and denigrating the marital experience.

Index Words: Periodical fiction, Magazines, True Womanhood, Mid-nineteenth century, Women, Marriage, Society, Feminism, Serial fiction, Media history, Mass Communication, Heroines

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

SUSAN PETIGRU KING AND THE CULTURE OF ANTEBELLUM WOMEN IN HIGH LIFE

"Marriages are as wife as deaths."[1] - Susan Petigru King

[1] Susan Petigru King (SDPK-B) to Adele Petigru Alston (APA), October 3, 1849. Vanderhorst Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society (SCHS). This quote is a reference to the many deaths of husbands in their social circle, "Conjectures are *affect* as to what the widow will do. I fancy the old Sparks' will not be too kind to her. She has one child, a daughter. Marriages are as wife as deaths." Emphasis by SDPK-B.

Introduction

Susan Petigru King was an intriguing and provocative author in the antebellum South; some might even consider her a maverick of sorts. At the very least she was an outsider of high society Charleston – at times leading a lifestyle contradictory to her status. On one hand she seemed to strive to fit into the Charleston "high life,"[2] while simultaneously criticizing aristocratic life using witty repartee and evincing an independent zeal for life largely unacceptable during the era. During her years as an author she published several short stories and novels, many of which were serialized in magazines and newspapers throughout the mid-nineteenth-century. As an educated woman, and at a time when most women within high society did not work for money, she wrote and received payment for her fiction as well as for the translation of numerous stories from the French language. Moreover, she has been described as one of the "most distinguished female [writers] of ante-bellum South Carolina."[3] This chapter will provide an overview of this study, discuss current research, and introduce the research methodology.

King's work has been significant for inclusion in Southern literature anthologies – and she has been touted as one of the greatest female writers from the antebellum South. King's writing has been described as witty, capturing the attention of many. However, not all notice was praise, because her work often provoked public disdain. At times inciting public scorn and outrage, King's writing criticized the "south of Broad"[4] lifestyle, meaning the society of her peers. Her literary work touched on social status, gender, and marriage, and primarily focused

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[2] One of King's critics used the term "high-life" in a notice concerning *Busy Moments of an Idle Woman*, in the *Southern Literary Messenger* 20, no. 1, (1854): 64.

[3] Alton Taylor Loftis, *A study of Russell's Magazine: Ante-bellum Charleston's Last Literary Periodical.* Dissertation, Duke University (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1973), 446.

[4] Broad Street is a street located in Charleston. Many of the wealthy members in society resided in mansions south of Broad Street; subsequently, this truism was formed.

on female characters. She is considered a significant Southern author, writing among the male literati from Charleston such as William Gilmore Simms, Paul Hamilton Hayne, and William Grayson. Her published work appeared in periodicals such as *Russell's Magazine, Knickerbocker, Harper's Magazine* and the Charleston *Daily Courier*. Her narratives did not frequently appear alongside other female authors, or in mainstream periodicals. Her volume of work and her ability to produce both novels and short stories, and the fact that men predominately wrote other work within these publications demonstrates her literary merit.

Although Charleston's upper-class society accepted King's family into its membership, they did not *completely* accept King because of disagreeable behavior. King's peers labeled her "bad" and "saucy."[5] Her life did not conform to societal expectations. Subsequently controversy and gossip riled King's life. King's activities were sometimes reported in periodicals such as *The Ladies' Repository*.[6] Vacillating between her desires to be a part of society and a craving to criticize it eventually led King to solitude. By the end of her life, the Charleston gentry ostracized her so much so that members of her own family regularly avoided her. More than 100 years after her death, residents of Charleston continued to gossip about King's activities in life – underlining society's fascination with this intriguing author of the antebellum South.[7] Consequently, King's narratives yield a unique point of view.

Research on Susan Petigru King

Little scholarship has been published regarding King's literary accomplishments. David Aiken included her in a biographical work describing the lives of prominent Southern authors,

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[5] Julius W. Stuart in a letter to his mother, described King as a "bad woman" June 17, 1855, SCHS; "Note, Query, Anecdote, and Incident," *The Ladies Repository* 14, no. 2 (1874): 146-147.

[6] In at least two separate columns, commentary was provided regarding King and meeting William M. Thackeray for the first time. "Note, Query, Anecdote and Incident," *The Ladies Repository* 14, no. 2 (1874): 146-147. "The Editor's Repository," *The Ladies Repository* 27, No. 9, (September 1867): 565.

[7] Letter from Yates Snowden, January 30, 1932; William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, *A Family of Women: The Carolina Petigrus in Peace and War.* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 79. Pease and Pease obtained this family lore from Sally Simons on March 19, 1994.

providing an intriguing account of King's activities throughout the Civil War and ensuing marital controversy.[8] William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease have also examined the Petigru family in detail. Their research illuminated several events, which shaped King's life. Pease and Pease focused their research on King's father, James Louis Petigru, as well as the lives of several women in the Petigru family, particularly Caroline Petigru Carson, King's sister.

Pease and Pease also examined her novels. They wrote an introduction for two of King's novels re-published together in 1993: *Lily: A Novel* and *Gerald Gray's Wife*.[9] They identified certain themes within King's work, arguing that "King draws far more than other contemporary American women writers on French models of social and sexual intrigue, especially those of George Sand,"[10] and that her work was "nascent feminism" because of her portrayal of certain female characters. They have argued, "King's own novels were transparent though fictionalized portrayals of her real-life impatience with the restrictive properties that governed behavior of Southern Ladies."[11] Pease and Pease also noted the marriage theme within King's work as "…the plight of a young widow much in love with a poor man whom, because of the terms of her late husband's will, she cannot marry without losing the large income she now enjoys."[12] These themes are based on analysis of only a handful of characters from her work.

Finally, while adding to King's biography, Sandra Barrett Moore's dissertation delves primarily into King's three novels *Lily, Gerald Gray's Wife,* and *Busy Moments of an Idle Woman*, the story "My Debut," and a portion of the stories contained in "Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach." Apparently the only dissertation that specifically explores King's fiction,

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[8] David Aiken, *Fire in the Cradle: Charleston's Literary Heritage* (Charleston, S.C.: Charleston Press, 1999).
[9] *Gerald Gray's Wife and Lily: A Novel.* 1864 and 1855, edited by Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), xiv.
[10] Pease, Introduction to *Lily* and *Gerald Gray's Wife*, xiv.
[11] Pease, "Traditional Belles or borderline bluestockings? The Petigru women." *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 102(4) (2001): 292-309.
[12] Pease, Introduction, xiii.

Moore's study fuses the idea of humbug with King's life experiences to explore the "unsentimental" nature of the "textured social and psychological portraits" within King's writing.[13] Moore proffered the idea of humbug within King's work, noting she worked with "hard-edged humor and honesty, and she relied on her intuitive ability to judge experience and human nature in her attacks on falsehood." Moore also describes King's ability to explore "complex relationships between individual and context, cultural realities and character response." Although Moore analyzes a few of King's short stories, it is imperative to note that most research regarding King has been largely focused on her novels.

All three of these works are helpful, but not comprehensive. These scholars do not examine significant themes relating to women in high society or compare them to the portrayal of women in other periodicals of the time period. Moreover, no one has examined King's narratives as a canon of work in the context of the history of magazine and newspaper publishing. Furthermore, no one has interpreted King's short narratives as a larger body of work revealing the cultural values of women in an antebellum aristocratic society. Additionally, King utilized a pseudonym in one story that has never been examined. Because the scholarship regarding these fictional narratives is incomplete, an examination of the King's canon will help scholars better understand portrayals of women in antebellum periodicals.

Research on Fiction in Periodical Literature

Media historians have analyzed mainstream publications such as magazines and newspapers spanning the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, but their research has not fully investigated the contribution of literature or the portrayal of women in nineteenth century periodicals. Many historians have examined the impact of women as writers, journalists, and

[13] Sandra Barrett Moore, *Women in an 'Age of Humbug': Authority, Sentiment, and Pursuit of the Real in the Work of Louisa McCord and Sue King,* (Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2002).

editors of magazines and newspapers. For example a study of Sarah Jessica Hale, by Patricia Okker, found her philosophy concerning fictional genre revealed "her view of women as essentially moral, and both aesthetics complemented her treatment of the author and the reader." Okker also found that Hale "[denounced] virtually all of the stereotypical conventions of sentimental literature," by emphasizing "the importance of sentiments." Okker postulated that "the intersection of morality, sentiment and gender" was the basis for Hale's aesthetic treatment of the fiction within *The Lady's Book.*[14]

A few studies have examined the antebellum time period and the portrayal of women, focusing on moral tendency, cultural values and the depiction of the female heroine. Janice Hume'sresearch offers a view of the female heroine not frequently discussed in current scholarship. Virtues of the mid-nineteenth century female heroine in the *Lady's Book* exalted moral tendency and submissive attributes, and were domestic in nature.[15] Another scholar, Alice Vivian Letteney, juxtaposed the virtues of the domestic heroine within the fiction of *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's Magazine* with the periodical fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne. Another scholar examined the complexity and duality set in the fiction of Caroline Gilman in the antebellum *Southern Rose* magazine.[16]

However, much of the research as a result of literary scholars and media historians alike has focused on middle-class society. Okker's scholarship emphasizes the white, middle class female readership.[17] Cindy Ann Stiles postulated that most antebellum Southern magazines were

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[14] Patricia Okker, *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-century American Women Editors*, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 139.
[15] Janice Hume, "Defining the Historic American Heroine: Changing Characteristics of Heroic Women in Nineteenth-Century Media," *Journal of Popular Culture* 31, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 1-21.
[16] Cindy Ann Stiles, *Windows Into Antebellum Charleston: Caroline Gilman and the "Southern Rose" Magazine,* (Dissertation, University of South Carolina, UMI Dissertation Services a Bell & Howell company, 1994), 28.
[17] Okker, 161.

"largely founded and edited by members of the middle class, and thus never fully attracted the support of the plantation class."[18]

Consequently, literary research regarding mid-nineteenth century women writing about life has largely focused on the middle class literary domestics or the domestic novel, meaning women of the middle class writing about the hearth and home. Anne Firor Scott's definition of the "domestic metaphor" describes domesticity as an "image of a beautifully articulated, patriarchal society in which every southerner, black or white, male or female, rich or poor, had an appropriate place and was happy in it."[19] While another scholar explains that the ideology of the domestic sphere, "…revolves around the private household realm of the middle-class American family set over against the public realm of the marketplace and politics...."[20]

Scholars have examined the specific fiction of widely known women writers during the nineteenth century era. These researchers have studied the life and work of women such as Lydia Sigourney, Mary Boykin Chesnut, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Caroline Gilman. Allison Giffen's research delves into the representation of the father-daughter relationship in Sigourney's antebellum popular fiction.[21] Others have bestowed Sigourney's poetic contributions to periodicals such as *Godey's Lady's Book.* Several scholars have studied the work of Margaret Fuller, particularly Sandra Gustafson, who delves into Fuller's reputation and sentimental form in order to "reconcile" the various perspectives of scholarship.[22] Others have studied domestic

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[18] Stiles, 28.
[19] Anne Firor Scott, "Women's Perspective on the Patriarchy in the 1850s," The *Journal of American History*, Volume 61, Issue 1, (1974): 52-64.
[20] Gretchen Kay Short, *Domestic Spheres: Home and Homeland in Nineteenth-century U. S. Domestic Fiction*, Dissertation (Irvine: University of California, 2000), 1.
[21] Allison Giffen. "Dutiful Daughters and Needy Fathers: *Lydia Sigourney* and Nineteenth-Century Popular Literature." *Women's Studies* 32, no. 3 (Apr/May 2003): 255- 281.
[22] Sandra M. Gustafson. "Choosing a Medium: Margaret Fuller and the Forms of Sentiment," *American Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (Mar. 1995): 34 - 65.

ideology and piety in the work of women writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe.[23] Much of this research relies heavily on literary interpretation, biography as well as historical methodology.

Until recently, the role of fictional literature has been largely unnoticed in terms of its contribution in the field of mass communication. Michael Lund asserts that scholarship concerning serial text and periodicals is necessary, noting many mainstream magazines, especially women's periodicals, included serial fiction. He argues, "The sheer number of significant authors and works first appearing in parts from 1850 to 1900 suggest that a central mode of the American literary tradition was the serial form, the continuing story."[24] Moreover, these stories are revealing of the women who wrote them. Susan Coultrap-McQuin notes that while major women writers of the nineteenth century "had to conform to certain magazine requirements, such as the length of a serial installment, on the whole these women planned and wrote what they wished, not what publishers and editors told them to write."[25]

Current scholarship focuses on a variety of time periods as it concerns media and literary history. Several scholars have evinced the importance of the role of women in the publication of newspapers and magazines. Consequently, several nineteenth-century women, including authors and editors, have been studied. Media historians have primarily focused on large circulating periodicals, popular women's magazines and literary magazines, neglecting many general-interest publications. Furthermore, the theoretical basis for True Womanhood and the domestic metaphor have been established through examining fictional women in mainstream magazines as well as the depiction of the female heroine. While the scholarship of literary scholars and media

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[23] Susan Pleticha, "The Eros Piety of Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896): Aspiring to The Presence of God," *Theological Research Exchange Network (TREN): Conference Papers*; 1988: 1-7.
[24] Michael Lund, *America's Continuing Story: An Introduction to Serial Fiction, 1850 – 1900,* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993).
[25] Susan Coultrap-McQuin, *Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 196; Quoted in Lund, 27.

historians is broad, it is not comprehensive. More research is needed regarding the various ways in which women were represented in periodical fiction. Few scholars have examined the significant themes specifically as they relate to women in high society, particularly those themes included in the fiction of magazines or newspapers. Serial text, or continuous volumes of stories by a single author for a single publication have also been largely unnoticed.

Research Question

The objective of this study is to examine the depiction of female characters within an antebellum aristocratic society. Therefore, this thesis asks: how do the narratives of Susan Petigru King, from 1848 to 1867, portray the cultural values and life of upper-class women as compared to the depiction of women in mainstream periodicals? This research compares King's portrayal of women to the depiction of women in mainstream periodical fiction based on secondary literature in order to understand the different ways women were depicted during this era.

Justification

Media historians have frequently overlooked female writers and their contributions to periodical literature, so, this research seeks to reduce this gap by focusing on one writer of merit. Hume expresses the importance of the press "as an influence on societal values…it seems to be a mirror of cultural expectations that were unsatisfactory for many women."[26] Since much of the research on periodical literature focuses on mainstream publications, this research contributes to scholarship that focuses on publications that were not inclusive of women's magazines or literary publications.[27] This research will also contribute to the gap in serial periodical fiction identified

[26] Hume, 18.
[27] Although *Knickerbocker* and *Harper's* were mainstream publications in terms of their circulation, their content was typically general-interest as opposed to a woman's magazine such as *The Lady's Book* or *Graham's*. *Knickerbocker* and *Harper's* have not typically been analyzed for the depiction of women in their fiction. And since

by Michael Lund, since nearly half of King's stories were serialized. While much serial fiction relies on cliffhangers with specific characters connected to a single story printed in a continuous format, King's serial fiction included a group of separate stories with unconnected plots and characters.

A gap remains as it concerns the portrayal of women in the mid-nineteenth-century era by other authors and other social classes. Although King's literary merit has been acknowledged, her work has been under-examined. Because the literary and historical scholarship concerning the work of Susan Petigru King is incomplete, more research is needed to better understand her contribution to periodical literature. Jeffrey Kirk believes "Historians who have examined the careers of women who became writers and social reformers in the period from the 1830s to the Civil War have suggested that many of them were covertly protesting against their subordination and expressing hostility to men and the Victorian home."[28] King's work opens a window on her time and place. Analyzing it adds to our knowledge and understanding of antebellum American culture during the mid-nineteenth century, particularly because it offers one woman's perspective about the culture of women in a Southern genteel society.

Methodology

This research is rooted in historical methodology. This is not a quantitative study, nor a content analysis counting descriptors and calculating statistics to interpret the fictional content. Instead, it relies heavily on secondary research to create a theoretical foundation as a basis for analyzing Susan Petigru King's narratives and secondary research on fiction in mainstream periodicals of the time. It examines secondary sources such as books, articles, and dissertations

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only each of these publication contained a single story or short novella by King, the analysis must note the uniqueness of these publications as they compare to *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's*. Most of King's narratives appeared in *Russell's Magazine*, a short-lived publication not considered a mainstream periodical.

[28] Jeffrey Kirk, "Marriage, Career, and Feminine Ideology in Nineteenth-Century America: Reconstructing the Marital Experience of Lydia Maria Child, 1828-1874," *Feminist Studies* 2, (2/3) (1975): 113-130.

regarding the concept of True Womanhood, domesticity, and the portrayal of women in mid-nineteenth century mainstream magazines. Based on this theoretical foundation, the four virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity are examined in Chapter Two. Examples of the depiction of women in fiction of mainstream magazines such as *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's Magazine*, from approximately 1840 to 1870 are included. Although fashion plates and advertisements contain interesting information regarding women, primarily fictional examples along with a small number of essays to supplement the research are included in the literature review, because of King's focus on fiction.

From 1848 to 1867 King published three novels and at least 17 narratives, nearly half of which were included as three sets of serial literature: *Sylvia's World, Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach,* and *A Little Lesson for Little Ladies*. *Sylvia's World* was published by Derby & Jackson in 1859 and serialized in *Knickerbocker*, while the others appeared in *Russell's Magazine* from 1857 to 1858. Because King published her short stories anonymously, primary and secondary sources verified the authorship of each work. First, the work contained within *Russell's Magazine* was confirmed through a copy of the editor's notes at the South Carolinia Library in Columbia.[29] Second, Alton Taylor Loftis' dissertation, which comprises a complete list of all works and their corresponding authors in *Russell's*, confirmed these and other stories. The stories published in *Knickerbocker* and *Harper's* were confirmed through the research of historians William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, as well as Sandra Barrett Moore. Pease and Pease also identified a narrative entitled "Bal Costume" as one of King's stories.

[29] Inscribed on the front page of the *Russell's Magazine* volumes at the South Carolinia library states, "The penciled names of the authors given in these copies of *Russell's Magazine* were written by Edgar Long who copied them from Mr. Alex Salley's copies of *Russell's Magazine*. Mr. Salley had his copied from the volumes in the N. Y. Public Library a set originally owned by John Russell. See Edgar Long's Thesis in *Russell's Magazine* for explanation – pg. 64."

The author read each of these narratives, in their entirety, to determine the ways female characters in upper-class society were specifically portrayed.[30] All of King's work was photocopied from original documents, printed from microfilm at the University of Georgia Library, or photocopied from the South Carolinia Library. Next, each of King's stories were read specifically to examine the way in which female characters were portrayed, based on the themes and characteristics defined in the literature review, in order to understand how King's narratives depicted women in high society.

Because True Womanhood provided the basis for the analysis female characters were classified in thematic categories to guide the initial reading: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Piety concerns religious values, purity is a woman's innocence, submissiveness yields obedience, and domesticity relates to all matters of household duties. The literature review will define these categories more clearly and put them in perspective. Other themes were also noted during the reading process. The researcher paid particular attention to the physical and emotional description of female characters, their marital status, personality traits, and descriptors to guide the reader's interpretation. Characteristics relating to the portrayal of female characters were recorded into an electronic spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel and categorized according to the virtues established in the literature review. All descriptions that did not fit into the cult of True Womanhood and domestic ideology were captured and categorized into specific themes accordingly.

Lastly, primary sources such as manuscripts, letters, and diaries of King's family members, as well as her peers in Charleston society were examined for the purpose of

[30] Please see Appendix for a conclusive list.

establishing an in-depth biography of the author.[31] Therefore, King's life story also supplements the research findings.

Chapter Two will consist of a literature review of secondary scholarship regarding such theoretical concepts as True Womanhood, domestic ideology, along with fictional representations of how women were portrayed including female heroines in mid-nineteenth century periodical fiction. Chapter Three will provide a biography of Susan Petigru King consisting of primary and secondary sources. Chapter Four will produce findings from the original readings and research. Chapter Five will discuss the findings juxtaposed with the topics included in the literature review. Chapter Six will consist of concluding remarks.

[31] James D. Stratt and William David Sloan. *Historical Methods in Mass Communication,* Northport, AL: Vision Press, 2003. "The Nature and Variety of Historical Sources," was sought as a reference for the different types of sources, which should be consulted during historical research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

SUSAN PETIGRU KING AND THE CULTURE OF ANTEBELLUM WOMEN IN HIGH LIFE

If a woman possessed the four virtues of True Womanhood "she was promised happiness and power." – Barbara Welter [32]

[32] Welter, 152.

Overview

In 1966, Barbara Welter identified a cult of True Womanhood and the concept of domesticity in nineteenth century women's magazines. Scholars have developed her ideas and evinced the need for additional research into these areas to learn how women were portrayed in the nineteenth century.[33] This chapter consists of a brief summary of research as it relates to True Womanhood, domestic ideology and the portrayal of women in nineteenth century periodical literature. Examples of the depiction of women in mainstream magazines such as *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's Magazine* along with the history of each of these publications is included. Many of these examples include studies of fictional "heroines" in mid-nineteenth century magazine fiction. The chapter begins with a brief overview of *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's*.

The Moral Aesthetic and *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's Magazine*

During the mid-nineteenth century, the amount of periodicals in the United States, "exploded from 100 magazines in 1825 to 1500 in 1840,"[34] broadening the reach of fictional material to an audience larger than ever before. Because of their large circulation and abundance of fiction *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's Magazine* represent mid-nineteenth century mainstream periodicals. Letteney argues that *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's* are the two "most popular and enduring magazines of the 19th century."[35]

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[33] Frances B. Cogan explains that True Womanhood is not the sole ideal of middle-class women of the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, she suggests that "it is very likely, based on didactic literature and popular novels – primary sources both – that more than one popular ideal for middle-class American women existed and was embraced between 1840 and 1880. American women, dealing with the complexities of real (as opposed to advice book) life, probably followed *neither* ideal slavishly." Frances B. Cogan, *All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America*, (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 9.

[34] Melissa Ladd Teed, *Work, Domesticity, and Localism: Women's Public Identity in Nineteenth-century Hartford, Connecticut*, (Dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1999), 140.

[35] Alice Vivian Letteney, *Hawthorne's Heroines and Popular Magazine Fiction,* (Dissertation. 1981, The University of Connecticut), 5.

In the mid 1840s *Graham's* transitioned into a magazine that focused its efforts on being a literary journal, "Nothing that money can do shall be spared to maintain the high literary reputation *Graham's Magazine* has acquired,"[36] its editors wrote. *Graham's Magazine* was published by George G. Graham[37] under a number of titles from 1826 to 1858.[38] In 1842, the magazine boasted a circulation of 40,000.[39] The content of *Graham's*, at least by 1849, compared similarly to *The Lady's Book*, and included "poetry, book reviews, engravings, essays, a wildlife series featuring birds, an Editor's Table, fashion plates and more fiction, especially domestic fiction…"[40] Its fiction was also devoted to "allegorical tales, historical romance, myth, legend, adventure stories such as sea tales and war stories, sentimental tales relying on the pathos of the heroine's madness and death, and Gothic tales, often set in exotic places, involving murder, intrigue, and the supernatural."[41] Contributors to *Graham's* boasted the likes of William Gilmore Simms, Henry B. Hirst, Amelia B. Welby, Edwin P. Whipple, R. H. Stoddard, Julia C. R. Dorr, John G. Saxe, and Caroline Cheseboro.[42]

The Lady's Book was considered a woman's magazine, although it attracted an audience comprised of both men and women of the middle to upper realm of society, achieving its greatest circulation with 150,000 subscriptions just before the Civil War.[43] Founded in 1830 by Louis A. Godey, *The Lady's Book* ended publication in 1898.[44] In 1837, Sarah J. Hale joined the magazine as editor and essayist, and the focus on fiction of the magazine also changed. *The Lady's Book* attempted to "create the image of a genteel magazine," according to Letteney. It

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[36] "New Contributors," *Graham's*, XXIV (January 1844): 48; quoted in Letteney, 6.
[37] Mott, Volume 1, 343.
[38] Mott, Frank Luther. *A History of American Magazines, Volume I: 1741-1850,* (New York and London: D. Appleton & Co., 1930), 544.
[39] *Graham's*, XX, (March, 1842): 153; Quoted in Mott, Volume 1, 552.
[40] Letteney, 7.
[41] Letteney, 12.
[42] Mott, Volume 1, 553.
[43] Mott, Volume 1, 581.
[44] Mott, Volume 1, 580.

had a propensity to publish moral fiction and essays "whose purpose was to both entertain and instruct, to display the beautiful and to teach the useful."[45] It is no longer remembered as a literary publication, but *The Lady's Book* directory of authors "included some of the most popular writers in America,"[46] including Edgar Allan Poe, Lydia Sigourney, Alice B. Neal, T. S. Arthur, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. During the mid-nineteenth century, the *Lady's Book* "increased its percentage of domestic fiction to approximately two-thirds of the total number of stories in each volume." In 1860, "all but three of its fifty-four stories can be classified as domestic fiction."[47] Even advertisements for the *Lady's Book* "emphasized the work of sentiment,"[48] stressing the importance of the magazine to unite "whatever is useful, whatever is elevating, whatever is pure, dignified, and virtuous in sentiment, with whatever may afford rational and innocent amusement."[49]

Characteristics of magazine fiction during this era extolled attributes of moral tendency to its audience. According to Welter's research, women who were "dangerously addicted to novels," interrupted "serious piety." Consequently, women were instructed to avoid them; "If she simply couldn't help herself and read them anyway, she should choose edifying ones from lists of morally acceptable authors."[50] If women were going to read then women read morally acceptable material preferably. *Graham's* and *The Lady's Book* "assumed to be pleasing and capable of influencing the reader," the fiction, "confirmed the Victorian vision of the world as moral." One of the shared similarities of mainstream periodical fiction of this era included that they should "please and influence readers by crafting plots that relied on a system of just rewards

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[45] Letteney, 9.
[46] Gail Caskey Winkler, *Influence of Godey's Lady's Book on the American Woman and Her Home; Contributions to a National Culture (1830-1877)*, (Dissertation. University of Wisconsin – Madison, 1989), 51-52.
[47] Letteney, 12.
[48] Isabelle Lehuu, *Carnival on the Page: Popular Print Media in Antebellum America*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 115.
[49] *Godey's Lady's Book,* August 1845: 84; quoted in Lehuu, 115.
[50] ; Barbara Welter, "Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 165.

and punishments." In this way, the reader would perceive the fiction as a more truthful depiction of reality.[51] Not surprisingly, the fiction during the nineteenth century also reflected this aesthetic.

The editors of *The Lady's Book* believed that happy endings "arose from the idea that moral readers experienced pleasure when good characters were rewarded and morally corrupt characters punished."[52] In order to please the audience of the magazine and sell more magazines, fiction leaning toward moral principles, "provided Hale and Godey the compromise they needed,"[53] because mid-nineteenth century audiences "were likely to see it as pleasing."[54] Because a "mass readership" was one of *The Lady's Book's* goals for the magazine, "promoting fiction that had a moral tendency," supported this objective.[55] Prevalent among mainstream fiction in both *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's* included an overwhelming propensity for a happy ending in domestic fiction.[56] In one story, the author uses humor to end a "potentially tragic situation," when the female protagonist is not allowed to "marry the man of her choice," and "tricks her family into witnessing the marriage ceremony." In the end, no harm comes to the bride, parents, or lover.[57]

Louis Godey explained the goal of the magazine as a means to "promote social refinement, domestic virtues, and humble piety."[58] Godey made clear the intentions of fiction through an essay printed in 1860, writing "Those articles of fiction that we do publish, have all a

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[51] Okker, 161.
[52] Okker, 153; paraphrased in *Our Sister Editors* from Fred Kaplan's research. Fred Kaplan, *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).
[53] Okker, 153.
[54] Okker, 153.
[55] Okker, 153.
[56] Letteney, 13. This is in reference to *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's*.
[57] Letteney, 13; from "A Legend of New England," *The Lady's Book*, VII, 1834: 136-137.
[58] *Godey's Lady's Book*, (December 1836): 283; quoted in Okker, 153.

moral tendency."[59] Patricia Okker describes an essay by L. A. Wilmer, "Some Thoughts on Works of Fiction," as a "virtual paradigm" of the fiction of the *Lady's Book*.[60] Wilmer's essay establishes moral tendency within the plot of magazine fiction. Okker also explains that Hale "generally favored marriage plots in which moral characters triumphed…"[61] Janice Hume's research validates Okker's explanation of the moral propensity of the fiction in *The Lady's Book* by describing heroines in many of the short stories in the publication as "domestic, *moral*, and decidedly feminine."[62] Hale "worked hard to define fiction as 'moral' and made it a foundation of her magazine,"[63] during a time "when women readers were still sometimes considered to be idlers and non-feminine."[64]

Okker explains that moral principles within the fiction of *The Lady's Book* have "provided a way of recognizing and celebrating the pleasure of reading fiction." However, this objective "did not position the magazine as one that simply amused its readers - an image Hale would have found unacceptable." Instead, "moral tendency implied that fiction affected its readers," and having the ability to "[inspire] personal, familial, and national improvement." Okker also associates Hale's definition of quality fiction as "almost identical to her understanding of woman's innate nature: both are essentially moral." Furthermore, by defining moral fiction, "Hale ensured a positive association of women with fiction." Hale's belief of the aesthetic of fiction as essentially moral, "assumed that fiction was properly designed to please and to influence readers," thus serving a basis for the fiction contained within *The Lady's Book*.[65]

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[59] *Godey's Lady's Book*, (February 1860): 186; quoted in Okker, 153.
[60] Okker, 150.
[61] Okker, 151.
[62] Hume, 18; emphasis placed by the author.
[63] Okker, 155; paraphrased in Hume, 18.
[64] Okker, 114; paraphrased in Hume, 18.
[65] Okker, 153.

More than one mainstream magazine emphasized moralistic tendency in its fiction during this era. In fact, *Graham's* literature also "portrayed the domestic heroine as man's moral saviour, his virgin redeemer, and especially in temperance tales, his moral watchdog."[66] For example, in one story, "a mother warns her daughter not to offer a glass of wine to a young man about whom she knows nothing." The female protagonist and her lover eventually marry, and "only then learns that he abstains because he has a drinking problem." He tells his wife, "[you] never tempted me in this way. Had you done so, we might not have been happy as we are to-day."[67] The woman in this story was man's moral redeemer, saving him from an alcohol problem.

Tim Ruppel analyzed another *Graham's* story, "Is She Rich?" written by T. S. Arthur. In this story a character named Charles believes a man should marry someone for "moral excellence"[68] as opposed to "money, beauty, or even intelligence." The male protagonist, Henry, fails to choose the appropriate wife, and "fails to restrain his aberrant consumption patterns."[69] Henry is quickly brought down "in both the domestic and business plot," because of "moral failings and character deficiencies."[70] Arthur emphasizes that "*Moral fitness* must be considered in the first in the catalogue of excellencies," when looking for a future wife.[71] Ruppel believes Arthur's use of *moral fitness* "[meant] a woman's understanding that her only true happiness will be found in domestic duties," and that this story reflects "emerging gender codes of the antebellum period." Charles valued a female character for her "good sense and good

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[66] Letteney, 34.
[67] Letteney, 34; Kate Sutherland, "A Harmless Glass of Wine," *Graham's*, XXXV (October, 1849): 230-231.
[68] T. S. Arthur, "Is She Rich?" *Godey's Lady's Book,* July 1842, 6; Quoted in Tim Ruppel, "Gender Training: Male Ambitions, Domestic Duties, and Failure in the Magazine Fiction of T. S. Arthur," *Prospects* 24, (1999): 319.
[69] Ruppel, 320.
[70] Ruppel, 320
[71] Arthur, 6; Ruppel, 322. Emphasis by Arthur.

principles,"[72] which he believed would "take delight in caring about household affairs,"[73] and he tells the male protagonist Henry, "I am persuaded, that no wife ever finds permanent and true happiness beyond the circle of her own household, or out of the duties incident to her domestic relations."[74] Ruppel's research acknowledges that the appropriate wife in this story, Caroline, "resembles a number of other women in Arthur's stories for *Godey's*." Ruppel believes her "interior qualities" made Caroline, and the other women of Arthur's fiction "suitable for recognition and distinguish them from idle women of surface display." Ruppel's research on the work of T. S. Arthur for *The Lady's Book* shows that many of the women in Arthur's work exhibited qualities that never find "true happiness beyond the circle of her own household."[75]

Even non-white women of periodical fiction during the antebellum era were frequently described as "beautiful, pious, and thrifty, as well as diligent housekeepers devoted to their families," according to Linda M. Clemmons. Stories within *The Lady's Book*, at least, "did not distinguish between white women and their Native-American sisters; rather, they focused on similarities between the two cultures…"[76] Clemmon's research found the portrayal of Indian women "as being assimilated into white culture and living according to the same moral codes and values that guided white women in the nineteenth century." Fictional native-American women "uniformly described as beautiful, well-dressed, and immaculately groomed," like their white counterparts.[77] "Despite the insistence on brevity, *Godey's* authors constantly interrupted the precipitate rush of their narratives for interminable moralizing," according to Joseph Satterwhite, who says that "although critics were silent on the question of technique, they

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[72] Arthur, 3; found in Ruppel, 322.
[73] Arthur, 3; found in Ruppel, 322.
[74] Ruppel, 322.
[75] Ruppel, 322; Arthur, "Is She Rich?" 3 and 6.
[76] Linda M. Clemmons, "Nature Was Her Lady's Book: Ladies' Magazines, American Indians, and Gender, 1820-1859," *American Periodicals*, Volume 5, (1995): 40.
[77] Clemmons, 40-41.

[agreed] that the primary function of fiction was to teach."[78] Louis Godey said of the magazine, "we give them a wholesome article, that will improve the mind, and teach a sense of duty."[79] By the 1850s, "the common, everyday domestic tale which taught a lesson or-pointed a moral was in."[80] *The Lady's Book* fiction focused on topics such as "how to perform domestic chores, how to manage a husband or wife, and how to treat one's family, servants, and neighbors with charity and forbearance."[81] Because the disposition of magazine fiction during the antebellum era focused on the moral tendency of its characters, Barbara Welters' True Womanhood ideology plays an important role in developing an approach to a comparative study of women in a cultural and historical context. According to Letteney, the domestic heroine of *Graham's* and *The Lady's Book* "had to be virtuous," because "she was held morally responsible for all her actions and suffered severe penalties when her behavior failed to satisfy the society's standards."[82]

True Womanhood

Barbara Welter conceptualized True Womanhood in 1966 to describe the representation of women in nineteenth century fiction. She asserts that the attributes of this ideology "could be divided into four cardinal virtues – piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife – woman." These were the characteristics "by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society." Without these four characteristics "all was ashes," but with them "she was promised happiness and power."[83] Welter drew on literature, women's magazines, and gift

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[78] Joseph N. Satterwhite, "The Tremulous Formula: Form and Technique in *Godey's* Fiction," *American Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (Summer, 1956): 109.
[79] "Godey's Armchair," *Godey's Lady's Book*, LVI (April, 1858): 376; quoted in Letteney, 14.
[80] Letteney, 14.
[81] Letteney, 14.
[82] Letteney, 27
[83] Welter, 152.

annuals from 1820 to 1860,[84] finding that the True Woman was "frail," "beautiful," and "educated," and a member of middle to upper-class society.

Other scholarship agrees with Welter's research. Gail Caskey Winkler points out that scholarship focusing on nineteenth century women supports Welter's four attributes. Moreover, these characteristics "defined both the genteel woman and her proper role in society, characterized at the time as 'woman's sphere.'" Stressing the importance of the domestic responsibilities of women, Winkler postulates that "the management of the home and family," was the primary role of women in society.[85]

Largely drawing on sources similar to Welter's, Mary Louise Roberts explains how "historians continue to agree that 'true womanhood' was the centerpiece of nineteenth-century female identity."[86] Roberts explains that separate spheres "structured the worlds of private and public, the home and the workplace, the family and the professions," which helped to "maintain class- and race-based hierarchies of power." She concludes this ideology "justified women's exclusion from participatory democracy."[87] By the Victorian era, the concept of the New Woman replaced the True Woman ideology.[88] The following section examines the virtues of True Womanhood during the mid-nineteenth century and includes examples from fiction from both *Graham's* and *The Lady's Book*.

Piety

As the first and most important attribute of True Womanhood, Welter explained, "Religion or piety was the core of woman's virtue, the source of her strength." Men appealing to the opposite sex "were cautioned to search first for piety, for if that were there, all else would

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[84] Welter, 151.
[85] Winkler, 1.
[86] Mary Louise Roberts, "True Womanhood Revisited," *Indiana University Press* 14, no. 1, (2002): 150.
[87] Roberts, 151.
[88] Bishop, 7.

follow."[89] Piety was defined during the mid-nineteenth century as "a compound of veneration or reverence of the Supreme Being and love of his character, or veneration accompanied with love." Piety in practice was "the exercise of these affections in obedience to his will and devotion to his service." It was also a "reverence of parents or friends, accompanied with affection and devotion to their honor and happiness."[90]

The fictional portrayal of women embracing this trait revealed that during the antebellum era women "still prayed to God for strength."[91] Women also "sought guidance from their maker in teaching their children to avoid indulgences 'which…if not checked…[would] lead to everlasting ruin.'"[92] Consequently, "The danger of being a wife and mother in the 1850s was a sobering force behind a woman's zeal in teaching her family about religion.…"[93] In at least one story in *Graham's*, a mother lectures her daughter, Ruby, "to keep her fancy ever under the control of reason," hoping the daughter would remember that "to love, and be beloved, is not the end of aim, of woman's existence." Instead, woman's aim was "piety, usefulness, and happiness, here, that her end may be peace and eternal joy." The young protagonist in this story follows her heart and "goes mad after discovering that her lover, a young man brought up without the benefit of religious instruction, is also making advances to her younger sister." To this, Ruby's steadfast response warned her young sister, "never to admit to your bosom any sentiment which wars with religion or duty."[94]

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[89] Welter, "Cult," 152.
[90] Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language,* New York: N. and J. White, 1835. The researcher interprets the word "his" as God.
[91] Hume, 13; quoted from Fannie Fenton, "Worship in the Wilderness," *The Lady's Book* (July 1858): 46.
[92] Hume, 13; quoted from "A Mother's Trials," *The Lady's Book* (July 1857): 21.
[93] Hume, 13.
[94] Lydia Jane Pierson, "The Hunter's Song," *Graham's*, XVII (August, 1840): 87-93; Letteney, 31.

Mardia J. Bishop states, "The True Woman was the 'real' ruler of the world because she was closer to God."[95] The wealthy male protagonist in at least one story extolled the virtues of a true woman as he looked back at his last 25 years of life and the great amount of income accumulated therein, "…the resolutions which I formed while sitting and gazing at the spars of my brig, and the confiding virtue, the filial piety, and the perfect love of Mary did all for me, and I should have been rich without the brig." This protagonist believed "Hope, contemplation, woman's virtue, woman's piety, and woman's love that made me what I am."[96] Men looked for women who extolled this religious attribute, because a pious wife embraced true happiness.

Purity

The second component of the True Woman was purity, meaning a woman's innocence and a life free of sinful actions. Purity was defined in the mid-nineteenth century as "cleanness; freedom from foulness or dirt," it was also characterized as "freedom from guilt or the defilement of sin; innocence…chastity; freedom from contamination by illicit sexual connection." Lastly, the era dictionary defines purity as "freedom from any sinister or improper views."[97] Welter describes this attribute as being almost as important to the virtue of piety since without it a woman was "a member of some lower order." A "fallen woman" was a "fallen angel," who was also "unworthy of the celestial company of her sex." Welter explained, "to contemplate the loss of purity brought tears; to be guilty of such a crime, in the women's magazines at least, brought madness or death." She posits that "Even the language of the flowers had bitter words for it: a dried white rose symbolized 'Death Preferable to Loss of Innocence.'"[98] Louis Godey clearly believed in purity within the fiction of the *Lady's Book*, since he forbade

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[95] Bishop, 49.
[96] Joseph Chandler, "Luck is Every Thing," *Graham's*, XXIV (March, 1844): 100; quoted in Letteney, 24-25.
[97] Webster, *Dictionary*.
[98] Welter, "Cult," 154-155.

any fiction into the magazine unless it was as "pure as the driven snow."[99] Illustrating this point, Godey wrote to his readers in 1840 that at least one story "although excellent, cannot be published in our *Book*. Nothing having the slightest appearance of indelicacy, shall ever be admitted to the *Lady's Book*."[100]

According to Letteney's study of domestic heroines in periodical literature, women were "examined in minute detail and evaluated carefully for any breach of decorum, for any trace of immodesty or immorality," because her research revealed "very few women characters were allowed a descent, much less a fall in popular magazine fiction."[101] In one story, the female protagonist suffers because she attempts to gamble, only one time. When this "impropriety" was revealed, "…the fire quenched on the hearthstone, the beautiful links in the chain of domestic happiness broken forever…" The protagonist's husband lamented, "My idol is fallen…the fair temple despoiled of its beauty."[102] In "Blessington's Choice," a story written by Fitz Morner in *The Lady's Book*, the narrator states, "in the same degree which a girl is a good daughter…in the same degree will she be a good wife." In this story, the protagonist's "slip of the tongue" nearly leads her to lose her suitor.[103] In another story, the female protagonist refers to her relationship with her lover as a "flirtation for one's amusement in the country," in a fit of anger. Because of this flippant remark, presumably considered an "improper view," the protagonist loses her lover and "spends the rest of her life as a spinster."[104]

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[99] Mott, Volume 1, 582.
[100] *The Lady's Book*, XX, 96 (February, 1840); quoted in Mott, 582.
[101] Letteney, 27.
[102] M. Miles, "The Young Countess: Or, a Folly and Its Consequences," *The Lady's Book,* XVII (December, 1838): 253-259; quoted in Letteney, 29.
[103] Fitz Morner, Blessington's Choice," *The Lady's Book*, XLVIII (May, 1854): 424-426.
[104] Miles, "A Leaf From the Journal of Florence Walton," *The Lady's Book*, XVII (December, 1838): 257; quoted in Letteney, 39. Webster, *Dictionary*.

Should a woman in mid-nineteenth century fiction break one of societies' rules, she would be ostracized because she was a "moral exemplar of her society."[105] In at least one story, the female heroine "displays an expensive handkerchief," and by doing so, "nearly loses her lover," since he regarded the handkerchief "coldly," because "its costliness gave him a sensation of sorrow." In this case, the lover "feared [Althea] was not the woman with whom he could pass his life happily."[106] In several instances many women face death, or are "morally tainted and marked for life," only to "live out their lonely existences as widows, spinsters, or nuns."[107] Morality was often tied to success in love and marriage.

Okker postulated the plot of fiction within the *Lady's Book* as "[rewarding] the good… consistently crafted…as a love story." Love stories were "described as the plot of woman's fiction, in which a heroine, often an orphan, makes her way in the world, depending primarily upon her own efforts and virtues."[108] This fictional pattern within the literature of magazines was "a plot of moral tendency," since it was assumed that readers would be "pleased and improved by reading stories in which good characters are rewarded."[109] In spite of a "lack of worldly sophistication," and "strong feelings," women were the "possessors of a powerful moral sense," which was developed by their mothers at a relatively young age. Women were also "considered naturally suited to inspire morality in their husbands and children," because they "were judged more innately moral and religious than men."[110]

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[105] Letteney, 37.
[106] Letteney, 37; Miss Leslie, "Althea Vernon; Or, the Embroidered Handkerchief," *The Lady's Book*, XVI (1838, serialized): 28-32, 58-63, 99-105, 170-175, 217-224, 264-272.
[107] Letteney, 1-2.
[108] Okker, 158; summarized from Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870,* (2d ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).
[109] Okker, 158.
[110] Letteney, 26.

Submissiveness

Submissiveness, the third virtue proffered by Welter, was "the most feminine virtue expected of women." A mid-nineteenth century definition of the term submissive characterizes this virtue as "yielding to the will or power of another; obedient," or "humble; acknowledging one's inferiority; testifying one's submission."[111] Welter explicated, "Men were supposed to be religious, although they rarely had time for it, and supposed to be pure…but men were the movers, the doers, and the actors." Women on the other hand were "passive, submissive responders...The order of dialogue was, of course, fixed in Heaven."[112] Welter also says a woman was supposed "to submit to fortune."[113]

According to Hume, the moral tendency of the fiction included in these periodicals shows that "early fictional heroines in *The Lady's Book* were non-threatening and submissive."[114] Women portrayed in the periodical fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne were depicted as "cheerful, pleasant, submissive, reverent, and entirely bound up in their familial duties."[115] The portrayal of these women was very similar to the "heroines of ladies' magazine fiction," which were "laced with generous doses of cloying sentimentality."[116] In one study, even non-white women were portrayed in periodical fiction similar to their white female peers. Clemmons found that in *The Lady's Book* "both white and Indian women were expected to marry and be cared for by their husbands."[117]

Letteney argues that female heroines in mid-nineteenth century magazine fiction "typically differed from the heroine in the sentimental novel in that she was less wooden a

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[111] Webster, *Dictionary*.
[112] Welter, 158-159.
[113] Welter, 161.
[114] Hume, 18.
[115] Letteney, 1-2.
[116] Letteney, 1-2.
[117] Clemmons, 41.

character, and more vital." This woman was "less the stereotypic unthinking, unresisting pawn, subject to the machinations of her husband, father, brother or lover than her sentimental counterpart,"[118] because she was "capable of making choices and was held responsible for those choices."[119] However, these fictional women were condemned when "strong [feelings] led [them] to commit any questionable or excessive act…typically the most acceptable behavior in the magazine fiction was [their] strict adherence to the most proper course of action."[120] In this way, women still had to be "submissive" to societal expectations, meaning if they deviated from the right path there were negative consequences to face.

Domesticity

Alice Vivian Letteney argues that by the mid-nineteenth century, "roughly half of the fiction which appeared in *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's* can be classified as domestic fiction." Domestic fiction typically reveals "interesting contradictory attitudes underneath the apparent support for the traditional restrictions of women's sphere."[121] It had a female protagonist or heroine with the "presence of healthy, desirable womanhood,"[122] addressing "matters of etiquette and dress, moral issues such as charity, forgiveness, and temperance, household skills, child-rearing, and the nature of woman's role in public life and in the public circle."[123] In addition to being the fourth virtue of True Womanhood, domesticity is a term utilized when describing white, middle-class writing by women in the nineteenth century. During the early to middle part of the nineteenth century, from the 1830s to 1850s, women's writing was dominated by the theme of domesticity, "a time when national boundaries were in violent flux…"[124] Domestic

[118] Letteney, 21.
[119] Letteney, 22.
[120] Letteney, 30.
[121] Baym, *Woman's Fiction*; Quoted in Cogan, 12.
[122] Cogan, 8.
[123] Letteney, 12.
[124] Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70, no. 3, "No More Separate Spheres!" (1998): 584.

ideology "placed women in the home."[125] Women were supposed to be "[tamed] and [taught] to live with man and under his control…." They were supposed to be especially "fond of home and skilled in household affairs," subsequently "bounded by kitchen and nursery, overlaid with piety and purity, and crowned with subservience." [126] These works were primarily "set in contemporary America," dealing with subject matter such as "etiquette and dress, moral issues such as charity, forgiveness, and temperance, household skills, child-rearing, and the nature of woman's role in public life and in the family circle."[127] Consequently the increase of "domestic fiction in popular American magazines in the 1840s produced a new brand of heroine – the domestic heroine – in whom the standards and values of mid-century American society were reflected."[128]

Welter cited domesticity as the fourth and final virtue of True Womanhood. Welter explained woman's place was by the hearth, "…as daughter, sister, but most of all as wife and mother."[129] Domestic, defined in the context of mid-nineteenth century, meant as the dictionary stated, "belonging to the house or home; pertaining to one's place of residence, and to the family."[130] By the 1850s, it became apparent that "*Godey's* was boasting of its domestic orientation: 'It is a Home Magazine; not foreign.'"[131] Many scholars have found that "Women's only proper sphere of activity in 19th century America was the home," which isolated women "from the taint of worldly experience." Women, according to Letteney, "were expected to remain

[125] Bishop, 49.
[126] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, (New York: Knopf, 1985), 178; quoted in Bishop, 49.
[127] Letteney, 12.
[128] Letteney, 5.
[129] Welter, 162.
[130] Webster, *Dictionary*.
[131] Cousin Robert, "Godey's Lady's Book," *The Lady's Book*, XLIX (September, 1854): 239; quoted in Letteney, 14.

unstained and untried, except in domestic affairs, for their entire lives."[132] Moreover, Welter found "Marriage was the proper state for the exercise of the domestic virtues."[133] The domestic heroine was "to harbor no ambitions of any kind, artistic, professional, or social. Pride was the domestic heroine's deadliest sin."[134] A woman who was not ambitious had no desire to move beyond the duties of home, however, she also differed from her female counterparts in sentimental fiction.

In domestic ideology Bishop explains the ideal woman embraced the virtues of the True Woman.[135] Lynn Reese Register Atkins found that "writers used the themes of outward mobility and domesticity"[136] to explain the "Woman Question" or "Modern Revolt," which involved female writers discussing the meaning of being a woman "in terms of economics, education, social relationships, and professional opportunities and accomplishments."[137] Atkins' research focuses on the "literary process or the literary tradition as it involves and affects images of women."[138]

Scholars have revealed that female authors generally "[associated] women with domesticity and men with politics."[139] In fact, the "cult of domesticity," ideology of "separate spheres," and the "culture of sentiment" imparts a paradigm for historical research, which provides researchers a paradigm to understand "the work of white women writers in relating a middle-class American culture in the nineteenth century." This illuminates the "permeability of the border that separates the spheres, demonstrating that the private feminized space of the home

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[132] Letteney, 21.
[133] Welter, 169.
[134] Letteney, 21.
[135] Bishop, 49.
[136] Lynn Reese Register Atkins, Lynn Reese Register. *Expanding the Limits of Domesticity: Nineteenth-century Nonfiction by Women*, (Dissertation. Wayne State University. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984), iv.
[137] Atkins, iii.
[138] Atkins, iii.
[139] Okker, 43.

both infused and bolstered the public male arena of the market." Amy Kaplan explains, "Sentimental values attached to maternal influence were used to sanction women's entry into the wider civic realm from which those same values theoretically excluded them." Kaplan posits recent scholarship has "argued that the extension of female sympathy across social divides could violently reinforce the very racial and class hierarchies that sentimentality claims to dissolve."[140] Other scholars evince the use of public and private spheres as "the usual definition of 'the domestic sphere' in current critical discourse revolves around the private household realm of the middle-class American family set over against the public realm of the marketplace and politics, a definition which takes no account of the other, equally essential boundary line between the domestic and the foreign."[141] Mainstream publications from the mid-nineteenth century illustrate that "The American dream of home – the vine-covered cottage, the orderliness, the sweetness and grace of domestic life is destroyed by women's aspirations to move beyond their appointed sphere."[142]

Domesticity has been studied in a variety of ways. For instance, scholars examined and discerned patterns of domesticity during the Washingtonian era by analyzing fine china patterns. Others have read and provided critical analysis regarding literary domestics or domestic novels and their traditional characteristics. Anne Firor Scott's definition of the "domestic metaphor" in the 1850s describes domesticity as an "image of a beautifully articulated, patriarchal society in which every southerner, black or white, male of female, rich or poor, had an appropriate place and was happy in it."[143]

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[140] *American Literature* 70, no. 3, (1998); Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," 581.
[141] Gretchen Kay Short, *Domestic Spheres: Home and Homeland in Nineteenth-century U. S. Domestic Fiction*, Dissertation (Irvine: University of California, 2000), 1.
[142] Letteney, 49.
[143] Anne Firor Scott, "Women's Perspective on the Patriarchy in the 1850s," The *Journal of American History*, Volume 61, Issue 1, (1974): 52-64.

Short argues scholars "began complicating this framework" during the 1990s "by recognizing the heterogeneity of domesticity and focusing on the intersections of race, class, ethnicity, and region." Lora Romero's research from '"Home Fronts: Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States," illustrates this viewpoint by "usefully [defining] this new approach as one, which recognizes the differences, variations, and conflicts within domesticity, rather than pitting a monolithic domesticity against an equally homogenous concept of patriarchy."[144] Short argues for the recognition of "the possibility that traditions, or even individual texts, could be radical on some issues...and reactionary on others...Or that some discourses could be oppositional without being outright liberating. Or conservative without being outright enslaving."[145] By approaching domesticity in this way, "scholars have begun to explore the 'class- and race- impelled subtexts' of domestic fiction and are drawing on the field of postcolonial theory and criticism for a new, more flexible framework."[146] Domesticity, then, offers room for exploration as a cultural value or identity.

Mary Kelley's examination of domestic novels shows that "Domesticity offered the woman what was essentially her only opportunity," since "it promised all she could be and embodied everything that was at stake, she fantasized as well as grasped for a peculiar success." Domesticity was "an intense confrontation with a single destiny. Hers was a life premised upon a principle crisis."[147] Kelley explained further that "to question and assess the quality of woman's duties was to question and assess the character of woman's life of domesticity," which questioned the role women were to play in life and the role "they were bound to accept."[148]

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[144] Short, 9; Lora Romero, *Home Fronts: Domesticity and its critics in the antebellum United States*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 6.
[145] Short, 9; Romero, 4.
[146] Short, 9; Romero, 3.
[147] Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-century America*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
[148] Kelley, 251.

"Kitchen" duties provided frequent consideration for the concept of domesticity in the domestic novel. For instance, in her scholarship, Laura Sloan Patterson utilizes the metaphor of the "kitchen" to help define nineteenth century ideology of the domestic novel. She states that such narratives "often offer implicitly political statements about what it means for a woman to work within her own kitchen at a particular nexus of class, race, gender, sexual, region, and temporal locations."[149] The "kitchen" analogy is important in terms of achieving and discerning patterns in narrative work. The way in which domestic duties were presented in the narrative form is essential to understanding and interpreting meaning, ideology and thematic virtues of female characters in the fictional form. According to *The Lady's Token*, wives were supposed to engage themselves, "only with domestic affairs - wait 'til your husband confides to you those of a high importance - and do not give your advice until he asks for it."[150] Women "at all times," should "behave in a manner becoming a woman, who had 'no arms other than gentleness.'"[151]

Domesticity has been studied in periodical fiction, especially in terms of understanding the domestic heroine or domestic fiction. Research on domesticity in magazine fiction has shown that the home or "male breadwinner's sanctuary," was the husband's "refuge from the rough, competitive, sometimes brutal world of business." Furthermore, the "secular altar of society" was "the domestic hearth."[152] Research has also shown that domesticity held certain demands on fictional female characters. For instance, the pressure put on the domestic heroine "to create the idyllic home were just as unrealistic as the scenes of graceful, untroubled, warm and genial domesticity to which the reader of periodical literature was treated."[153] In one story, a

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[149] Laura Sloan Patterson, *Where's the Kitchen? Feminism, domesticity, and Southern women's Fiction,* (Vanderbilt University. Dissertation, 2001).
[150] "The Ladies Token: or Gift of Friendship," edited by Colesworth Pinckney (Nashua, N. H., 1848): 119; quoted in Welter, 161.
[151] *The Ladies Token: or Gift of Friendship*, 119; Welter, 161.
[152] Letteney, 18.
[153] Letteney, 24.

wife greets her husband "with a smile as soft and bright as she had worn before the cares of married life accumulated around her." Modeling the proper family, "the baby sprang to his arms, and the other children clustered around him, vying with each other in the affectionate warmth with which they welcomed 'dear papa' to his own hearth."[154] Female heroines exhibited a "budding nurturing role that began as daughter and sister," which blossomed into "full bloom after a heroine's marriage."[155] Moreover, scholars believe "the 'true worth of woman' could be judged only 'within the circle of her domestic assiduity.'"[156]

The nineteenth-century woman as domestic heroine was "valued more for her housekeeping skills and her cheerful disposition than she was for her physical beauty…"[157] In a *The Lady's Book* story, the male protagonist rejects a beautiful woman because her "tattered" stockings. Instead, he chose a woman who seemed plain in beauty, but "whose stocking is neatly darned."[158] In *Graham's*, two male protagonists, one married and one bachelor, discuss the option to marry a "simple woman" who is "less intelligent and less accomplished," compared to marrying a woman who is "brilliant" and not domestic. The bachelor observes the married man's choice of a domestic wife and concludes, "I could not but think that my friend was right after all in his choice, and that I too, after a few more hesitating years, might be glad to find myself settled to such…."[159]

Women were portrayed as the foundation of family and the home, because they were selfless people supportive of their husbands, brothers, and parents. "The artifices of the coquette gave way to the 'natural' grace and simplicity of the American girl," Letteney argues, "health

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[154] E. A. Dupuy, "The Partners," *The Lady's Book*, XXXII (February, 1846): 70-71; quoted in Letteney, 18.
[155] Hume, 16.
[156] Hume, 16; F. R. Stauffer, "The Wife at Home." *The Lady's Book* (Oct. 1857): 43.
[157] Letteney, 40.
[158] Letteney, 40-41; "R. L. H.," "Darning Stockings," *The Lady's Book*, LX (June, 1860): 528-529.
[159] Letteney, 42; Alice B. Neal, "Settling to a Jemima," *Graham's*, XLIX (July, 1852): 44-48.

and a cheerful temperament were now considered the most desirable qualities in a prospective wife and mother."[160] The domestic heroine in at least one story "[served] as a guardian angel to her brother's family, moving in with them after his death."[161] In "Constance Allerton," the protagonist had "a beautiful face, a fine and graceful figure, and a highly cultivated mind. With warm feelings and deep sensibility, she possessed much energy of character," she was "affectionate, generous, and totally devoid of all selfish considerations. Constance had nothing so much at heart as the comfort and happiness of her brother's family."[162]

Welter argues, "The marriage night was the single great event of a woman's life, when she bestowed her greatest treasure upon her husband, and from that time on was completely dependent upon him, an empty vessel, without legal or emotional existence of her own."[163] Domesticity has been a reference to the home, to family life, and more specifically to the role of women within those parameters.[164] It is important to acknowledge the way in which marriage factored into family life. Only in marriage "could woman find happiness, and she was told her husband was the 'only being she must care to please.'"[165] Wives and mothers "mustered all [their] strong characteristics to hold [their] home together through turmoil and strife." These women were "religious, economic, laboring, nurturing backbone of the family," performing "all [their] duties with a smile."[166] According to Letteney, the plots included in Hawthorne's fiction were similar to those included in *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's,* because they "inevitably end in the domestic heroine's marriage or impending marriage." [167] Clemmons argues that marriage "remained women's ultimate goal," since "[her] alliances were to be based on love and mutual

[160] Letteney, 22.
[161] Letteney, 23.
[162] "Constance Allerton," *Atkinson's Casket*, XI (January, 1836): 13; quoted in Letteney, 23.
[163] Welter, 154-155.
[164] *Oxford English Dictionary*. [Cited 30 June 2003]. Available from http://www.oed.com.
[165] Hume, 16; "Marriage," *The Lady's Book* (August 1857): 223.
[166] Hume, 16.
[167] Letteney, 1-2.

respect."[168] According to Hume, at least during 1857 and 1858, "the roles of wife and mother were still of paramount importance," because "nearly every heroine, fictional or non-fictional, either was or became a wife and mother." Becoming a mother exhibited a woman's a single thought, "In giving birth to the child, she may sacrifice her own life," wrote the author of "Mother Trials."[169] Hume points out that personal attributes such as "genius, resourcefulness, faith, self-sacrifice, good sense and cheerfulness," aided magazine heroines, such as those in the *Lady's Book*, "face up to these all-important duties." Moreover, her research reveals that an unwed woman was branded as an "unnatural position," [170] while a "fictional pioneer wife was called 'heroic' simply because she gave birth."[171]

A common plot of periodical fiction during this era included a story centered on love or a romantic plot. Letteney argues "love does seem inevitable in the plots of domestic fiction," and "young women of the age were strictly enjoined to obey their parents and believe that their first duty is to their family, they were also led to believe that their lives would be empty and dull without romantic love."[172] In at least one story entitled "The Frozen Heart,"[173] the female protagonist's "heart is frozen because she has been jilted by her lover." She "covers up her tragedy," becomes engaged, and "when her former lover asks her to marry him, coldly refuses."[174]

Welter explains that much of the advice given to women during this time was "directed to woman as wife," and that "marriage was the proper state for the exercise of the domestic

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[168] Clemmons, 42.
[169] "Mother's Trials," 21; Quoted in Hume, 14.
[170] Hume, 16; "Editor's Table" *The Lady's Book* (September 1858): 274.
[171] Hume, 16; Meta Victoria Victor, "May: The Squatter's Daughter." *The Lady's Book* (January 1857):19.
[172] Letteney, 31.
[173] Violette Woods, "The Frozen Heart," *Godey's Lady's Book*, (December, 1868).
[174] Mott, 587.

virtues." Welter explains that in at least one essay entitled "True Love and a Happy Home,"[175] that while marriage was the best decision for a woman to make, "it was not absolutely necessary."[176] Welter also points to George Burnap who "saw marriage as 'that sphere for which woman was originally intended, and to which she is so exactly fitted to adorn and bless, as the wife, the mistress, of a home, the solace, the aid, and the counsellor of that ONE, for whose sake alone the world is of any consequence to her.'"[177] In the fictional portrayal of women, "the domestic heroine who was both wife and mother was also responsible for the education and upbringing of her children."[178] So, evidence of the woman's role to marry and be a proper wife is seemingly overwhelming.

The theme of marrying for money was not popular. According to Welter, women should "choose only the high road of true love and not truckle to the values of a materialistic society." In a story by Elizabeth Doten, the female protagonist made a "crass choice," by deciding to marry for money. In the end, the protagonist believed "it [was] a terrible thing to live without love." Believing that "a woman who dares marry for aught but the purest affection, calls down the just judgments of heaven upon her head."[179]

While magazine fiction during the mid-nineteenth century communicated marriage as the singular goal of a woman's life, some research has suggested that women, such as Sarah J. Hale, portrayed the relationship of married men and women as a "…shared, rather than divergent," experience. Furthermore, Hale showed men and women lived in a world more similar than different according to an interpretation of *Northwood: A Tale of New England*.[180] Okker goes on

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[175] "True Love and a Happy Home," *Young Ladies Oasis*; Welter, 169.
[176] Welter, 169.
[177] Burnap, George. "Sphere and Duties of Woman," Burnap, George. *Sphere and Duties of Woman* (Baltimore, MD: John Murphy, 1841), 64; Welter, 170.
[178] Letteney, 25.
[179] Elizabeth Doten, "Marrying for Money," *The lily of the valley*, n. v. (1857): 112; Welter, 171.
[180] Okker, 43; Okker discusses this topic in depth as it concerns Hale's novel *Northwood*.

to state although Hale's accounts in *Lady's Book* defined women through their "Familial relations – as aunts, sisters, or daughters – their worth and happiness were not determined by their roles as wives and mothers."[181] An apparent shift of public sentiment was taking place regarding the culture of society and the view of marriage and the woman's role within those boundaries in the essays included in periodicals. Francoise Basch states, "In the nineteenth century the oppression of women appeared starkly in the marriage relations: wedding bells rang in major inequalities between bride and bridegroom and sternly prescribed different gender roles."[182] Basch goes on to state, "The women's rights advocates, from their very origins, had addressed the slavery of wifehood, making it the paradigm of female oppression, and the battle cry of emancipation…marriage appeared as a metaphor for the complexities of both the public and private spheres."[183] Consequently, a shift began to appear regarding the public sentiments of marriage, however, the fiction during this time largely held on to the inequalities of this institution.

Although Welter's concept of True Womanhood defined four specific attributes, some female writers seemed to struggle with the complexities of womanhood and the depiction of women in society. Cindy Ann Stiles examined the magazine fiction of Caroline Gilman, a Southern writer during the mid-nineteenth century. Her analysis found that Gilman embraced contradictory sentiments in her work within periodical fiction. Stiles exposed "conflicting responses to the issues of class, race, and gender," because of disparagement in the "idleness of the antebellum Southern leisure class in favor of [Gilman's] Yankee, Puritanical notions of self-improvement nevertheless contradict a pervasive support of class stratification." In fact, Gilman

[181] Okker, 66.
[182] Francoise Basch, "Women's Rights and the Wrongs of Marriage in mid-nineteenth-century America," *History Workshop Journal*, 22 (1986): 18-40.
[183] Basch, 19.

defended the institution of slavery with an "acceptance of paternalism," which "[opposed] her very real awareness as a woman in the nineteenth-century South of the destructive forces of oppression." Gilman's depiction of women formed "the most significant paradox," in the *Southern Rose*. "Just as Gilman sought both to defend and defy her culture in light of its cultural polarities, so, too did she attempt to reconcile in the pages of the *Rose* divisions within herself in relationship to that culture."[184] So, it is apparent that female writers sometimes struggled with the topic of gender, oppression, society and its membership when it came to fictional story-telling.

Physical Description of Women

Also included in this chapter is a brief description of characteristics contained in the representation of women in periodical fiction as it pertains to their physical appearance and other behavioral portrayals. The physical description of fictional women in the mid-nineteenth century shows that the domestic heroine did not require "striking beauty or captivating charm to get her man." Instead, a woman who was "pretty," "natural," and "unaffected" seemed to be the new criteria of feminine beauty or attractiveness.[185] Hume's research found that heroines in *The Lady's Book* fiction, from 1857 to 1858, "were still sensible women who put little emphasis on high fashion and fancy houses but sought happiness 'in the path of duty alone.'"[186] In fact, fictional female heroines who were "described as beautiful wore humble clothing; many were described as plain women or girls with attractive inner qualities." *The Lady's Book* "went so far as to extol the merits of 'homely women.'"[187] Women were characterized as "sweet and gentle," rather than by physical beauty. Their manners were "remarkably easy and ingratiating."[188] The

[184] Cindy Ann Stiles, *Windows Into Antebellum Charleston: Caroline Gilman and the "Southern Rose" Magazine,* (Dissertation, University of South Carolina, UMI Dissertation Services a Bell & Howell company, 1994), 16-17.
[185] Letteney, 40.
[186] Hume, 15; Stauffer, 44.
[187] "A Series of Truths," *The Lady's Book* (June 1857): 498; Hume, 15.
[188] Pauline Forsyth, "The Fire," *The Lady's Book* (February 1858): 133; Hume, 15.

heroine of "Memory Bells," which appeared in *The Lady's Book*, displayed the "quiet dignity of womanhood," while also being "devoid of personal vanity."[189]

Behavioral Characteristics

Heroines in mid-nineteenth century magazine fiction were portrayed as "[sacrificing] comfort, happiness and even safety to ensure the happiness of others…"[190] This attribute "began when she was yet a girl, 'a God daughter' who was expected to be 'strangely blind to her own happiness' and serve as 'the steady light of her parents' house.'"[191] When a woman married she "[sacrificed] her happiness," because she was a true woman.[192] According to Hume's research "'It is in the midst of trial and suffering, misfortune and anguish, that the nobler traits of the true wife are displayed in all their characteristic grandeur.'"[193] Wives were not to be "'chilled by selfishness.'"[194]

Women in magazine fiction were "were almost always well-educated, intelligent, book lovers," but these characters "tempered their genius with common sense and did not let their intellectual pursuits harm their physical or emotional health."[195] Hume's research illuminates one example, a heroine was "'fond of books, but not sufficiently so to be in danger of becoming pedantic.'"[196] Another female character read books "as only part of her busy lifestyle," alongside "music, with riding and walking."[197] Consequently, "woman's genius" was promoted, even if it was "earned outside the home."[198] Fictional heroines were "expected to be intellectuals

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[189] Virginia B. Townsend, "The Memory Bells" *The Lady's Book* (February 1857): 138-43; Hume, 15.
[190] Hume, 14.
[191] Hume, 14; quoted from "A Good Daughter," *The Lady's Book* (March 1857): 301.
[192] Hume, 14.
[193] Hume, 14; Stauffer, 43.
[194] Hume, 14; Stauffer, 44.
[195] Hume, 11; Townsend, "The Memory," 146; Victor, 214.
[196] Hume, 11; "The Tableau: By An Old Maid," *The Lady's Book* (April 1857): 318.
[197] Hume, 11; Helen Irving, "Arthur Rivers," *The Lady's Book* (February 1857): 146.
[198] Hume, 11; "Celebrated Women: Mrs. Hemans," *The Lady's Book* (May 1857): 420-421; Virginia B. Townsend, "Lost Relatives," *The Lady's Book* (October 1857): 307.

but were to use the power and influence of their minds to create domestic harmony." So, the heroine of mid-nineteenth century periodical fiction accepted reading and other activities to improve her education and lifestyle.

Women "who were victimized by men or nature [fought] back with intellect, daring and enterprise."[199] Similar to fictional heroines portrayed in earlier eras, "Women of 1857-1858 faced trials as did their heroic predecessors." According to Hume, "sometimes they were mistreated or deserted," even so, these women "were well able to face adversity and even triumph over it."[200] Women were portrayed as strong-willed, having the ability to overcome obstacles, even when mistreated by men. In fact, the domestic heroine's strong emotional traits illustrates that "melancholy did not hang on the brows of *The Lady's Book's* heroines." Instead, women "were cheerful, even merry, women who faced hardships with smiles and seemed to revel in hardships."[201]

Although women were portrayed as intellectual and strong-willed, they did not seek attention or fame. When Agnes Flagg, in "Lost Relatives," attained fame and "success as a writer," she did not have the ability to "become accustomed to being 'stared at,'" because "being lionized disturbs [her] so much."[202] In another example, a woman "gave up the life of a writer for marriage," because, she said, happiness "was better than fame."[203]

Summary

This chapter shows that in women's mainstream magazines such as *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's* short stories depended a great deal on its moral plot as a way to please their national audience. Examples of short stories within these magazines illuminate several attributes

[199] Hume, 11.
[200] Hume, 13.
[201] Hume, 16.
[202] Hume, 16; Townsend, "Lost Relatives," 402.
[203] Hume, 16; "Why I am," 315.

embraced by female characters. True Womanhood ideology seems frequent among mainstream publications. This study will compare the ideology of the True Woman with the short stories published in periodicals by Susan Petigru King. The following chapter summarizes King's fiction.

CHAPTER 3: BIOGRAPHY

SUSAN PETIGRU KING AND THE CULTURE OF ANTEBELLUM WOMEN IN HIGH LIFE

"Mrs. King, I believe, is a bad woman." - J. W. Stuart[204]

[204] J. W. Stuart in a letter to his mother, dated June 11, 1855. SCHS.

Biography

Susan Petigru King's contribution to periodical literature opens the door to valuable insights of the upper-class culture of women during the antebellum period of American history. Many experiences of King's life led to a lonely existence, because by the end of her life many family members and long-time friends ostracized her from society. Understanding King's life will provide the context necessary to understand her work. This chapter is a synopsis of King's life put forth through her personal letters and biographical information regarding her upbringing and education, marriages, family, literary accomplishments, as well as King's thoughts concerning upper-class society and vice versa. Illuminating the events which shaped her life will provide insight and the historical context central to her literary contribution.

On 23 October 1824 Susan Dupont Petigru was born into Charleston high life as one of the four children of James Louis Petigru and Jane Amelia Postell Petigru. Although he had a humble upbringing in Abbeville, South Carolina, her father's law firm provided a comfortable lifestyle for the family, and they became part of Charleston's "high society." While Petigru established a well-known law practice in Charleston, he was most noted for his political ideology, particularly for his Unionist ideals, since he was not in favor of secession. This political stance brought forth much public commentary and criticism frequently evidenced in periodicals and newspapers of the era. Even so, he was accepted and supported by the public, eventually becoming both an Attorney General and state representative for South Carolina.[205]

Education

Their wealth and lifestyle provided the Petigru children an opportunity to be educated in the best schools. During her youth, King attended Madame Talvande's on Legare Street in

[205] Aiken, 66; William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, *James Louis Petigru: Southern Conservative, Southern Dissenter*, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

Charleston.[206] Here she learned the French language alongside other students such as Mary Boykin Chesnut, who would also go on to become a notable female Southern writer.[207] When she was 15, Susan Petigru boarded at Madame Guillon's academy, known as a "fashionable ladies school" in Philadelphia, to further her education in the French language.[208] Here she befriended Acelie, the daughter of Madame Guillon. Eventually Acelie would marry Dr. John Togno, and she remained a close friend to Susan Petigru throughout most of her life – until Susan Petigru slowly lost every meaningful friendship and family relationship over the span of her lifetime.[209] Susan Petigru's literary accomplishments were firmly supported by her education, particularly when she began translating short stories for *Russell's Magazine*.[210]

In a letter written to Susan Petigru, her father emphasized his pleasure in the academic pursuits of his children:

> …More than a week ago, I had the pleasure of hearing from you, and then resolved that I would take the very earliest opportunity of expressing the pleasure, which your well-formed and easily legible character of writing gave me. I never could enter into the refinement that sets no value on a fine hand…I will allow you an almost boundless latitude of innovation in other habits; such as reading – studying – I mean reading novels and studying amusements…[211]

Still, Susan Petigru's father expressed concern regarding the instruction of his daughter suggesting, "…Sue I am afraid will *after all of our pains* turn out a wit." However, he thought she showed progress writing "oftener than she did, and her French letters, though French only in

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[206] Pease, *Family*, 43.
[207] Mary Boykin Chesnut was the wife of South Carolina Senator, James Chesnut, Jr. She is best known for her work entitled *A Diary From Dixie* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2003, electronic version http://www.docsouth.unc.edu/Chesnut/maryches.html); Aiken, 67.
[208] James Petigru E. M. Carson, *Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru: The Union Man of South Carolina*, (Washington, D. C.: H. L. & J. B. McQueen, Inc., 1920), 204; Pease, *Family,* 44.
[209] Carson, 204.
[210] King translated several short stories from the French Language – as noted by a copy of the editor's notes at the South Carolinia Library in Columbia.
[211] James Louis Petigru (JLP) to SDPK-B, April 1, 1842. SCHS.

the words, show that she has made some improvement."[212] Susan Petigru had a rocky relationship with her parents for several years – sometimes lashing out because of the education encouraged by both her father and mother. Although Petigru saw improvement in his daughter's education, she remained unhappy nonetheless and Petigru thought his daughter "unreasonable." He believed Susan Petigru saw "better society than she would do at home," and that her host, Mrs. Drayton, supported Susan Petigru to the extent that she "could not have a better model nor visit a house by which she will improve so much…"[213]

Frustrated with her education, Susan Petigru thought the learning experience nothing more than "lessons, lessons, 'tout le tem[p]s.'"[214] Petigru's inability to achieve independence coupled with personal frustrations of coming into her own, caused a temperamental relationship with her parents. Her father declared that she should only "dine out but once a month."[215] In a letter written to her sister Caroline, Susan Petigru lived in a much "*reduced* frame of mind."[216] According to historians William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, Susan Petigru "questioned whether a finishing education was of any utility at all for girls doomed to a life in the domestic sphere."[217] Susan Petigru's frustration with school seemed to be an outgrowth of her independent sentiment. Nevertheless, after a visit to one of the family homes in Badwell, her father remained hopeful, "Sue is so much civilized by her visit to Badwell that she speaks seriously of commencing the study of music."[218] Whether she continued her study of music seriously is unknown, but

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[212] JLP to Jane Petigru North (JPN) May 21, 1839; Quoted in Petigru, *Life and Letters*, 204. Emphasis added.
[213] JLP to JPN May 21, 1839; Quoted in Petigru, *Life and Letters*, 204.
[214] Pease, *Family*, 44.
[215] Ibid. 44.
[216] Ibid. 44.
[217] Ibid. 44. King would later fictionalize frustrated sentiments regarding "finishing schools" in the novel *Lily*. SDPK-B, *Lily: A Novel*, ed. Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease (1855; reprint, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 72.
[218] JLP to APA, February 6, 1843. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.

evidence illustrates that Susan Petigru did go on to become one of the most notable writers of the antebellum South.

Marriage

Forced to sell his rice plantation during the Panic in 1837, the financial decline of Susan Petigru's father began. According to his grandson, James Petigru Carson, the elder Petigru's financial breakdown resulted in a failed business venture in Mississippi.[219] Scholar David Aiken explains that Petigru "was forced to surrender to his creditors everything except his home and law office."[220] In a letter to his sister Jane, Petigru explained "…I have this day sold the place and half the Negroes for $55,000. It is a melancholy thing to sell from compulsion, which is in effect my case…"[221] The financial strain felt by the Petigru family permeated into other aspects of life, particularly the marriage of Susan Petigru to her first husband.

Because of the economic strife overwhelming the Petigru family, Susan Petigru's mother encouraged her daughters to marry for monetary motivations as opposed to love and affection. Her sister, Caroline Petigru, married William A. Carson on December 16, 1841.[222] Initially, Susan Petigru declined a proposal from Henry Campbell King in 1842. A letter written by one of her aunts explained, "[Susan Petigru] seemed half sorry for what she had done." Her aunt described the difficulty to which Susan Petigru objected to Henry's physical appearance, "…The worst description – very short – very broad and very round shouldered and with all a little lame." Susan Petigru's mother and sister believed she "had done a most unfortunate thing for herself,"

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[219] Carson, 192.
[220] David Aiken, 67; Carson, 203.
[221] JLP to JPN, January 25, 1839. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS. Also quoted in Carson, *Life and Letters*, 203.
[222] The Charleston *Daily Courier* reported "Married on Thursday, 16th inst., by the Rev. Paul Trapier, William Augustus Carson to Caroline, eldest daughter of James L. Petigru." Quoted in Carson, 207.

by refusing the proposal by Henry since he came from a wealthy family similar to the Petigrus.[223]

Evidenced through personal letters, Petigru strongly disagreed with both her mother and sister regarding this matter, but accepted the marriage proposal from Henry in 1843, at the age of nineteen. James L. Petigru seemed satisfied with the match calling it a "nine days' wonder that nobody wonders at any more." He portrayed personal satisfaction with her decision: "I hope you like it, as we are all very well pleased here; but when the knot is to be tied we do not know."[224] The announcement of Susan Petigru's marriage to Henry appeared in the *Charleston Daily Courier*: "Married on Thursday, 30th of March, by the Reverend Paul Trapier – Henry C. King to Susan, youngest daughter of James L. Petigru, Esq."[225] One of Susan Petigru's relatives described Henry as "…the best of Mr. K's [Mitchell King's] sons for intelligence and industry."[226]

Like her father, Henry King and his father, Judge Mitchell King, were also attorneys in Charleston.[227] In 1854, a notice published in the *Charleston Daily Courier* stated "THE subscribers continue to Practice LAW, as Partners, under the name of PETIGRU & KING, as heretofore." Beneath this declaration are the names of J. L. Petigru, Henry C. King, and J. Johnston Pettigrew. James Petigru Carson paints a flattering portrait of Henry:

> …more noted for his manliness, kindness of heart and geniality than for ambition to shine in his profession, being overshadowed by the brilliancy of his partner. He was an extremely good lawyer, but seldom appeared in court, and devoted himself to the details of the office. Many of the students used to say that they learned much more law from him than they ever did from Mr. Petigru.[228]

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[223] LPN to APA, June 18, 1842. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[224] JLP, February 26th, 1842. SCHS. Also quoted in Carson, 213.
[225] Carson, 226.
[226] LPN to APA, June 18, 1842. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[227] Aiken, 67.
[228] Carson, 226.

Susan Petigru King's father-in-law expressed concern in personal journal entries concern for the marriage between Henry C. King and his wife: "my headache increases," he wrote.

It is evident that King's relationship with Henry was rocky at best. Carey North, King's cousin, explained she "is nearly mad, unfortunate woman, but others are not blameless."[229] North did not place entire blame upon her cousin for the adverse relationship that developed between Henry and King. Henry's discontent with his wife spread through the Petigru family. On a visit to Jane Petigru North, Henry bemoaned King's laziness:

> [Henry] gives me the idea of the most amiable of men and [Susan Petigru] summons one in her way of speaking to him of her poor mother – rather flippant – for instance, he will say King is too lazy sleeping all day – well Henry says she why did you not find that one before? It would have saved a great deal of trouble on both sides. Now tho' this is said in good humour and taken in good part, it is never the less playing with edged tools…[230]

King's witty banter frequented scorn from members of her family who believed her behavior inappropriate. Witty banter and behavior invoked scandalous gossip, further hindering relationships within society.[231]

In a letter to her Aunt Adele Petigru Alston, Susan Petigru revealed her thoughts concerning marriage. Susan Petigru's Aunt Jeanne North accused her of discouraging a marriage proposal to her daughter, Carey North. Susan Petigru alleged no such action transpired, and defended herself in a letter to Adele Petigru Alston:

> Now, justice compels me to say, that I had not and have not a shadow of influence with Carey, but, if I professed such influences, it would most assuredly be exercised in urging her never to marry where she did not love. This is one of the *monomaniacs* of my life…[232]

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[229] Pease, *Family*, 80-81; Mitchell King diary, June 30, July 3, 1856, May 21, 14, 1857, UNC; Jane Carolina North Pettigrew to Jane Gilbert Pettigrew North, January 10, 1858, copy, SCHS. According to Pease and Pease research, allegedly an extramarital affair between Henry and a black woman was probable. However, the researcher did not find evidence to support the postulation that an extramarital affair was present.
[230] JPN to APA, July 29, 1843. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[231] JPN To APA dated July 29, 1843. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS. King was labeled as "indiscreet" by a relative of hers, suggesting her behavior called negative attention from others.
[232] SDPK-B to APA on August 26, 1849. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS; italics emphasized by the researcher.

It is apparent that King's negative experiences in her first marriage caused her to criticize the pressures felt by women in society who were pushed to marry because it made a good "match." King's marriage to Henry bore only one child, Adele King.[233]

Family Opinions

Marriage was not the only trial for King to endure; she also had to deal with the misgivings of family and society, that is, the negative opinions and behavior towards her as an individual. Petigru described his daughter as "a sweet child you," and "so docile, so gentle and so lively, as to get the imputation of being Pa's pet…" Petigru wrote much of this flattery prior to a homily regarding poor temper and behavior, asking King to "resume the ascendant," and to place her "love of distinction upon the doing of what is right."[234]

In fact, King's father frequently lectured his daughter regarding appropriate behavior, even after her marriage to Henry, "…I hope your good behavior will be equal to the kind reception which your allies have given you," he wrote in 1843, "I have often said that I should be as much chagrined to turn a bad wife out of my nursery, as to send a student from the office to be rejected." His lecture continued:

> I confess my dear Sue, that I was grieved when I heard you some days ago, under the influence of a slight vexation, express pleasure in the prospect of giving poor Anne Deas as much trouble as you could in the alterations of the dress which displeased you. I had not the opportunity of letting you know the painful impression this made on me, and tho' she is a humble individual and I dare say you did not in fact use your power to annoy her, my affection was wounded by a momentary display of a feeling that rendered you less worthy of esteem.[235]

Petigru advised King that proper conduct with others witnessed the "effect, which politeness has on those who are attentive to its rules." He urged her to be more refined and gracious towards

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[233] Alexia Jones Helsley, "Henry Campbell and Susan Petigru King," *Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association,* (2001): 11-18.
[234] JLP to SPK, May 11, 1843. SCHS; also found in Petigru, 227.
[235] JLP to SPK, May 11, 1843. SCHS; also found in Carson, 227.

others. He said, "The instances which come under our own eyes of persons who, after tormenting others, become like poor Mrs. McRee, their own executioners and go mad from sheer ill nature and peevishness, should speak a terrible warning to all that are sensible of any infirmity of temper…"[236]

According to historians, King sported "her father's temper as well as his appearance, [and] she lacked his self-control."[237] Perhaps recognizing the effort that it took, Petigru also acknowledged instances when his daughter did *not* exercise her infamous temper. He wrote, "I am glad you did not insult Mr. Trapier, but sorry you came so near doing so. He is an unpopular man, and it is not the part of a generous mind to be merry at his expense…"[238]

Petigru lectured his daughter in another homily once more in 1849 exclaiming her life would be "lost in quicksands and shallows," if she did not curb her negative disposition towards certain members of society. This homily revealed the similarities Petigru acknowledged between himself and his daughter, which pained him to great lengths. He lectured the "triumphs" over "Temper," in the hopes of correcting his daughter's temperament.[239]

Despite his homilies concerning proper behavior in society, King's father loved his daughter immensely. In October of 1847, King was involved in an accident. "My dear Sue," he wrote, "in the car on Thursday I met Dr. Moultrie and was happy to learn that your wound was completely healed without any scar and that the mark which it leaves, would only be temporary."[240] In a letter to Henry C. King, Petigru wrote, "When we left you we were ready to reproach ourselves for not turning back with you till we saw her [King] out of danger. The idea

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[236] JLP to SPK, May 11, 1843. SCHS; also found in Carson, 227.
[237] William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, *James Louis Petigru: Southern Conservative, Southern Dissenter*, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 75.
[238] JLP to SPK, September 12th, 1845. SCHS; also found in Petigru, 249.
[239] JLP to SPK July 12th, 1849. SCHS.
[240] JLP to SPK, October 9th, 1847. SCHS.

of the danger presented itself differently however, to Caroline and me. I dreaded a fever as the effect of such a shock, and she thought of the lamentable consequences, if the wound should leave a scar."[241] The cause of this accident is uncertain, but, Petigru felt particular concern for his daughter because he wrote of the debacle on more than one occasion.

Many more individuals, other than King's father, worried about her behavior. Several relatives discussed their misgivings and ill-considered behavior in their personal letters. Louise North wrote often of both King and her sister Caroline:

> I never hear of Caroline and Sue except through Sister Louise – and she hears very sad things of their imprudent conduct, would to God they had an infusion of Johnstons purity – He spent last Saturday night and Sunday on the Island at Brother's, and told me King is in great dread and fear that the yellow fever in Savannah will cause her mother to return!![242]

King also struggled in the relationship with her mother Jane Amelia Postell Petigru, which was questionable at best – through personal letters, King's comments portrayed an unstable relationship. Jane Petigru North, one of King's aunts, complained that King's remarks regarding her mother were rather "flippant."[243] King criticized her mother's tactics to gain attention at home. In a letter to her Aunt Adele, King explained her mother's ill predicament while enduring a cold, "…being unused to colds, and very used to doing a lot of grunting it really makes me laugh to hear mama go…You could not believe it unless you heard her, and I have several times come very near 'a difficulty' by suggesting that if she made such unearthly noises and strains, she will break a blood-vessel."[244] She saw her mother as a woman in need of attention, and with opposition to any sympathetic response King wrote, "Poor Mama! She has been accustomed to have Papa make-believe he thought her dying whenever she went on so, that she can't give up

[241] JLP to HCK, September 20th, 1847. SCHS.
[242] LPN to APA, August 30th, 1852. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[243] JPN to APA, July 29, 1843. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[244] SDPK-B to APA, August 28, 1863. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.

the dodge and my conscience can't let me perform such comedies. I must reserve my sympathy until it is really needed…"[245] Despite their relationship, in 1863 King lived with her mother in Summerville to avoid the perils of war in Charleston.[246]

Nevertheless, family antipathy concerning King continued throughout all the years of her life. Louise North explained how one of King's aunts was displeased with her behavior and "terrible rage," by explaining "Aunt Jane Petigrew has been in a terrible rage with King for something or other and did not wish her to spend the summer on the Island." Louise North described how "Sue was very angry and vowed she would return to Town the next day but Cousin Caroline persuaded her not to…."[247] Over the years, tension grew between King and members of her family.

King was aware of the backlash from others regarding her writing and behavior, particularly her own flesh and blood. In a letter she explains her "experience is so peculiar, that I am obliged to shut my eyes an dears to the most glaring things, or else live in total solitude." Continuing to lament her misgivings King wrote:

> …Far between the supercilious neglect of one half and the covert slander of t' other, my couch of life has many crumpled rose leaves – and I really have to be grateful to those who only abuse me behind my back, and are not impertinent to my helpless face. And then for my as-yet-unexploded-in-any-way acquaintances – not only is their number very small, but like the sieges, it is a mere matter of time – wait long enough and they will follow the zest….[248]

King goes on to record "brutal treatment" suffered by her at the hand of her Aunt Jeanne, "so near in blood to me that she should have often poisoned Papa's mind, and made him suspect to

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[245] SDPK-B to APA, August 28, 1863. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[246] SDPK-B to APA, August 28, 1863: "…Meanwhile Summerville empties out some of its inhabitants and others pour in. There is not a vacant room on a lot even, to be had, and yet, should the city fall, which may God avert! They say, this spot would prove no safety. I shall not attempt to move mamma until all is lost, or this settlement entirely deserted. Should that be the case, I have already secured rooms at Barhamville, and will retreat there."
[247] LPN to APA, July 19th, 1859. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[248] SDPK-B to APA, August 28, 1863. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS; Portions of this quote were also revealed by Pease and Pease, *Family*, 173.

me – run me down with slandering sneers…"[249] During her life, King encountered growing resentment and rejection from family members, who refused to accept her conduct.

Literary Achievements

When King began writing, she received noticeable praise and avid support from a very proud father:

> You have burst upon me as an author…So little was I anticipating such a thing…I have no doubt that you will receive a great deal of praise, for the dialogue is witty and sparkling, and the descriptions circumstantial and striking. I dare say that if you were to take to study, you might, in time, attain to the delineation of the passions and rise to the walk in which Miss Austen is admired. But it is something to do as much, though in a lower style of art, and tho' your performance is indebted for its success to the initiation of temporary evanescent modes of behavior and can hardly be expected to survive the present fashion, it will be remembered longer than anything that any of the rest of us have done. And that is something that lays your kin under an obligation and is felt with pleasure mixed with pride….[250]

It was common for authors to publish anonymously during the nineteenth century and King's father suggested that his daughter maintain the secrecy of her authorship for a very specific reason. "I believe that the interest would be better kept up by standing in the reserve and making the authorship a sort of secret," he wrote, "It can't be more, considering how many are in the plot." Her father believed preserving anonymous authorship would help to cover up the many "real-life" characters included in King's narratives. He felt her authorship should remain a secret to mitigate the potential backlash from society.

Throughout her literary career she was influenced by the support of other authors, most notably William Gilmore Simms. *The Vision of Cortes, Cain, and Other Poems*, by Simms, is dedicated to King's father.[251] Through his close association with her father, Simms came into frequent contact with King, and he encouraged King's writing and supported her position as a

[249] SDPK-B to APA, August 28, 1863. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[250] JLP to SPK, November 18, 1853. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[251] Aiken, 68.

"Charleston writer of merit."[252] In addition to befriending Mary Boykin Chesnut, King also met William Thackeray, the English novelist, apparently much to his chagrin. In one letter he mentioned, "I got on by feeling and expressing a fellow-loathing for a certain person whose name I daresay you can guess. And yet vulgar as that Individual is I rather like h- bless me I was going to mention the Individuals sex!" [253]

King's work was included in magazines and newspapers in Charleston, South Carolina and New York. These publications included the Charleston *Daily Courier, Russell's Magazine, Knickerbocker,* and *Harper's Magazine*. King was also the most prominent of *Russell's* female contributors. Few have acknowledged her contributions of translations from the French included in *Russell's Magazine*. [254] King apparently wrote a work entitled "Correspondence" penned under the pseudonym "Rachel Strong." Her serialized work includes *Sylvia's World* and *Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach*. The former was serialized in *Knickerbocker,* while the latter was serialized in *Russell's Magazine*. *Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach* includes the more widely known story "Marriage of Persuasion," which was reprinted in *The Signet Classic Book of Southern Short Stories*. *Busy Moments of an Idle Woman* was published by Appleton & Co. in 1853. In 1855 Harper published *Lily: A Novel*, and Stockton published *Gerald Gray's Wife* in

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[252] Aiken, 68.

[253] In Thackeray's *Letters* a footnote describes a dinner party attended by Thackeray and eludes to King: Lucy Baxter described the evening soiree, "where I went alone with [Thackerary], my sister not being well, a lady was present who from their first meeting had antagonized Mr. Thackeray. She was clever and rather brilliant, but had written some very trashy novels, whose reputation had certainly not extended beyond her native city. On this and other occasions she seemed determined to attract Mr. Thackeray's attention, to his great annoyance. At last when something was said about the tribulations of authors, the lady leaned across the table, saying in a lour voice, 'You and I, Mr. Thackeray, *being in the same* boat, can understand, can we not?' A dead silence fell, a thundercloud descended upon the face of Mr. Thackeray, and the pleasure of the entertainment was at an end…. This annoyance on the part of the lady was the culmination of numerous attacks, and struck just the wrong chord. She is referred to as the 'Individual' in a letter to my mother." Written by Lucy Baxter, *American Family*, 13-14; found in Thackeray's *Letters*, 569.

[254] The translated works are as follows: "The Last Fairy: Translated from the French of Jules Sandeau," "The Marble Bust," "Passages from My Autobiography" by Lady Morgan Sidney, "An Old Acquaintance: Freely Translated from the 'Scenes Hollandaises,' of Hildebrand," and "The Twins of Hotel Corneille: From the French."

1864.[255] In 1868, "My Debut," a novella, was published in *Harper's Magazine.*[256] In 1856, the Charleston *Daily Courier* published a whimsical narrative entitled "Bal Costume," which was considered a detailed account of an evening gala she attended earlier that year. Her narratives within *Russell's Magazine* include: "A Braid of Auburn Hair," "A Little Lesson for Little Ladies," "Correspondence," "How Gertrude was Married," "Lucy Sheldon's Dream," "My Ball Tablets," "Woman's Warning. An Allegory," and the short stories from *Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach*: "Gossip," "Marriage of Persuasion," "Male Flirt," "The Best of Friends," and "A Coquette."

Scholars are less certain of King's other publications. In the University of Georgia library catalog King is listed as the author of a novel entitled *An Actress in High Life: An Episode in Winter Quarters,* which was published by Derby and Jackson in 1860 and appeared in serial form in *Russell's Magazine* from January 1859 to March 1860. However, Loftis disagrees with the authorship in his dissertation.[257] Therefore, this novel published in serial format, is not included in the research findings.

Critics both loved and loathed King's writing. Frederick A. Porcher wrote in a critique of *Busy Moments* stating "This is decidedly a clever book…The Authoress is a true woman – her eye never fails to take in at a glance the whole dress of every lady she meets, and she reports it with, perhaps, rather too much detail…" Porcher also found that three of the stories included in the novel were "directly" from "Charleston Society" to which King "unequivocally condemns." He questions whether the female protagonist in *Busy Moments* "can, at all, appreciate the

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[255] Duke University Press reprinted *Lily* and *Gerald Gray's Wife* in 1993 with an introduction by William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease.
[256] Aiken, 70.
[257] Loftis asserts the authorship of this serialized text has been attributed to Susan Petigru King. However, he argues that an unpublished manuscript written by Andrew Charles Moore's student roll. Alumni information included in this typewritten sheet attributes the authorship to E. Manigault. Loftis also argues the structure of the novel "[points] to a person of far less ability." Loftis, 388.

perennial springs of happiness, which minister to the well being of the secluded wife, whose lot she [protagonist] so haughtily disdains and bewails…."[258] Another description of King's literary talents describes her as "intelligent, bright" and quite "saucy."[259] A critique of "Sylvia's World" describes the work as a collection of stories "whose object is to teach sincerity, honesty, and justice between the sexes."[260] While many critics loved her work, others felt differently. In a letter to the editor of *The Charleston Daily Courier*, one person wrote "I trust the day is not far distant, when our saloons will no longer be (dis)graced by dancing Mrs.'s, but around the walls a few elderlies in caps will keep 'watch and ward' upon their charges, while the floor will be occupied by those engaged in the true object of the dance, viz., marriageable persons of both sexes." This critic did not condone the protagonist of *Busy Moments* because she was a married woman who danced with bachelors.[261]

King also translated stories from the French language for *Russell's Magazine* such as "Passages From My Autobiography," "The Marble Bust," and "The Twins of the Hotel Corneille." Additionally, she reviewed stories by other authors such as "Two Years Ago," by the Reverend Charles Kingsley.[262] When King remarried, she helped publish a newspaper in support of her second husband's political ambitions.[263]

Society

King was especially aware of her female peers' perception regarding women in society, writing "…as Mattie Singleton says 'it is disreputable for a Southern woman to enjoy life! Her

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[258] F. A. Porcher, "Art VIII – *Busy Moments of an Idle Woman*," *Southern Quarterly Review* (January 1854): 212-213.
[259] "Note," 146.
[260] "Editor's Repository," *The Ladies' Repository* 19, no. 11, (November 1859): 697.
[261] *Busy Moments of an Idle Woman*, *The Charleston Daily Courier*, (January 7, 1854).
[262] King, *A Review*, 169 in *Russell's* in 1857.
[263] *Southern Women's Writing: Colonial to Contemporary,* edited by Mary Louise Roberts and Caroline Perry, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995. This research found that King "worked with her husband throughout their marriage, publishing a weekly newspaper in support of his political endeavors."

reaction is as essentially to negotiate,' that I am absurd to desire ameliorate mine by one step."[264] King traveled to New York and Washington, D.C., for the purposes of publishing her novels. She enjoyed departing home for new experiences and adventure, and desired to do so very eagerly, "it is so long since I have left this part of the country nine years; and when I *was* at the North, I was too young to appreciate or know its advantages."[265]

Society's fascination with King occurred not only in the nineteenth century, but also well beyond the grave. In 1854, Sally Baxter, while visiting Charleston, "had been interested in learning the identity of the anonymous author of *Busy Moments of an Idle Woman*."[266] To her delight, Sally had an opportunity to meet King on her visit to Charleston. In a spirited letter to her mother, Sally made a detailed account upon meeting King, "I screamed with delight – rose from my seat, Mrs. King ditto & we fell into each other's arms…I told her that I had accomplished the object of my Southern tour now that I had seen her…"[267] Noted for her candor and wit, many individuals were excited to meet the author; King was equally willing to reveal her authorship. King's excitement to reveal her authorship illustrates the personal satisfaction she received upon revealing her authorship.

King was fond of attention. She often received notice "in the political society to which her father's extensive acquaintance introduced her," and her writing gave her another source of

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[264] SDPK-B to APA, August 26, 1849. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[265] SDPK-B to APA, August 26, 1849. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[266] Sandra Barrett Moore, *Women in an 'Age of Humbug': Authority, Sentiment, and Pursuit of the Real in the Work of Louisa McCord and Sue King,"* (Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2002), 109.
[267] Moore, 110. Sally Baxter's letter to her mother also shows the witty repartee exalted by King. "…I found awaiting me, with a Mrs. Grammage & Mrs. Willington a pretty blonde woman rather stout & with an expression about her of being *some body* – After a little preliminary conversation I said – "Will you excuse a question that I am going to ask, but is the lady who wrote "*Busy Moments"* a relative of yours?" "Ah – yes – a distant connection – I have been frequently confounded with her" - & then looking at me quite decidedly she said – "I am going to retort upon you instantly & as you began the game of questions & answers I shall continue it – Are you Mr. Thackeray's Sally Baxter" (Thackeray had an infatuation with Baxter according to Moore). I … colored in an unmistakeable manner, for Mrs. Grammage said "Miss Baxter you are more frank than Mrs. King deserves you should be, allow me to tell you that she is the identical Mrs. King who wrote the book in question."

admiration.[268] A trip to Washington, D.C., with her sister, in support of one of King's novels, revealed a great amount of attention from the opposite sex. "They seem to have been followed by 'the men,' perfectly monopolized and idolized – even clergy-men followed in their train – they repeated that no women before had ever had such a successful career in Washington." One particular male admirer was a "blind Methodist preacher, the Chaplain of the house…He could not see her, but was fascinated by her voice and followed her constantly." King's attractor felt "there [was] some mysterious bond between them…" The blind preacher was not the only male admirer of King, more than one man followed in her tracks on this particular visit.[269] People were often fascinated by King's voice, appearance, or conversation. In another example King was seen **"**…sauntering down King St with poor Dr. Hayne, who looks rather dull, says the winter has been intolerably dull and long without Sue."[270]

King, alongside her sister, often received scorn for the type of dress they adorned for social gatherings. Described as "triumphant and saucy, and ready for almost anything," on their return from Washington, "they were dressed very gaily, Caroline had on a pink-silk, very low in front making truly a meager display, Sue was richly dressed, but in darker colours and in better taste…" King's relatives felt she and her sister were "surprising women" and "very clever…"[271]

In her account of a costume ball in 1856, King shocked her high society peers. According to family accounts, King dressed as a Marquis with the jewelry of an actress, who was also the sister of the madame of a local brothel.[272] Bessie Allston's account of King and others attending the costumed gala included the statement "Madame took us to see Madame Roger and the Miss Kings and cousin Sue but I cant tell you how they were all dressed except Miss Louisa

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[268] Pease, introduction on page ix of the reprinting of *Gerald Gray's Wife* and *Lily*.
[269] Letter to APA on March 6, 1854. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[270] Letter to APA on March 6, 1854. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[271] Letter to APA on March 6, 1854. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[272] Pease, *Family,* 80.

King she went as night she was dressed in black crape all spangled with gold stars and a black veil spangled also."[273] According to Adele Allston, King dressed,

> prettier than [Adele] ever saw her before. her hair was powdered turned with two curls hanging down and on the top of her head was a little pink silk hat or cap with pink streamers the upper dress was of blue silk beautiful it was and the under was pink silk grilled round the shirt – in front the upper dress was open and drawn attached with beautiful opals or pearls set with diamonds – round the neck and arms was the most beautiful lace and then she had a great many diamonds and jewels and things of that sort.[274]

A few days after the ball, King wrote a narrative describing the event and members in attendance, inciting great annoyance from her peers.[275]

In fact, others sometimes recounted King's activities in periodicals. In the *Ladies Repository* of 1874, gossip regarding a visit to Charleston by esteemed author William Thackeray was reported. The subtitle read "Thackeray Neatly Rebuked."

> When Thackeray visited this country, he happened to be in Charleston, S.C., in 1856, during "race week" - the week of the year in old times. He met, of course, Mrs. Susan Petigru King, daughter of James Petigru (famous as the only Union man in South Carolina, and who, by the way, really cared no more for the Union than he did for the Confederacy - despising both and lauding monarchy). Mrs. King is an author, an intelligent, bright, and, not to get too fine a point upon it, saucy woman. Her train of cavaliers was always numerous. On being presented to Thackeray, who had been told something of the lady's peculiarities, he said, "I have heard that you were a fast woman, Mrs. King." Without suffering a shadow of annoyance to appear on her proud but espiegle [sic] face, Mrs. King responded, "And I have been told that you were a gentleman."[276]

Rumors of King being a "fast" woman flourished, and at one point, King was rumored to be involved in a scandal "so deplorable that she had to be rusticated to Badwell until gossip about her simmered down."[277]

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[273] Bessie Allston (BA) APA, March 8, 1856. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[274] AA to APA, March 9, 1856. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[275] Pease, *Family*, 80.
[276] "Note," 146-147.
[277] Pease, *Family,* 54.

For this reason, people fascinated by King were discouraged from her company. In a letter to his mother, J. W. Stuart describes one such case.

> Mary Rhett has been spending a few days here. She is a very charming interesting girl, but without distraction. She seems fascinated with the company of Mrs. King. God protect her and her brothers from Mrs. King! Her brothers are chiefly to blame. If they go on much longer with Mrs. King, they will compromise the position in society of all three sisters. I think you should forbid Claudia's having anything to do with Mrs. King. She and father never mention Mrs. King's name. Mrs. King, I believe, is a bad woman.[278]

Having a formal association with Susan Petigru King meant disapproval in society.

Eventually, King tired of the female members of Charleston's aristocracy stating firmly, "I am so tired of the stupid, self-sufficient, wearisome styles of young ladies," whom were considered to be "all that they should be." She explained that "the highest standard" amongst women of high society were those "who have not three ideas, who spoil a little French, who play a little music, and have not a grain of agreeability." King said these women turn into "housekeepers and muses" that "are quite fit for what they become." King also explained in her criticism of women that "it is a wise dispensation of Providence which places no loftier aspirations within them."[279] She criticized the inability of women to be accepting of others, such as herself, and believed they would achieve no greater ambition beyond the domestic sphere.

Civil War

The Civil War changed the Petigru family. Family and friends fought and perished in the war. "Sue is one of those who are frightened out of her wits," her father wrote, "she goes with the Kings to Greenville. I wish you could invite her and Addie to stay with you, but I don't think you can…"[280] King's close friend, Madame Togno, departed Charleston around the same time

[278] J. W. Stuart to his mother on June 11th, 1855.
[279] SDPK-B to APA, August 26, 1849. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.
[280] JLP to JPN, November 14th, 1861; found in Carson, *Life and Letters,* 413.

the Kings did along with young Adele. In November of 1861, many individuals living in Charleston decided to leave the city due to the events of the war.[281]

Henry C. King joined the Charleston militia when the Civil War began. He fought and died on 17 June 1862, in the battle of Secessionville.[282] In a letter from her father, Petigru informed King of Henry's death:

> …And last of all yesterday morning I heard that poor Henry had been mortally wounded the day before at Secessionville. I hurried as soon as I could to town, and was in time to see him alive, receive the last squeeze of his hand and hear his last accents, which were to call to mind his wife and child. He bore his sufferings heroically, and among his last words was a pious expression of hope and resignation. He was shot with a Minnie ball in the left breast and the ball passed through his body. His funeral takes place this afternoon at 4 o'clock.[283]

Even as a widow, King's behavior was deemed inappropriate. Mary Boykin Chesnut cited examples within the pages of her diary. At a gala in Columbia in 1863, King appeared in "brilliant colours" with "scarlet facings," illustrating to Chesnut that she had "hauled down the flag of distress (widow's cap) and run up a Union Jack." Chesnut invited King to many of her soirees, although disapproving of her at times. Chesnut recorded, "[King] went for Captain James, straight as an arrow…." Later in the evening when Chesnut urged King to put a shawl upon her bare shoulders, she promptly retorted:

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[281] JLP to CPC, November 23rd, 1861; found in Carson, *Life and Letters,* 416.

[282] Aiken, 70; Helsley, 15. Helsley specifically notes that Henry C. King joined the South Carolina state service on February 17, 1862 and joined the Confederate soldiers on March 24, 1862.

[283] JLP to SPK, June 18th, 1862; found in Carson, *Life and Letters,* 451-452. In a letter to his sister JLP stated, "It is with a heavy heart I put pen to paper: Henry King is no more. He was short in the fight at Secessionville on Monday and died yesterday at half past five. I arrived in George Street in time to bid him farewell; he died nobly. His reason was clear to the last. His last words were of his wife and daughter, whom he commended particularly to Mack and me, and of a pious resignation to the will of God. No person could manifest a firmer mind or a kinder nature, from the time of receiving his death wound, of which he was fully sensible, and in the battle he conducted himself with all the coolness and courage of a true soldier. His funeral takes place at the Scotch Church." JLP to JPN, June 18th, 1862.

> "Why?"
>
> "Such shoulders &c &c – bare &c &c – makes you look *that* willing – too willing, you know."
>
> "Willing for what?"
>
> "Another husband."[284]

Stories of King's "fast" behavior were recorded in journals, letters, and periodicals such as the *Ladies Repository*.

Yet King was even more scandalous than people realized, at least according to David Aiken who discovered an intriguing account written in a letter by James M. Morgan. His friend George Alfred Trenholm, imprisoned during the Civil War, instructed Morgan to find King in order for her to keep a sum of gold safe for him while in custody. Morgan wrote:

> She led the way upstairs to her bedroom, and directing me to help her we pulled off the coverings of a bed that was dainty enough to be the resting-place of a fairy. We then rolled back the upper mattress and I began to unload the yellow double eagles. The breast and tail pockets of my coat were filled with the handsome coins…and while I was thus engaged the beautiful lady, standing on the opposite side of the bed, was engaged in spreading them over the lower mattress. We then replaced the upper mattress, and I could not help but laugh when I realized the extraordinary situation in which I found myself, assisting a strange lady in the making-up of her bed! Mrs. King was laughing, too, but for a different reason. Her cause of merriment was so good that she could not keep it to herself. Everybody knew that Mr. Wagner had paid ten thousand dollars to keep from being arrested…and Mrs. King's joke was that the provost marshal, who had scared Mr. Wagner out of the money, and the commanding general, were both present among her guests downstairs.[285]

Wagner was an associate of Trenholm's who offered a bribe to prevent arrest by the provost marshal and commanding general.[286]

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[284] Discourse found in Pease, *Family*, 198; Mary Anna Porcher (MAP) to APA, December 16, 1864. SCHS; Mary Boykin Chesnut, Diary, December 12, 1864, in C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Boykin Chesnut's Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 691-93.

[285] Aiken, 73-74.

[286] Aiken, 74-75. Aiken points us to another letter written by James Morgan: "The fortune of the beautiful and accomplished Mrs. King, who had saved Mr. Trenholm's gold for him while he occupied the felon's cell in Charleston jail so recently vacated by Captain Bowen, had suffered like those of the rest of the people of Charleston,

Second Marriage

More controversy followed after the death of her first husband, King, on 17 August 1870, married Christopher Columbus Bowen, a politically controversial character.[287] King's marriage to him furthered the gap between herself, her family, and society. Bowen was enlisted during the Civil War, and later became a Congressman, convicted bigamist, and alleged murderer. It was suspected that he was involved in a murder when he was enlisted as a soldier during the Civil War. In 1875, when he was a Charleston County Sheriff, an editorial was published in the newspaper, "So far, [C. C. Bowen] eluded pursuit and baffled every effort to bring him to justice. We have exposed his rank offences and held him up to public execration…"[288] Court records indicate the fervor surrounding Bowen's infamous murder trial was a vehement topic in Charleston. While Charleston residents were appalled at the acquittal of Bowen's court case, a lawsuit was fought against the local newspaper on the basis of libel. During this case

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and it was necessary for her to obtain employment, which she easily found in the United States Treasury. Clerks, if they know what is good for them, don't rebuff Congressmen. It was Mrs. King's misfortune to meet Bowen, then a full-fledged Congressman. To escape her unaccustomed drudgery she married this fellow, and in less than a year a previous wife turned up and had Bowen indicted, tried, and convicted on a charge of bigamy. He was sent to the penitentiary, but only remained there for a short time, as he had a strong political pull. He was pardoned and returned to Charleston where he was immediately elected sheriff of the county."

[287] Pease, *Family*, 239.

[288] Editorial, "What Are You Going to Do About It?" *Charleston Daily Courier*, 18 June, 1875. "The presentment made by the Grand Jury yesterday is published in another column. Mr. Miles needs no defence at our hands. Against no citizen of Charleston could such charges more fruitlessly be made; else is there no value in a life of unsullied integrity and continued public service. To-day Mr. Miles, on his own motion, will have the opportunity to be heard in answer to the Grand Jury, and we doubt not that his exoneration will be complete. But the public must not mistake the true character of the issue which is once more presented to them.

Here in this city flourishes a public officer who is accused of heinous crimes, and the proof of whose guilty conduct as Sheriff of the County is on the record, and stares judges and juries in the face. Nevertheless, that officer, C. C. Bowen, has, so far, eluded pursuit and baffled every effort to bring him to justice. We have exposed his rank offences and held him up to public execration. We have shown what are his plans, and what is the character of the control, over his County, that he has had, and seeks, at any cost, to make complete. The people, therefore, know his character and their danger. It is Bowen's purpose to rule this County and City, and, through them, to rule the State. It is his purpose to bend every department of justice to his will, and to use every agency, public and private, for the persecution and prosecution of any individuals who dare to oppose him. There is boldness in all this; its meaning must be clear to the dullest comprehension. *What do the people of Charleston mean to do about it?* Do they intend to submit to the Bowen Ring, and bow their necks to the yoke? Are they willing to bear tyranny and oppression, robbery and rascality, in dumb meekness forever? This is the time to speak out, and to act! The people can count on us. We are ready to stand, as before, in the very front of the fight. Half measures will not do. Rosewater remedies will not reach the seat of the disease. The people of Charleston know what they have to expect, unless Bowen's power is quickly crushed. We ask them again, *What are they going to do about it?*"

disturbances in the courtroom were not entirely uncommon.[289] Bowen outlived King and eventually survived the accusations of murder to turn around and sue the local print media.

Gossip regarding King's "indiscreet"[290] behavior echoed throughout society posthumously.[291] More than fifty years after her death, King's activities could still be remembered. Yates Snowden recalled a conversation in a letter to an acquaintance:

> …Noticeing [sic] considerable face powder on J. J. E's shoulder one evening, a friend asked; 'John, where did you get all that powder'?
>
> 'Oh,' said he, with a laugh; 'I have just returned from a visit to Sue Petigru'!
>
> From which I would infer that 'necking parties' in Charleston were not unknown in the good old days – 'when *Plaucus* was consul.'[292]

One-hundred-twenty years after her death, family lore concerning King continued. According to family legend, James Louis Petigru offered a toast to laud his daughter's success with *Busy Moments*: "Quick in conception and easy in delivery," he said. To this King replied in a reciprocal toast, "A man of large parts and deep penetration."[293]

The controversies of King's life led to a lonely existence. King died of typhoid pneumonia on 11 December 1875. King endured emptiness and dissatisfaction regarding society and life. "The deadly loneliness of my existence is hard to stand," she wrote in 1874, "…Of what constitutes 'society,' I have none. My parties are all given by myself; my guests are, for the most part, old & poor & forlorn – less friendless perhaps than I, but a more great deal more

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[289] The State vs. F. W. Dawson, "The Great Libel Case. Report of the Criminal Prosecution of The News and Courier, for libeling Sheriff and Ex-Congressman C. C. Bowen." Charleston, SC. 1875, 10. "A disturbance occurred at the door leading to the courtroom, caused by the attempt of County Commissioner Stephen Brown to enter, he having been sent for as a witness to rebut the testimony of Jungbluth and Sheriff Bowen…The constable at the door refused to allow Mr. Brown to enter and a scuffle took place…"

[290] JPN to APA, July 29, 1843. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.

[291] Gossip was found in the letters written about King by family and acquaintances within society. This was also discovered by Pease and Pease in *Southern Conservative,* 75.

[292] Yates Snowden (YS), January 30, 1932. A portion of this letter discusses the author of "Sylvia's World" to be `Susan Petigru King. Snowden revealed a story in which J. J. E., later revealed as John Jones Edwards, was involved in a "necking party" with King. SCHS.

[293] Pease, *Family*, 79.

destitute than I ever was." King's daughter, Adele, "refused even to see her" prior to her death.[294]

Susan Petigru King was born and accepted by the aristocracy of Charleston society until she forfeited the "high life" for provocative behavior and authorship. King led an interesting life, sometimes riled with controversy and scandal. Fascination of her life experiences and activities exist posthumously. Despite that, her writing has been accepted into the Southern canon of antebellum literature. It has often been said that King intermingled real life events with her fictional narratives. This study seeks to understand the depiction of women by analyzing King's work primarily with the ideology of the True Woman. Similarities relating to King's life experiences will be used to support the findings of this study.

[294] SDPK-B to Caroline Petigru Carson (CPC), February 2, 1874, Vanderhorst Papers, SCHS; Pease and Pease introduction to the reprint of *Gerald Gray's Wife* and *Lily*, xi. Aiken also points out King was buried "beside her father's in the churchyard of St. Michael's Episcopal Church. Buried simply as Susan Petigru, wife of C. C. Bowen and daughter of James L. Petigru, her published name of King nowhere appears on her monument." Aiken, 76.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

SUSAN PETIGRU KING AND THE CULTURE OF ANTEBELLUM WOMEN IN HIGH LIFE

> "Suppose I turn Methodist? They are all very kind and devoted too – and think me the finest woman going, if I would only be less worldly…"[295]
>
> - Susan Petigru King

[295] SDPK-B to APA, December 14, 1855. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS.

Overview

Susan Petigru King's writing style addressed social roles such as gender, marriage and class, while displaying a rebellious spirit, character, sarcasm, and wit, often critical of Charleston high life. Embracing romance with a didactic quality, her writing is also eloquent and effervescent at times. Frequently commenting on the formality and culture of high society, King's writing depicts antebellum Southern culture. This chapter examines the characteristics of King's writing and presents an illustration of women categorized by True Womanhood and domesticity. Additional themes within King's short stories as they pertain to the portrayal of women in genteel society are also included.

Russell's Magazine*, *Knickerbocker*, and *Harper's Magazine

Charleston was one of the cultural and literary epicenters of the country just before the Civil War.[296] So, it is no surprise that King wrote for at least one of the city's magazines during this period. *Russell's Magazine* contained most of King's short fiction. John Russell, owner of Russell's Bookstore, knew most of the literati of Charleston during this era. Male literati of Charleston included William Gilmore Simms, James Louis Petigru, Mitchell King, editor of the Charleston *Mercury* William R. Taber, Henry Timrod, and Paul Hamilton Hayne, editor of *Russell's Magazine*, frequently gathered in Russell's Bookstore for an afternoon discussion.[297] *Russell's* was a general-interest magazine published from 1857 to 1860, featuring poetry, fiction, translated stories, and formerly unpublished American Revolution papers, biography, essays,

[296] Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, Volume II: 1850-1865,* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1938) 488; Stiles, 12-13.
[297] Mott, Volume 2, 488.

travel news, and "many discussions of Southern resources."[298] The aim of the magazine was "to be a magazine for the whole South and to speak with the voice of the South."[299]

Although *Knickerbocker* and *Harper's* are considered mainstream magazines, King only published one short story in each of these publications. Their content was general interest as opposed focusing solely on women. "Heart-History of a Heartless Woman," from *Sylvia's World*, was serialized in *Knickerbocker* in 1856. First issued in 1833, *Knickerbocker* remained active until approximately 1865.[300] In its most prominent era, before the Civil War, the magazine published on a variety of topics such as literary criticism, travel, music and fine arts, as well as "racy and unusual tales."[301] It attempted to attract an audience both north and south of the Mason-Dixon, but had difficulty doing so.[302] *Knickerbocker's* contributors included Fred S. Cozzens, Charles Leland, James Hall, Albert Pike, Mrs. Kirkland and Francis Parkman, author of *The Oregon Trail*. Mott points out that humor was an important component of the success of the publication. The "Editor's Table" was known to be "wholly humorous," according to Mott.[303]

Harper's Magazine was first published in 1850, and just prior to the Civil War, *Harper's* was a "widely diversified" publication with eclectic topics and departments. As a general interest publication, *Harper's* pages emphasized "English novels, travel and exploration, school books, and history and biography."[304] By the Civil War, *Harper's* circulation was approximately 200,000, "an unprecedented circulation for a three-dollar magazine."[305] Known for its eclectic content, *Harper's* was not limited to English novelists, however. American writers such as Jacob Abbott, Benson J. Lossing, and short stories by Caroline Chesebrough were also printed in

[298] Mott, Volume 2, 490-491.
[299] Mott, Volume 2, 489.
[300] Mott, Volume 1, 606.
[301] Mott, Volume 1, 610-611.
[302] Mott, Volume 1, 611.
[303] Mott, Volume 1, 609.
[304] Mott, Volume 2, 383.
[305] Mott, Volume 2, 391.

the magazine.[306] Much of the short fiction in *Harper's* was considered sentimental during the period just prior to and shortly after the Civil War. Authors such as T. S. Arthur and Jane G. Austin contributed such short fiction. Some readers opposed such fiction, believing many of its female characters "[put] a simple rose in their hair and [walked] off with the most eligible young gentleman…" Moreover, it was felt that this kind of fiction would influence "young people of unhardened hearts" in a state of "toploftiness," who might very well "[go] off in a gush of moral nobility on any little provocation, and delighting to martyrize themselves in a painted flame of self-sacrifice."[307]

Characteristics of King's Writing

Setting, distinct tone and style in King's fiction generally characterized her writing style. Usually set in Charleston, King's short stories were almost always narrated by a third person, as if an outsider were telling the story, most likely the author. All of the protagonists were women; although men were part of each story, they usually played less prominent roles. Flippant humor and wit often exemplified King's writing. In one story, after the protagonist's death, her sister Julia wore "avalanches of bombazine, and rivulets of crape," the narrator remarking, "if grief can be shown by millinery work, Julia was inconsolable!"[308] In "My Debut," King's narrator's thought process is humorous. When she is caught gawking at an attractive man, Elizabeth Leighton's thoughts reveal her embarrassment with a humorous edge, "This is delightful: caught staring at men in omnibuses! What next will you do, Elizabeth Leighton?"[309]

King also inserted double entendre into her work. In "Bal Costume," the narrator was a woman apparently dressed as a male lawyer. At the end of the narration, however, she explains

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[306] Mott, Volume 2, 387.
[307] Mott, Volume 2, 394.
[308] Susan Petigru King, "Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach: The Best of Friends," *Russell's Magazine*, (January 1858): 365.
[309] Susan Petigru King, "My Debut," *Harper's Magazine,* (1867): 534.

to another guest at the costume gala that she is just a "polonaise," meaning, a woman dressed in a plain black gown.[310] In the same narration, King describes the "*Marquise* de Lejour ! (who sees the pun ?)," in a "portentous wealth of skirt and diamonds," wearing a "coquettish pink satin hat and blue feathers." In this example, King described the costume she herself had donned for an evening gala attended several nights before the publication of this narration.[311]

Unlike some of King's peers who contributed to the magazines included in this research, her work exhibited a distinct didactic quality. Didactic writing tends to be overt in its style or meaning and includes romance more typically than other types of writing. Other Southern writers during this era, such as William Gilmore Simms, who was one of the most prominent male authors of *Russell's*, were less obvious in their writing style. King's stories are often rife with morals and allegory about woman's woes. Usually romantic in nature, her protagonists desire real love instead of a husband or forced marriage. Many of her stories published in periodicals were allegorical and moralistic, contributing to their didactic quality. In "Woman's Warning," King portrays a protagonist who is tempted with "revels," gifts, riches, and luxuries, including a beau; however, when the young woman accepts the temptations her "snowy" and pure clothing changes, and her waist is crushed by her girdle as "serpents [crawled] over her [to lap] the red blood from her heart."[312] In this example, as in many cases in King's writing, the main character is punished for following her heart to life's natural temptations, including the pursuit of love. This is a *romantic* pursuit, which is a characteristic of the *didactic* quality of writing. In another story, King writes "Let those who blame Anna Mansfield for her next step,

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[310] A polonaise is the name of an article of clothing worn by Polish women; "a dress or over-dress, consisting of a bodice, with a skirt open from the waist downwards," (Oxford English Dictionary).
[311] Susan Petigru King, "Bal Costume," *Charleston Daily Courier*, (10 March 1856); It has been reported that she dressed as a marquise in the diamond jewelry of an actress on this occasion with pink ribbons similar to the description in "Bal Costume." Pease, *Family*, 80.
[312] Susan Petigru King, "Woman's Warning: An Allegory," *Russell's Magazine*, 1 (April 1857): 66.

pray to be kept from the same pit-fall…if, when their day of trial comes, they hold firmly to the right…"[313] This serves as advice from the narrator to reader: marry for love instead of money, even against the pressures of family and friends. Another significant characteristic of King's short stories reveals the use of dreams in her work. In at least three stories, the protagonist has a prophetic dream, accompanied by moralizing text. In "Heart-History," the mother remarks to her daughter Olivia at the end of the tale, "why do we always conclude that a woman must marry or does marry. What do you think? conjecture? *did* she marry? Ought she to have married?"[314] The protagonist in the story eventually marries out of convenience because she was jilted by her first love. By providing a moral at the end of each story, the audience might learn a particular lesson, especially one of broken hearts and imprisoning wedding vows for those who marry for wealth or pressures from family.

In some stories, the narrator asks the reader a question at the end of the tale as a way to moralize the text. As rudimentary as it may seem today, one of King's objectives in her writing was to challenge several values in genteel culture by posing such questions.Often, the final sentence in a story asked a question alluding to the moral. "A Little Lesson for Little Ladies" illustrates this point. King asks, "Has she (the protagonist) profited by the lesson? Let us wait and see." In "Marriage of Persuasion" the lesson communicated from the author to the audience is that "A love-match makes no marriage of love."[315] This notion, again, reveals the author's ideology regarding the institution of marriage, that is, a match between two people, where one of those individuals is marrying for the inheritance of wealth and riches and one of those two people has felt pressured into that union. Members of high society seemed to believe that

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[313] Susan Petigru King "Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach: Marriage of Persuasion," *Russell's Magazine*, (November 1857): 115.
[314] Susan Petigru King, "Sylvia's World: The Heart-history of a Heartless Woman," (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1859), 182.
[315] King, "Marriage," 114.

marrying for wealth was better than for love or happiness. Therefore, King's work largely criticized this part of the aristocratic culture. Her moralizing tales warned women against the perils of such life altering decisions.

As evinced in a publicly reported column in the *Lady's Repository*, King was rumored to be a "fast" woman based on her first introduction to William Thackeray.[316] So, it is no surprise that wit and a teasing nature is reflected in her writing. Illustrating her ability to be playful in her writing, in "Bal Costume" King describes a Postillion,[317] "By the way, somebody says the Postillion means a 'Fox-Hunter' – does he indeed? I am perfectly willing." Revealing a flirtatious nature, the narrator of this story says, "My eyes are dazzled by this time, and I am almost tired of admiring; so I turn to the *Sailor Boys*, and feel quite myself again." These are overt descriptions taking on a vivacious and playful tone of writing, sometimes flirtatious or teasing, and almost always illuminating a humorous side to King's writing.

Piety

King rarely mentions the virtue of piety in her work. None of the stories center on religious values, and rarely do any of her female characters attend religious services. Those who do are described as self-righteous women and portrayed as sarcastic and condescending to others. In "Gossip," society women visited the home of the protagonist Mrs. Greene to receive charity donations. Their conversation made Mrs. Greene uncomfortable, and she asked them to end their gossip. Instead, the society women continued to spread rumors, refusing Mrs. Greene's request. As the conversation progressed, the women were insulted by Mrs. Greene's request to end their scandalous chat. So, they continued a discussion about another conversation they had with two women "on their way home from prayers," who then began discussing the scandalous

[316] "The Editor's Repository," *The Ladies Repository* 27, No. 9, (September 1867): 565.
[317] A postillion is French for a forerunner or Post's guide. (Oxford English Dictionary).

life of another "at three o'clock in the morning the carriage brought home Ellen Manners dead drunk- drunk, my dear, so that she could not stand, her dress half torn off, and she was lifted into the house by a strange woman..."[318] To Mrs. Greene's outrage the gossip continued from these self-proclaimed religious women. Toward the end of the conversation the women of charity said, "well, we will remember you in our prayers. You are a worldly woman yet, my dear young friend (Mrs. Greene), - but we will hope to bring you to us, before long."[319] Mrs. Greene replied, "Put aside, while there is yet time, the Pharisaical belief, that because you wear straight skirts and a sombre-hued bonnet - because you say your prayers daily in the market place, and listen while the ear of Heaven is vexed with long exhortations - because you visit the poor, and beg alms for them, you are pious and charitable."[320] The woman they gossiped about eventually died of illness rather than consumption, as posited in the gossip. Mrs. Greene faulted those who spread such rumors, "the most frivolous 'woman of the world,' (Mrs. Greene) who has once, in very agony of spirit, called upon God's grace to preserve her from sin and temptation - who keeps her tongue from evil-speaking, her mind from evil-thinking, of her neighbors - is as far better than you, you and your compeers, as Heaven is higher than Hell."[321]

Women in high society took charge of others taken over by illness, poverty, and scandal. "I am so glad I came here, instead of going to see a sick girl in Smith's Alley. She is dying of consumption. A most interesting young creature; it is a pleasure to see her. She can't last much longer." One secondary female character says, "Between [her] poor and [her] sick, [her] time is always taken up."[322] These women are the same types of characters to attend church services and profess self-righteous attributes. In contrast, the female heroine in "Heart-History," admits

[318] Susan Petigru King, "Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach: Gossip." *Russell's Magazine*, (October 1857): 48.
[319] King, "Gossip," 49.
[320] King, "Gossip," 51.
[321] King, "Gossip," 51.
[322] King, "Gossip," 47-48.

she was not a "pious girl." Although her character "respected religion, practiced its forms, but did not look to it as her constant and only friend."[323]

King portrayed religion negatively in other ways. Lucy Sheldon, in another story, was expelled from high society. When this occurred, King portrayed the protagonist as reading a book that was a "dreary, desponding work on religion, giving the gloomiest picture of a godly life."[324] While arguing with her daughter, Anna's coercive mother in "Marriage of Persuasion" attempted to compel her daughter into a financially superior "love-match" based on the tenets of a pious life, "The Bible says, 'Honor thy father and thy mother' - it don't say, 'dispute with them.'"[325] Anna's mother, in this example, argues that marrying for money is appropriate, because this is something a Christian woman embracing the virtue of piety would do to honor her family. In "Woman's Warning," the protagonist prays to God at the end, when she falls from a pure and prosy way of life.[326] However, this is not to say that the main character embraced piety as a virtue, only that she regretted the outcome of her decision.

Purity

While men in King's stories were "passionate [admirers] of female beauty," they were also "firm [believers] in woman's faith and purity,"[327] especially the purity of young, unwed women. These women were naïve, "seeing the world for the first time."[328] In "Male Flirt," the protagonist is a "shrinking beauty," "little blushing girl" embarrassed to dance for the very first time because she is afraid, with "sweet blue eyes sank still lower, till their black lashes trembled on her flushed cheek," and she was only seventeen. Her purity was portrayed by a "dainty"

[323] King, "Heart-History," 160-161.
[324] Susan Petigru King, "Lucy Sheldon's Dream," *Russell's Magazine*, (August 1857): 464.
[325] King, "Marriage," 48.
[326] King, "Woman's Warning," 66.
[327] Susan Petigru King, "Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach: A Coquette," *Russell's Magazine*, (March 1858): 546.
[328] Susan Petigru King, "Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach: Male Flirt," *Russell's Magazine,* (December 1857): 202.

figure, and her father described her as a "timid little goose."[329] Others described young Azalea as "so shy and so tiny."[330] Azalea's "innocent brain of pretty, foolish" ideas was visited by "bright dreams."[331] The protagonist's "sweet purity"[332] made her beautiful to the world. King described her as "an innocent, unsuspicious, intelligent girl, who had never read six novels, and never been 'in society.'"[333]

In "Male Flirt," an innocent woman's ethereal beauty suddenly halted when a young woman married or was slighted by a man. In one of King's narratives, when this happened, "a girl, trembling, timid and unworldly…grew into a woman, with every pulse beating, but every muscle striving to subdue an emotion she would die rather than display."[334] Then her physical appearance was altered; although still beautiful, she became "confident" and bold." "She carried her small head, with its coronal of jetty hair, like an Empress; and her lips, exquisitely chiselled as they were, surprised you by their scornful and contemptuous curve." In this example, "A deep, dark shadow beneath the very black lashes, gave a peculiar expression of force to the features," no longer soft, angelic, or pure. A woman's attitude was described as "gracefully disdainful…the incarnation of fierce pride," as if outwardly saying, "admire me, but I scorn your admiration."[335] Azalea was now "defiant," described with having a cold but beautiful face, which was "hard and haughty." She was confident, bowing "as if a Queen dismissing a subject who overstayed his audience."[336] Azalea was now a "cruelly self-asserting woman."[337] In her

[329] King, "Male Flirt," 202.
[330] King, "Male Flirt," 202.
[331] King, "Male Flirt," 206.
[332] King, "Male Flirt," 207.
[333] King, "Male Flirt," 204.
[334] King, "Male Flirt," 207.
[335] King, "Male Flirt," 208.
[336] King, "Male Flirt," 208.
[337] King, "Male Flirt," 209.

commanding presence, her blue eyes cut the male flirt like "steel."[338] Women once hurt or slighted by a male acquaintance became strong-willed and authoritative.[339] In this example, and many others, the impure element to a story was a male character because he usually tainted and spoiled the life of a young, innocent woman.

In another story, wealth, riches, jewelry, and male companionship tempted the protagonist. In a dream, the protagonist donned a golden girdle, the women around her were described as "prosy,"[340] but she was not allowed to participate in such pleasures. However, she decides to indulge in these revels, and the consequence is regrettable. The protagonist's girdle "crushed into her side and with a scream, she saw great drops of blood trickle slowly from the wound…the rubies, like hot stones, seared her hands. Spectres surrounded her; the lights, the brilliancy, the gay forms, were gone; serpents crawled over her, and lapped red blood from her heart; signs and moans echoed near her…"[341] At the end of this story the protagonist prays to Heaven, "I am weak. I am human. May I not regain my golden girdle?"[342]

Women who were unmarried were frequently described by their simple attire, lack of jewelry, gracefulness, and small-framed figures. These women were described in a very innocent manner, in many ways "ethereal."[343] However, once marital vows were taken, the innocence vanishes and the woman becomes cold, uninviting, unwilling and foreign. Even a coquette, or a flirtatious malevolent woman, when desiring to steal the heart of a man, had the virtue of purity. Such was the case in "A Coquette," where the protagonist decided to take revenge on an old enemy of hers and steal her betrothed. To carry out her plan, Emilia Forrester

[338] King, "Male Flirt," 209.
[339] King, "Male Flirt," 210.
[340] King, "Woman's Warning," 66.
[341] King, "Woman's Warning," 66.
[342] King, "Woman's Warning," 66.
[343] King, "A Coquette," 545-555.

wore a white gown "composed of such miraculous flounces, that her small and graceful head, her exquisitely moulded shoulders, and her softly rounded arms, seemed to be rising from a bed of those fleecy, downy clouds that float across a summer sky at noonday." Emilia's "innocent and ethereal drapery" placed an "air of candor and simplicity which was beautiful to see. No glittering jewels marred the purity of this virginal costume. A single row of pearls marked the outline of her little throat, and her sunny Chesnut tresses clustered low about her peachy cheeks, with not even a flower to grace them."[344] Even widows were "pretty," "bright," and "good-tempered."[345] A woman's purity was present in her physical appearance and ethereal beauty.

Women in King's stories also tainted men. Such was the case in "The Story Her Uncle Told Lucy." Apollonia, while a female character in the story, actually represents a "selfish man, who wins and woos" a woman for his wife by offering "her a heart that he swears has never before been touched – lets her fold her wings in this happy nest, and then – wearies of the little bird, who can never again nestle elsewhere."[346]

Submissiveness

Many of King's stories offer strong-willed women. In "Male Flirt," Azalea Dudley's broken heart provided a means for her to be commanding, self-assertive, and more powerful because she had "more beauty and the knowledge to use it."[347] In another story, the protagonist defended equal wages for women, illustrating the character's desire for rights equal to her male counterparts. In "My Debut," Elizabeth Leighton illustrated her independence from a male companion in her ability to support herself and her mother: "It had seemed to my ambitious and buoyant spirit an easy enough thing to work for just us two. I had youth, health, pluck, and some

[344] King, "A Coquette," 545.
[345] King, "Male Flirt," 202.
[346] Susan Petigru King, "A Little Lesson for Little Ladies: The Story Her Uncle Told Lucy," *Russell's Magazine*, (October 1858): 77.
[347] King, "Male Flirt," 211.

brains - surely there was room in this world for me to earn a living." However, Leighton found that "working for [her] living…a prosaic and difficult thing..." She pointed out that women's "wages in any subordinate position are so miserably scant," for having "worked six hours a day for six hundred dollars a year in greenbacks; and this is thought to be very liberal pay for a woman." She states, "In the same school…a man, in no wise superior to myself, commanded easily the double of what I got, because he was - a man." She was a strong-willed woman who understood woman's financial inferiority to her male peers, because "in masculine attire [she] should have been paid according to [her] powers; in feminine garb [she] could form no such pretensions."[348] This female protagonist had no desire to be submissive to a man or husband, unless she held strong romantic and loving feelings towards him. In fact, this character refused marriage until she found such love and devotion. This character believed women could contribute to society, although in a limited capacity, portraying nascent feminist cultural values during the era.

In "The Best of Friends," the protagonist's friend Madge did not submit to her husband. Instead, when she deserted him and her children, she exercised control, revenge and an assertive nature because she would not let her husband remarry. She threatened him once, saying, "If you marry, it will but be to bring disgrace upon the lady…"[349] King portrays Madge as superior to her husband, since she "scorned him."[350]

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[348] King, "My Debut," 532. The protagonist also did not "wish to vote nor preach, nor practice medicine or law, but [she] should like not to be damned into eternal mediocrity in those few lines where a woman may modestly assert herself."

[349] Susan Petigru King, "Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach: The Best of Friends," *Russell's Magazine*, (January 1858): 361.

[350] King, "Best of Friends," 361.

Domesticity

Domestic duties are rarely mentioned in King's stories because the characters are members of the highest echelon of society. In "A Braid of Auburn Hair" one of the minor characters learns to "bone turkeys," and takes amusement in her "domestic details."[351] This boning process is only one of the few ways the reader may traditionally think of domesticity, or activities historically performed by women, servants, or slaves. In another story's pantry scene, a few wealthy women in society observe old Patty, either a domestic servant or slave, make quince preserves.[352] King's society did not labor in the kitchen, since servants and a slave labor force performed "domestic details."[353]

The term "domestic" has another meaning. A character states, "I can't permit you to interfere in our domestic circle,"[354] meaning domesticity is also a societal position held by certain members of one's social community, not of the house and hearth, but of society, wealth, and privilege. However, domesticity or domestic duty in the eyes of King's main characters is typically situated in marital themes.

Marriage

Scholars have described a link between King's novels and her life, stating that the novels "aired her disenchantment with marriage…She held intimate dinner parties and developed provocative relationships with attractive young bachelors."[355] Sandra Barrett Moore explains that King wrote her stories as a way to have a public voice regarding the topic of marriage, since "writing fiction for an increasingly democratic market allowed [King] to interrogate the gender

[351] Susan Petigru King, "A Braid of Auburn Hair," *Russell's Magazine*, (June 1857): 219-223.
[352] King, "Best of Friends," 361.
[353] King, "Braid," 223.
[354] King, "Best of Friends," 359.
[355] Helsley, 12.

constraints and double standards that diminished her in a patriarchal world."[356] Although the female characters in King's work were frequently described according to their beauty, wealth, jewelry, and clothing, the author provided grave descriptions when portraying the emotional and physical depiction of married women. In "Woman's Warning," mothers were described as having "sad, sweet" smiles.[357] These women were also described as "prosy," "grave," "solemn," and dressed in a "homely" fashion. In "Braid of Auburn Hair," King describes one of the main characters, a wife, as "indolent," "fatigued," and "prosy," with "lost individuality." Married women had unhappy and unfulfilled lives.

Female characters who did marry, often did so hastily, and were frequently "tearless and proud" during such ceremonies.[358] Without love, young brides believed their married lives would be unhappy, and King successfully portrayed this marital characteristic in the lives of women in high society.[359] King equates marriage to murdering the essence of a woman's character when she has been pressured into the situation.[360] In "Marriage of Persuasion" the protagonist "Deprived [her family] of [their] mainstay and support…and destroyed the great hope of [her mother's] life!" by initially refusing the proposal of a man she did not love.[361] Her mother is described as "heated and excited" with negative reaction regarding her daughter's decision since it would exponentially add to their family wealth, which in turn, would please her mother. The protagonist is adamant about her inability to love the courtier; however, the mother selfishly pressures the daughter into the marriage for the sake and well being of the family so they may live a life of luxury. The daughter's passion about finding a true love is "trifling" to

[356] Moore, 5.
[357] King, "Woman's Warning," 64-66.
[358] King, "Gossip," 47-51.
[359] King, "Marriage," 111.
[360] King, "Gossip," 51.
[361] King, "Marriage," 111.

the mother. Furthermore, the daughter's desire to marry someone she loves and finds physically attractive is an absurd idea to the mother. Women professing to have an interest in marrying a physically attractive man were considered to have "low [minds] and vicious ideas," because it was not "proper" for women to think or act in this manner.[362] "Marriage of Persuasion" was not the only story in which a young woman had to choose between two men. "Cora's Dream" offered a similar situation. Cora's mother described her daughter's predicament, "Two gentlemen have assiduously paid you their court during the past year. Both are honorable, worthy men; either would be a suitable match for you. You have steadily refused to choose between them…This must end."[363] A dream ensued, Cora's vision enlightens the young protagonist to judge her suitors their reasons for wanting to marry her: a man who loves Cora for herself, or a man who selfishly loves her for himself.[364] In the dream two streams of water existed, and Cora attempted to drink out of the stream symbolic of the wealthy, self-centered male suitor. This stream was "ungrateful…unmeaning, unsatisfying beauty. Fair of promise – false of fulfillment – lovely to attract – unwilling or unable to retain!" Cora concludes, "Who cares for a stream, however it may glitter, that has not an inch of depth – and that treacherously flaunts its make-believe virtues!"[365]

In the traditional high society marriage, King states through the words and wishes of the mother that "All proper, well-regulated women do love their husbands…Love comes after marriage. Every woman with good principles loves her husband. She makes the best of her bargain,"[366] an insinuation that marriage is a financial transaction. Women in King's society were frequently pressured to marry in order to obtain greater wealth, so that a mother or other

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[362] King, "Marriage," 112.
[363] Susan Petigru King, "A Little Lesson for Little Ladies: Cora's Dream," *Russell's Magazine,* (August, 1858): 448.
[364] King, "Cora's Dream," 448.
[365] King, "Cora's Dream," 450.
[366] King, "Marriage," 115.

siblings in her family would benefit from the luxuries. King frequently describes women pressured into marriage as "restive and unwilling" or "weary and dispirited,"[367] because they were "coaxed into a union without love or decent esteem."[368] Married couples were limited by their soberness: they "were never late for tea, and never lost themselves accidentally."[369]

King's criticism of the institution of marriage is frequently overt. In one example, a wedding of a woman forced into marriage to a man she did not love, the narrator describes the ceremony:

> Colorless and immoveable as some marble statue…she gave no sign of life or feeling…Gertrude's voice was never heard. At each demand she simply bowed her poor drooping head still lower till finally the round, child-like chin rested wearily upon her sparkling diamond necklace. When the ring was put upon her finger she shuddered, and her hand clutched the air nervously.[370]

The bride in this story "mourned that she had e'er been born."[371] When another protagonist married, she was described to have "A perjured conscience and a broken heart…She is very pale and cold, and kind. She has no children…[She has] a joyless household, and a very rich one."[372] In the one instance when a woman married the man of *her* choice, a loving, happy, vibrant family resulted. The woman even loved and embraced her children and her spouse.[373]

In one story, "Heart-History," Mr. Latimer, in a narrative being told to a young woman, is a father who stands firm in his judgment that his daughter should only be "affianced" when he permits. He does not "approve of long engagements – I will permit none – you will marry three weeks after I give my consent to your marriage – until that time, you are not engaged."[374] This is important because it illustrates the inability of King's female heroines to control their marital

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[367] King, "Best of Friends," 356.
[368] King, "Best of Friends," 357.
[369] King, "Male Flirt," 201.
[370] Susan Petigru King, "How Gertrude was Married," *Russell's Magazine*, (June 1858): 244.
[371] King, "Gertrude," 249.
[372] King, "Marriage," 115.
[373] King, "My Debut."
[374] King, "Heart-History," 100.

destiny. Marriage matches were determined primarily by mothers, and in at least one instance a father.

Widows appeared in nearly all of King's stories. Being a widow was preferred to being a wife. Mrs. Conway, in one story, was portrayed as "a bright, good tempered, pretty widow."[375] They were often dowagers, escorted to parties by cavaliers.[376] They were formal in their bereavement, wearing dark widow's caps made of crepe and bombazine. According to the narrator in "A Braid of Auburn Hair," the widow's cap was revered, "if these be weeds, I prefer them to flowers."[377] In this story one character describes Persia as a wife's paradise:

> When a woman marries, it is understood and received as a fixed fact, that her husband's relations are her natural enemies, so that if she is molested by them in the slightest manner, *he* is to be punished for not preventing it before it could happen. She reigns supreme in everything, over everything…Think! Why those women are better off than if they had been born widows.[378]

This description further supports the notion of marriage as a means of confinement or prison, and the only escape is the husband's death. King depicts the institute of marriage as an imprisonment of women because of the way it cages and confines them. Being a widow was better than being married in cases where the wife was supposed to be submissive to her husband. This illustrates the negative portrayal of married life put forward by King.

Education

It is difficult to determine the role of education or finishing schools in the portrayal of King's female characters. However, women were portrayed as great readers of books. The grandmother in "My Ball Tablets," was a true lover of books, almost obsessive, in one scene her "big chair woos [her] with its large padded-arms outspread, and the scarcely tasted feast of fresh

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[375] King, "Male Flirt," 202.
[376] King, "Bal Costume."
[377] King, "Braid," 219.
[378] King, "Braid," 220.

books invites [her] loudly with every un-cut leaf." Frequently, conversation amongst members of society revolved around the different stories and books that were read for each of the characters. In "My Debut," the mother of Elizabeth Leighton loved to read books, "Mamma, here is your book," Leighton says, "Thank Heaven, if we saved not much else, we still keep your eye-sight and your taste for love tales!"[379] Leighton in this story is also a teacher of young children. A secondary female character in "My Debut" named Aunt Polly, apparently a slave or black domestic servant, complains that Elizabeth reads too much. In this scene Elizabeth was preparing to perform two readings for an evening soiree when Aunt Polly exclaimed in a Gullah accent, "Lord hab mussy, king! Ain't you do enough reading with them chillun all day long? I am 'stonished at Miss Vincent to make you read. Read! She don't read her Bible, or she would know better how to treat a poor, pretty little thing like you than to fetch you to her house to do nothing but read!"[380] In "Heart-History" King references two books, "Fordyce's Advice to Young Ladies," and William M. Thackeray's "Vanity Fair."[381] Interestingly enough, Thackeray's work made it into more than one of King's short stories. In "A Coquette," the narrator references Thackeray as the "great master of the human heart."[382]

Absent Themes

Some silent subject matter exposes categories unrelated to the themes covered in the literature review. However, these are important when taking into consideration the characterization and subject matter of King's writing. Positive parental figures are conspicuously absent. King rarely included a father figure for female protagonists, unless it was in fleeting reference to him. At the most, a father figure appeared very briefly at the beginning

[379] King, "My Debut," 533.
[380] King, "My Debut," 542.
[381] King, "Heart-History," 66 and 37.
[382] King, "Coquette," 549.

of the story, such was the case in "Male Flirt." Azalea's father introduces her to a young betrothed bachelor in this instance, and hardly appears in the story again.[383] Instead, an uncle figure was far more prevalent in King's short stories. One example includes "The Story Her Uncle Told Lucy." The uncle explains a moralizing account about the life changes that take place when a woman marries so that his niece may benefit from the knowledge of this tale to make a good decision when it comes time for her to marry.

Children are also largely absent from King's work. In one story, "My Ball Tablets," the protagonist, a grandmother, despises children. She says in one scene, "I get up with a sigh. I am not a lover of children. It is a great defect in my disposition and qualities I know." The grandmother goes on to explain, "My own little girl never amused me until she was a great girl," and only then, the grandmother "preferred having her asleep in bed, conscious that she was well, safe, and out of harm's way, rather than have her ranging about my room, asking questions, touching forbidden things, invariably hungry, and generally restless."[384] The grandmother believed children were "worse than silk-worms."[385] In King's final work, "My Debut," children were largely absent from this story – until the end when the protagonist marries a man for romance and love, and only then does she accept his children in a loving fashion.

Another theme largely silent in King's work is the depiction of servants and slaves, especially during one of the most opposing eras in American history. Generally, women writers were usually tied to abolition movements during this era. However, this was not the case in King's work. It was difficult to determine the gender of slaves or servants, since when they were mentioned it was in brief reference to the work they were performing. For example, servants

[383] King, "Male Flirt," 201-211.
[384] Susan Petigru King, "My Ball Tablets," *Russell's Magazine*, (January 1860): 331.
[385] King, "My Ball Tablets," 332.

announced the presence of a guest at formal and informal gatherings.[386] In one story, a character states "if ever you try to keep house in the country with Irish servants, you will find out that giving orders will not secure their fulfillment."[387] Another example of a slave or domestic servant in King's work exists in "Heart-History." The character of Aunt Polly, believed to be a black woman or former slave because her dialect is distinctly Gullah. Additionally, King alludes to Aunt Polly's African roots when she degradingly explained how "Aunt Polly grinned benignly with that keen African sense of a joke when it is not too obscure."[388] This character served dinner to the female protagonist and her mother.

Physical Description of Women

The inherent wealth of the women depicted in King's short stories was illustrated by their attire and jewelry. Women in high society were debutantes,[389] often capturing the attention of an audience at dances and dinner parties. Women in King's stories were described as "belles" and "beauties," in ethereal language. They were "graceful, gentle women, all so charmingly dressed; sweet, bright, merry girls…"[390] Beautiful women were considered the "moving spirit" of parties, often angelic in their appearance, especially unmarried women. King portrayed women that were "followed by a long line of admirers, and surrounded by a circle of friends, [making] mirth and melody, 'with rings on her fingers (but not bells on her toes) wherever she goes.'"[391] One example is Azalea Dudley in the story "Male Flirt." Azalea's "black hair was as smooth as satin, without ornament but its own glossiness and profusion." When Azalea danced it was described as "floating along with glancing feet, and the lightness of youth and health, and an excellent

[386] King, "Gossip," 47.
[387] King, "Braid," 219.
[388] King, "My Debut," 532.
[389] King, "Gertrude," 251.
[390] King, "My Debut," 539.
[391] King, "Male Flirt," 201.

partner." [392] Another story described one dinner guest as a "stately blonde with the fair ringlets and pretty mouth - she is a belle and a beauty - if she were not so handsome, people would talk only of her wit."[393] In still another story, the protagonists' dress drew "miraculous flounces, that her small and graceful head, her exquisitely moulded shoulders, and her softly rounded arms, seemed to be rising from a bed of those fleecy, downy clouds that float across a summer sky at noonday."

Women in high society had money and wealth, depicted in the clothing and jewelry dawned by them. In "Bal Costume," the gala was described as "Silks and velvets, jewels and gold, scarlet and blue, soft eyes and brilliant eyes, skins so rich and dark, brows so white and pure!" The costumed attendees were described with "snowy shoulders partly hidden by floating veils or perfumed tresses, or else bare beneath the glitter of the chandelier, and turning off the light from their polished curves."[394] Women in society were also measured by the jewelry they wore. In one story, "In keeping with this innocent and ethereal drapery, Emilia had put on an air of candor and simplicity which was beautiful to see. No glittering jewels marred the purity of this virginal costume. A single row of pearls marked the outline of her little throat, and her sunny Chesnut tresses clustered low about her peachy cheeks, with not even a flower to grace them."[395]

King also paid special attention to the feet of female characters within her narratives. In "Bal Costume," for instance, King describes the feet of guests at the ball four times. For example, she wrote of "Another Greek Girl, with marvellous little feet, that put Cinderella's to

[392] King, "Male Flirt," 206.
[393] King, "Braid," 219.
[394] King, "Bal Costume."
[395] King, "Coquette," 545.

shame," or "little glancing feet, in their many colored slippers."[396] Moreover, at least four other stories described the feet of King's female protagonists. It seems unusual to pay such close attention to the feet of certain characters, however, King seems to have a curious fascination with this detail. In "My Debut," the protagonist is embarrassed by her old and shabby brown boots, until one evening she is able to wear a beautiful pair of shoes putting the old ones' to shame.[397] In this example, the heroine's shoes represent a lack of self-confidence in life because she is ashamed of the boots and believes she will never meet an amiable suitor.

The protagonist in "My Debut" epitomizes King's portrayal of female beauty. Her gown was made of "blue silk, made with a long, pointed waist, and a plain, full skirt without trimmings. A few yards of old Machlin lace, disposed about the corsage, gave softness to the color where it framed my shoulders. Around my throat was a single row of pearls, and in my ears two pear-shaped drops of the same jewels."[398] In this story the protagonist discusses the topic of beauty with a male guest. In this illustration, the two use the analogy of a statue to the subject at hand.

> "It is the difference between the beauty of a statue and the beauty made by the hand of Nature."
>
> "Many prefer the statue," he said.
>
> "I don't. The statue must always lack warmth, softness, and variety of expression. Three indispensable adjuncts to beauty."

King's female protagonists embrace liveliness, warmth, and affection, and lack worldly ways or vanity. Oftentimes married women, following societies' rules, were described as "prosy," but the *most* beautiful women were unmarried, free from "worldly" ways, vanity, wealth, and

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[396] King, "Bal Costume."
[397] King, "My Debut," 534.
[398] King, "My Debut," 534.

especially men.[399] Women who were worldly and vain were other married members of society not usually idolized, and frequently depicted with less beauty. While King criticized women in high life, most of her protagonists felt compelled to join high society.

Behavioral Illustrations of Women

Despite their beauty, King depicted women in high life negatively. In "Bal Costume," they were hordes consuming great amounts of food at dinner parties only to get up and desert the party shortly thereafter, "Another surprise! Instead of hurrying home from the table in vile haste, as if these fair daughters of our fruitful soil were gourmands, who only came to feed, (their invariable custom,) they swarm up the staircase again in all their bright array - their rainbow magnificence!" The costumes of the women attending the ball seemed to vary little, since the narrator explained many of them dressed as Greek girls, "great grand mammas," and observed there were too many dressed as Nights and Stars in attendance. However, in the next sentence, King flippantly remarks, "But I should not complain, for there are fewer *Flower Girls* than fall to our usual lot."[400]

If women, in general, were portrayed negatively, mothers were depicted even worse. Described as cold, worldly, self-centered and malicious, they forced their daughters into loveless marriages and unhappiness.[401] In one story, the mother was accused of sacrificing her own daughter for "worldly vanity."[402] In "Marriage of Persuasion," Mrs. Mansfield was described as greedy, becoming "broader and broader as the blaze of plate - the measured footfall of a train of servants - the luxurious profusion of their constant service, were spread out before her." Because her daughter would not marry her wealthy suitor, Mrs. Mansfield accused her of depriving the

[399] King, "Braid," 219-222; "Woman's Warning," 66.
[400] King, "Bal Costume."
[401] King, "Gertrude," 244-245, 248; King, "Marriage," 111,
[402] King, "Gertrude," 248.

family of their "mainstay and support," and destroying the "great hope of [the mother's] life!"[403] When the daughter gave in to her mother's coercive behavior, Mrs. Mansfield embraced wealth and riches, treading "the 'velvet pile' of carpets with a happy step," and after compelling her daughter to marry into money, she "[adored] her daughter's noble brow..."[404]

Women in high society were described as "worldly." Aunt Milly in "The Best of Friends," had seen the world and offered a warning to her young nieces and nephews,

> I have seen good called evil, and evil, good. I have seen virtue do vicious acts, and I have seen poor vice perform the highest and noblest works. I have seen the unkindest people applauded for their wonderful charity, and I have seen the warmest hearts crushed because they were misunderstood - in a word, I have seen the great spirit of 'humbug' which governs society, ride triumphant over honesty and sincerity, and I have long come to the conclusion that the earth would be a fair pace to dwell in, if it were not for the men and women that inhabit it.[405]

While being an "amiable" person went nowhere, the world, meaning high society "[offered] premiums for rudeness and unkindness…"[406] Women who were described as saucy or imprudent received criticism from their societal peers, such as"…[Nell] you know you have often done imprudent things; and then that saucy tongue of your makes many enemies…"[407] Such enemies "bought knowledge that this is the world, and these are the world's acts."[408]

Society

King also criticized Charleston society. In her description of society, King's stories revolved around elegant balls and soirees, and the idle lives of leisure. This was a recurrent them in King's work; Frederick A. Porcher found King's novel, *Busy Moments,* included three stories about Charleston high life, "…which the writer unequivocally condemns."[409] While many

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[403] King, "Marriage," 111.
[404] King, "Marriage," 115.
[405] King, "The Best of Friends," 355.
[406] King, "My Debut," 542.
[407] King, "Heart-History," 94.
[408] King, "Heart-History," 97.
[409] Porcher, 213.

fictional female characters criticize the rich or harbor ill feelings toward high society, they still desire to be a part of this culture. In fact, King's personal letters also reveal her dislike of society women, yet she seemed to aspire to be included in their membership.

Families in high society strived for popularity. For instance, in "The Best of Friends," Madge's life was rife with gossip; she married the wrong man, and consequently became obsessed with learning the ways of the world through various male instructors and mentors. Her association with these men created much of the gossip, eventually bringing Madge to an emotional edge, becoming increasingly "sad and more dissatisfied than ever. The tears would roll out of her large black, wistful eyes when she talked to be about someone's coldness…"[410] Her family turned against her, electing to attend the same parties that excluded their close relation – all for the sake of popularity.[411] Failure in business, loss of wealth, and being gossiped about excluded one from the upper echelon of society. In another story, a character says, "Oh, well, I don't know exactly; you see she has been a great deal talked about, and now, since Aubry's failure, they must find it difficult to keep their place in society - and, in fact, I don't know - her day is passing somehow."[412] While the husband, Aubry, failed in his business ventures, the wife in this story was gossiped about and eventually they found themselves excluded from the circle of high society.

Wealth and riches surrounded everything in society. One room described by the narrator depicts "gay coloured chrysanthemums on the panelled walls, and the blooming hyacinths in their glass jars on my dressing-table and chimney-piece, give an air of eternal spring."[413] A grandmother's room had a "thousand and one gilded scent-bottles, ivory bon-bonnieres, cut-glass

[410] King, "Best of Friends," 357.
[411] King, "Best of Friends," 358.
[412] King, "Lucy Sheldon's Dream," 464.
[413] King, "My Ball Tablets," 331.

perfumery receptacles, enamelled jewel-boxes," with a "duchesse mirror reflects under the very shadow of its pink-lace curtains."[414] Sometimes merely being exposed to high society could also have a negative influence on the lives of King's characters. One night in society could "upset the ideas with which you were born. That the night of jewels, fine dresses, and idle people," could confuse the minds of young, single women.[415]

Many balls and social gatherings were important in the lives of women. In the story "My Ball Tablets," the grandmother kept records of the men she danced with in a special box – each name on the list represented a different man in her life, each corresponding with a different account of their lives.[416] In fact, many of the scenes in King's stories were set in dinner parties and ballrooms. In another story, the dinner party was described as a "dazzling sight," with "rows upon rows of fresh spring dresses, flowers and bright silks, exquisitely arranged heads, tiny bonnets looking like mere butterflies that had perched above beautiful brows, or were nestling among flaxen or raven curls, animated faces, a few distinguished looking men scattered here and there - it was really a charming sight!"[417] Mrs. Conway, in "Male Flirt," threw balls for her friends, acquaintances, and enemies.[418] In "Cora's Dream," the protagonist envisions "a ball room, softly floating to the rich music…"[419] During balls attendees danced quadrilles or the "German,"[420] illustrating that formal dancing was a significant part of social gatherings. The narrator in "A Braid of Auburn Hair" began the story by asking the readers if they knew a "pleasanter thing than the expectation and the arrival of an agreeable party to dine and spend the night?" The narrator explained the essence of a good dinner party: "you have a good cook, a

[414] King, "My Ball Tablets," 332.
[415] King, "My Debut," 543.
[416] King, "My Ball Tablets," 332.
[417] King, "My Debut," 536.
[418] King, "Male Flirt," 208.
[419] King, "Cora's Dream," 449.
[420] King, "Male Flirt," 202; "Cora's Dream," 449; "Bal Costume."

well-filled larder, the best wine, an excellent appetite, and a decided hunger for something new in the way of gossip and town talk..."[421] Conversation during these balls and dinner parties leads to the next theme in King's short stories.

Gossip

"Jewels glittered - bright eyes flashed, fair forms glided about with smiles and laughter, and gay gallants whispered sweet words in the ear of willing beauties," while the quiet attendees of a party "were looking anxiously out for stray daughters and nieces, and gossiping between whiles of scandal..."[422] As this example suggests, a theme frequent in King's writing is that both formal and informal conversations included excessive "gossip." Defined in nineteenth century terms, gossip meant to "tell idle tales" or to run "from place to place tattling."[423] Women who gossiped represented people harshly influencing the lives of their intended victims. Consequently, victims became severely ill, died, or were completely ostracized from high society because of the gossip. Yet, gossip seems widespread amongst most women in high society in King's short stories. According to one character, "No woman should attract public attention to her private affairs."[424] In "Heart-History," one character "has a lot of old women who come and talk to her about 'societies' and scandal - they are all as ugly as sin and can't even make their abuse of their neighbors amusing."[425]

King overtly discusses gossip and its negative consequences in several stories. Mrs. Turner in "Gossip," said of Ellen, a young woman in society, "Why they say she has young men at all hours of the night walking in and out."[426] Mrs. Greene believes "in the adaptation of the

[421] King, "Braid," 219.
[422] King, "Gertrude," 244.
[423] Webster, *Dictionary*.
[424] King, "Cora's Dream," 448.
[425] King, "Heart-History," 74.
[426] King, "Gossip," 47.

old proverb, 'the receiver is as bad as the thief.' In tales of scandal, 'she who listens is as bad as she who relates.'"[427] Women who gossiped were in denial of their character, "I am sure I never have been accused of scandalizing my neighbors,"[428] said one woman in this story, insulted that Mrs. Greene would accuse her of such a trait. Mrs. Greene believes this behavior is akin to murder.[429]

Although King criticized gossip, it is often the type of conversation in the upper echelon of high society. At soirees, weddings, dinners, conversation centered around a discussion and exaggeration of others' lives, "gossiping between whiles of scandal…."[430] King alludes to high society in her fiction by calling it "The world."[431] Furthermore, those who gossip are described as "worldly,"[432] and the victim of gossip is always a young, unmarried woman, often innocent of any wrongdoing. People gossiped about deaths, marriages and public scandals. Additionally, those "worldly" individuals delighted in the criticism of other people. "Woman of the world,"[433] is another frequented reference to "frivolous," gossiping, society women. These references are in nearly all of her collected short stories in *Russell's Magazine* when King is referring to society.

Neither friends nor family could be trusted among the women in high life, since gossip frequently ruled conversations. "The Best of Friends" provides one example. In this story, high society gossip about Madge constantly, often alleging a problem of "consumption." The gossip riled Madge's life, "She dropped her head upon our joined hands and cried, oh! So bitterly! …She told me how the whole city was busy with her name, and how she was almost beside

[427] King, "Gossip," 48.
[428] King, "Gossip," 48.
[429] King, "Gossip," 51.
[430] King, "Gertrude," 244.
[431] King, "Best of Friends," 357.
[432] King, "Gossip," 47.
[433] King, "Gossip," 51.

herself with horror and indignation and despair."[434] Even women who never left home "knew more news than any body," and "could entertain her visitors by the hour with tales of poor Madge." Eventually members of high society "turned a cold shoulder upon her, and she began to receive slights from this one, and rudeness from that one."[435] When this happened in society, even family members turned against their kin, as was the case with Madge. Her sister offers this perspective, "I hope people will understand that Madge's decline is not hereditary. It is a bad thing to have consumption in one's family. It might hurt my girls' prospects."[436] So, she was ostracized not only by high society, but also by her entire family. Madge became the "perfect Ishmael,"[437] deserted her family, became an actress, and later died of a prolonged illness.

Flirtation

King's writing often included flirtation, both as a personal trait of her characters as well as a topic of conversation. Flirtation meant romance, love, and heartbreak. Flirt meant "to throw out harsh or sarcastic words," and a "desire of attracting notice."[438] King often described coquettes as unmarried characters. In "Woman's Warning," the protagonist is tempted with riches, wealth and true love, and exhibits "coquettish" glances, that is, looking flirtatiously at a suitor. However, King did not limit the flirtation to women. A few prominent male characters exhibited overtly flirtatious behavior as well. Marriage and male flirtation changes a woman from innocent to cold and often unfeeling. "Sweet purity…Here was an inoffensive, feminine, loveable young girl, whose beauty and whose liveliness had touched…"[439] After the male flirt breaks her heart, she turns "hard and haughty,"[440] transforming the young unmarried woman into

[434] King, "Best of Friends," 356.
[435] King, "Best of Friends," 357.
[436] King, "Best of Friends," 364.
[437] King, "Best of Friends," 358.
[438] Webster, *Dictionary*.
[439] King, "Male Flirt," 207.
[440] King, "Male Flirt," 208.

a "Cruelly, self-asserting woman."[441] The female receiving this attention from a male often lost her innocent qualities to become a cold-hearted character, similar to characters already married.

Summary

Through her short stories King challenged the norms of high society in a very public forum. Utilizing the concept of True Womanhood ideology, this chapter initially focused on the depiction of women categorized around the four cardinal virtues. However, other categories relating to the representation of women in high society emerged. For instance, flirtation and gossip were two major themes within King's writing. The physical and behavioral portrayal of women within high society paints the portrait of a heroine confined to societal pressures as it pertains to marriage. King also portrays these women as defiant in the face of marriage because they challenged society and their spouses. Often it was better to be a widow than a wife and better to be defiant in the face of high society women than not. Secondary characters in King's stories generally made up other female members of high society who were less than trustworthy and contradicted their self-proclaimed righteousness. The discussion will focus on an analysis between King's depiction of women and the concept of Welter's True Womanhood in order to understand both the similarities and differences between this concept and the portrait painted by Susan Petigru King.

King's portrayal of women in high life is exhibited in two ways. First, through the portrayal of innocence as attributes of the young and naïve. On the other hand, she includes the portrayal of women in the "worldly" ways of wealth and vanity exhibiting negative features of women in society. At first glance, King's characters overtly deviate from the idyllic representation of women in the cult of True Womanhood and domestic ideology. Next, the findings examine King's work based on these attributes.

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[441] King, "Male Flirt," 209.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

SUSAN PETIGRU KING AND THE CULTURE OF ANTEBELLUM WOMEN IN HIGH LIFE

"…we cannot always do as our friends would desire, we must strive to content ourselves…"[442]
- Susan Petigru King

[442] SDPK-B to CPC, December 25, 1839-1841. SCHS.

Overview

Susan Petigru King wrote from a Southern aristocratic point of view, frequently challenging societal norms for her era. Through her writing she also addressed controversial topics pertaining to high society. This chapter compares the concepts in Chapter Two with the findings in Chapter Four.

Much of the mainstream fiction in magazines such as *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's* embraced moral qualities. For instance, the work of T. S. Arthur illustrates the author's ability to share moral tales throughout his work. In one of Arthur's stories, the moralizing plot centers on choosing the best wife, one who is domestic and simple, rather than one who is beautiful and smart.[443] Often choosing the best wife was determined by a woman's domestic virtues and other qualities related to the concept of True Womanhood. King's work shares moral story telling qualities like the fiction appearing in periodicals such as *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's*, but while the former promoted the virtues of True Womanhood and domestic ideology, King's moral plots denigrated many of these attributes. One way that King challenged cultural ideals is that she degraded the culture of high society itself. Formulating her work with a "moral-to-the-story," King exercised her ability to malign certain aspects of high society, such as marriage matches, gossip, and other social mores.

Piety

While Welter argued the True Woman possessed piety, the most prominent and important characteristic in the portrayal of women in the nineteenth century, King's characters negate this quality. Welter believed that women during the nineteenth century prayed to Heaven for strength and absolution, whereas King's heroines never attended religious services. In contrast, secondary characters King's protagonists despised - women who lied, gossiped, and destroyed

[443] Arthur, 6; Quoted in Ruppel, 319.

the lives of others with rumors - were connected with religious virtues more so than any other character in the story, since they were the ones who prayed and attended church on Sunday. These same women went door to door to ask for charitable donations for various organizations and supposedly took care of the poor and sick, while destroying and ostracizing the lives of other women by participating in scandalous conversation and hearsay. Moreover, mothers who prayed did so in the hope that their daughters would make a decision to marry the appropriate suitor, meaning a man with great wealth. Therefore, those who embraced pious characteristics within King's fiction lived an existence antithetical to a virtuous quality.

King portrayed piety as a negative attribute: supposedly pious women were actually evil and ruined the lives of other women. The narrator or the female heroine of her stories generally pointed out the hypocrisy of malevolent characters. In sum, King's fiction does not display True Womanhood's ideal of piety. In fact, the narrator or female protagonists in King's stories criticized church-going women for being hypocritical and insincere. King's pious female characters were different than many others in mainstream fiction because they were not portrayed as the ideal role model for women.

Purity

Like many of the fictional heroines in *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's*, King depicted women as pure and ethereal, at least in her portrayals of young, unwed women. These women were angelic in their beauty and graceful in their movements, whether on a ballroom floor or idly walking an outdoor field. They were portrayed as the epitome of women who were happy and satisfied with their lives. However, these women were also naïve to the ways of the world. Frequently, they fell on difficult times because of relations with men, marriage or gossip. When these events transpired, women who had been described as pure were now portrayed as cold,

heartless, fearless, strong-willed and confident. Members of high society were not comfortable around fearless, strong-willed women, making this characteristic a negative attribute among other members of high society and women who embraced these traits became ostracized from society.

However, one exception to King's portrayal of purity amongst women were those described as wild, flighty, and saucy, such as Madge in "The Best of Friends." She was "bright, full of mischief and as really good as gold…She was a great belle…" Madge was depicted as a woman who was "fond of laughing and joking, and people never half understood her, and thought her malicious when she was only merry." Consequently, she "made more enemies than friends."[444] So, a woman who was innocent and ethereal could also live a life considered aberrant because she was self-satisfied and content with her behavior and lifestyle. Her fall came at the hands of gossip and ridicule by members of the gentry.

In King's "Woman's Warning" the protagonist suffered similar consequences to the woman portrayed in a story by M. Miles, published in *The Lady's Book*. The former dreamt of a chaste life until one day she was tempted by revels, and a golden girdle destroyed her heavenly realm of innocence. When the protagonist in *The Lady's Book* only once succumbed to the sin of gambling, she was considered "fallen," and all her beauty defiled.[445] Women who did not uphold societies' moral standards were ostracized, and whether in *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's* or King's fiction, sinful women fell to illness or death. However, in King's short stories it was usually at the hand of another member of society. In King's story, the female protagonist only regretted choosing a coquettish life and revels because of the harmful response

[444] King, "Best of Friends," 355-356.
[445] King, "Woman's Warning"; M. Miles, "Young Countess," 253-259; quoted in Letteney, 29.

that soon followed: a girdle that squeezed blood from her along with snakes slurping from the blood of her heart.

In King's fiction young, unwed women, as well as widows, embraced purity, while married women were frequently depicted as having lost this virtue. When women marry, they usually lose their purity because of their husband's despoiled behavior, lack of love and unhappiness. Later in this chapter, the portrayal of married women will be discussed in more detail.

Submissiveness

Contrary to Welter's finding that fictional women were submissive to their husbands, King's female characters had no desire to be submissive. In fact, they verbally opposed pressure from family members to marry, and they were assertive towards their husbands. King's female protagonists often disobeyed their mothers, or at least attempted to be defiant until the pressure of peers or loved ones overcame their spirit. While Welter's True Woman was feminine when she was submissive, King's female characters were feminine and beautiful regardless of submissive nature toward their suitors or mothers. They did not become more beautiful by being more submissive. In fact, the opposite was usually true.

Although the True Woman was supposed to be non-threatening, several of the stronger-willed women in King's short stories *threatened* the culture of high society because they endangered the marital tradition by desiring actually to marry someone for love rather than wealth. King's female heroines jeopardized the formalities of high society because many wanted to enjoy life without restraint. Many of these women were not submissive. Although they frequently succumbed to the pressure of marriage in the end, the moralizing propensity of the narration illustrates the misery compounding the life of women embracing submissive attributes.

Women portrayed in mainstream periodicals like *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's* were not to harbor ambitions outside the home. Many of King's characters, on the other hand, embraced them. One example was the way female characters were interested in books, acting, teaching, and other interests beyond the domestic realm. Many of the young wives did not have or at least did not desire to have children of their own.

During the Civil War, King lived with and supported her mother on the outskirts of Charleston. Similar to King's responsibility of her mother during the war, the character that presents the greatest challenge to submissiveness is Elizabeth Leighton, a strong-willed female who supports her mother by employment outside the home. She describes the unequal salaries and wages of her male peers in her professional occupation. This is an attribute of a stalwart woman who is confident and assertive. Elizabeth could easily marry a man in order to support herself and her mother; instead, she refuses such an idea. When she eventually marries, it is not out of worldly vanity or the desire to submit to fortune, a husband, or even her mother. This analysis of King's short stories reveals female characters possessed a virtue opposite to Welter's third attribute of the True Woman, submissiveness. Instead, King's female characters exhibited strength and a willingness to prevail over cultural norms.

Domesticity

Counter to True Woman ideology, King's female characters did not possess domestic virtues. Female characters in King's narratives hardly ever mention domestic duties, whereas Welter's study found that women were portrayed as domestic heroines or as women who embraced household obligations. King's fiction revealed that brides rarely wanted to marry their suitors, while the True Woman embraced the hearth and home and knew her place in the world as wife and mother. King's fiction, when it included domestic attributes, illustrates the

aristocratic life of idleness, one where servants and slaves kept up with household duties, instead of the wife, mother or another family member. The lack of domestic or household duties of the female characters in King's work can be attributed partially to the difference in social classes, as opposed to gender. Members of genteel societies during this era were slave owners or had domestic servants to take care of the household duties.

Traditional mothers typically portrayed raising families during this time were missing from King's narratives. Of the mother characters in King's fiction, most forced their daughters into marriages and others were described as prosy and homely, antithetical to King's depiction of beauty. King's work does not fit into this traditional idea of the domestic writer in antebellum America, that is, women writing about life in the home. In fact, her personal letters reveal her views of such stereotypes of women, "who have not three ideas," since they are "quite fit for what they become; housekeepers and muses…" King expressed her desire for her only daughter, Adele, to grow up like Elizabeth Leighton, a woman of "sound principle" and "amiable" virtues.[446] King's stories focused on societal values and norms, which she outright challenged. In fact, her final novella protested the inequality of wages for women working outside the home to support their families. King understood the role of woman in society was not solely as wife and mother, and her fiction reveals this belief.

Within King's narratives, beauty is an important characteristic, perhaps more so than domesticity. Women leaned on their ability to exude outward beauty and wealth in order to be accepted by high society. Lack of money or attractiveness would embarrass members of this gentrified association. By contrast mainstream periodical fiction during this time did not judge

[446] SDPK-B to APA, Aug. 26, 1849. Vanderhorst Family Papers, SCHS; King, "My Debut," the character of Elizabeth Leighton is a good-natured, warm-hearted, the same kind of woman King desires her real-life daughter, Adele, to become.

women solely on their outward appearance. If they inherited domestic qualities, however simple in their physical appearance, they were considered more beautiful and more desirable wives.

Marriage

King's self-professed obsession with marriage led her to focus on this theme. She challenged norms for women in society by comparing the institution of marriage to slave labor and even murder. King's brides were unhappy, miserable women who did not have the power to protest their objections to wealthy love-matches. This mirrored King's own life experiences as a young woman, when her mother and sister believed she made a mistake to refuse Henry C. King's initial marriage proposal because he was a wealthy man. Similar to Anna in "Marriage of Persuasion," King was not physically attracted to Henry. Because of their mothers' unhealthy obsession with money and wealth, in the end both the protagonist and King were coerced into unhappy, loveless marriages. The only time a bride was happy with marital nuptials was in King's final novella, published in *Harper's Magazine*, when she married the suitor of *her* choice. In King's second marriage she was not pressured by family or friends to marry. In fact, the opposite was true because many individuals in society did not like C. C. Bowen or his politics. In King's life, she married the suitor of her choice, but it came at a price because she was eventually ostracized by society.

Married women in antebellum mainstream periodicals held their families together. This was not always the case in King's stories. Although this has been considered a positive characteristic, some of King's female characters were driven crazy by the thought of such a responsibility, especially when it was forced upon them. At other times, King's female characters accepted the fact that they would never be able to leave their husband. No matter the

route women chose after being married, the wedding night was never the most cherished moment of a woman's life, as described in the mainstream fiction in the literature review.

In Chapter Two, Hume's research revealed that an unwed woman was considered "unnatural,"[447] but King's stories, unwed women were happier than those who were married. In fact, being a widow was better than being a wife; being a spinster was better than being married. Marriage was portrayed as the "unnatural position," forced upon women in high society. While love and romance frequently found their way into King's plots, it was portrayed much differently than the illustrations provided in the mainstream fiction of the literature review. T. S. Arthur's short stories regularly ended with a marriage, whereas King's narratives oftentimes began with marital vows or involved at least the contemplation of matrimony. King's characters knew there was more to life than marriage and the traditional domestic circle. Elizabeth Leighton's character in "My Debut" exemplifies this belief. Widows were portrayed as women who were happier in bereavement than marriage; the rumored life of wives in Persia was the most ideal situation because they reigned supreme over everything, including their households.

Absent Themes

Many scholars have examined racial tensions in the South during the antebellum era, either in the press or the literature of the time period. However, King rarely included such discourse within her work. King's obsession with romance, love, and marriage kept her from seeking political topics of the era. King's letters, however, reveal that she held strong views of the political crisis during this time. She once lamented that "crisis," "secession" and "which will Georgia do" were the focus of too many dinner conversations. However, King dismissively laughed at the "whole *business*," because she did not have the "slightest respect for the whole body of legislature" in South Carolina. She remarked in a letter that she wished to be a "'worth

[447] Hume, 16.

while' Governor" for at least "a day or two!" King said she would have "delight" in responding to "the letters requesting 'arms and ammunition'_! [sic] There would instantly have been such an order for pop-guns and pluffers [sic] and poison berries and peas freed from 'Headquarters.'"[448] King also owned slaves, so the topic of slavery was an intimate matter. However, she never addresses the issue in her writing.

Second, fatherly characters were rarely mentioned in her stories. King's biography shows that her father frequently scolded his daughter concerning aberrant behavior toward others in high society. He was a lawyer and unionist, traveling through much of the South for his law practice and public speaking engagements to spread his political beliefs. Petigru publicly and privately supported his daughter's authorial ambitions. Although it seems her relationship with her father was better than the relationship King shared with her mother, fatherly figures rarely existed in her fiction. On the other hand, mothers of women in high society were frequently depicted as malevolent characters, perhaps reflecting King's own relationship with her mother. In place of most would-be fatherly figures were uncles. Several of King's protagonists interacted with an uncle figure to tell the story, as opposed to one that the audience would assume to be the father if the relation was not revealed.

Other Themes

Themes discussed in this section are subjects not addressed in the literature review or included examples from mainstream magazine fiction. Flirtation was a scandalous predicament and gossip frequently contributed to the negative affects of this indignity. In real life, King was considered a flirt. Both she and her sister Caroline wore fashionable clothing, sometimes cut too low in the front, which was unacceptable in their culture; King often led a trail of young bachelors in her wake. Even renowned novelist William Thackeray, on a visit to Charleston,

[448] SDPK-B to ADP, Dec. 19, 1850. Emphasis by SDPK-B.

once remarked to King that he heard she was a "fast" woman. Mary Boykin Chesnut accused her of being too anxious for a second husband, and letters written by individuals long after her death dealt with this topic as well. So, King dealt with the theme of flirtation in her writing from an intimate perspective. In fact, King's real-life flirtation was one of the primary reasons her personal life was riled by gossip. Innocent women's lives were ruined by the flirtation of male suitors who had no intention of actually falling in love with their young, beautiful maidens. Women who flirted were also disliked by high society, and sometimes exiled because of such behavior. To gain revenge on one's enemies, flirtation could be the answer. Moreover, flirtatious behavior was one of the primary reasons women in high society gossiped, since playful actions indicated a sinful life.

Gossip

Gossip is not included in the model of True Womanhood, but King's writing utilized it to illustrate the inherent flaws of human nature, at least in high life. Women who gossip while also embracing piety were considered spiteful human beings. Consequently, King utilizes this theme as a form of opposition to the virtues considered the epitome of True Womanhood. The similarity between King's life and the life of the victims of gossip in her fiction is clear. When members of high society label someone "bad," and eventually ostracize that person through their gossip, can hardly distinguish between the biography offered in Chapter Three or the gossip of fictional characters of high society described in Chapter Four.

King's fiction is critical of high society, while her characters at the same time desired to be a part of its membership. The same can be said of King's life experiences. These feelings, vacillating from one side to the other, frequently caused both conflict in fictional plots and the rise and fall of women in King's short stories. Her female characters were graceful and

beautiful, while also being called sinful because they quietly protested the cultural values of their society. They wanted to challenge the cultural norms of high society, but in the end, they fell short and lost their defiant spirit to the pressures of family and peers. Women who kept up the challenge frequently lost the battle to ill health or worse, death.

Summary

Women portrayed in King's fiction defied the values of True Womanhood in several ways. King addressed subject matter similar to the stories presented in the literature review, but the moral to her stories was not the same as those exemplified in Chapter Two. Her morals went against many of the formalities of society, as opposed to teaching a lesson conforming to the culture of the gentry. Not every woman embraced domestic ideology or motherhood, since the opposite was usually true. Pious women were not ideal. In fact, women who attended church services were antithetical to the idyllic model of womanhood, because they were cunning and deviant characters. While purity added to the ethereal beauty of King's female protagonists, it was usually reserved for the young and naïve, and sometimes widows. Women who lost their purity became strong-willed and defiant in King's fiction as opposed to being completely "fallen," as was the case with True Womanhood ideology. Not every strong-willed woman in King's short stories died; sometimes they survived to confront the man who stole their "purity." Even those who fell to illness or death came back to confront their aggressors or at least someone on their behalf did – almost as if it were a case of King avenging her real-life antagonists.

King's fictional protagonists frequently succumbed to pressures from family and friends to marry. However, these women rarely submitted to their husbands. So, in terms of the submissive attribute, King's characters do not comply. Her protagonists did not usually submit to societal wishes. Women *were* unhappy in marriage and had no desire to become mothers.

Domesticity was not frequently a topic in King's work, but when it did come up, women usually had no desire to become mothers. They also did not participate in household duties since they hired servants or owned slaves to perform domestic responsibilities.

Yet with all of King's protests to society, her fiction never seems to overthrow high life altogether. The only way her characters free themselves from this lifestyle is when they are ostracized from the group or through death. So, King never really seems to be able to overthrow the traditions and culture of society. Her characters fluctuate between their desire to be "in" society, invited to soirees and balls, while also desiring to rebel against certain social mores. King does not leave many options for her characters, until the final narrative in this selection of works when she suggests teaching as a good occupation, but it would be better if a woman received wages equal to her male counterpart.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

SUSAN PETIGRU KING AND THE CULTURE OF ANTEBELLUM WOMEN IN HIGH LIFE

"I am so tired of the stupid, self-sufficient, wearisome styles of young ladies…Women, who have not three ideas, who spoil a little French, who play a little music, and have not a grain of agreeability, are the highest standard with us …"[449] - Susan Petigru King

[449] SDPK-B to APA, August 26, 1849.

King's burgeoning assertiveness frequently contradicted the concept of Barbara Welter's True Woman ideology. Although utilizing plots of romance, marriage, and other domestic themes, King was able to challenge the cultural values of Charleston's high society. One of the cultural values of this aristocracy was to "turn out" a good wife, according to King's father, James Louis Petigru.[450] Marital pressures put forth by members of Charleston's aristocracy eventually led King to challenge societies' cultural norms in a very public form. In her writing, King had no desire to please anyone but her female protagonists. Similar to her short narrative work, King's personal life also challenged societal norms as they pertained to the behavior and conduct of women. Eventually, her defiance of the genteel customs and rituals led to a lonely existence and isolated death, similar to many of her female protagonists.

This study reveals that not *all* women portrayed in nineteenth century periodicals embraced Welter's concept of True Womanhood. In fact, King's work showed women in the mid-nineteenth century as often defying those characteristics. Piety was a trait in women who were cruel. Consequently, pious women were shown to be malevolent characters. Purity was only reserved for the young and naïve. Purity was a virtue until a woman married and returned only when her husband died because they became "pretty" accompanied by cavaliers to various tea parties. Female protagonists may have submitted to the pressure to marry, but, they did not submit to their husbands. Submissiveness was not a virtue, but rather a hindrance in life that very few female characters embraced. Women who submitted to the pressure of their family and peers lived unhappily the rest of their lives. Women who did not love their husbands did not exhibit submissive qualities. However, women who married for wealth certainly submitted to fortune no matter how badly their characters detested wealth. Domesticity was never a primary

[450] JLP to SDPK-B, May 11, 1843. SCHS. Petigru wrote, "I hope your good behaviour will be equal to the kind reception to which your allies have given you. I have often said that I should be as much chagrinned to turn a bad wife out of my nursery, as to send a student from the office to be rejected."

topic within King's writing. Although domestic duties were flippantly mentioned in a few of her stories, the role of woman as mother or a wife's sole role of household duties was not typically part of King's plots. When domestic affairs were mentioned it was apparent that women in King's stories were not fond of matronly or domestic roles. However, the role marriage played in the life of women in high society does relate to the concept of domesticity, since, according to Welter, the responsibilities residing within the domestic circle were the singular goal in the life of nineteenth century women. In King's work, however, true happiness, not true womanhood, was the only goal of female heroines. Consequently, King's fiction does not coincide with the fiction that other scholars have found was printed in *The Lady's Book* or *Graham's*.

While scholars have evinced the need for expanding theoretical concepts as they pertain to the depiction of women in the nineteenth century, others have assessed the need for periodical fiction, particularly serial text, to be studied. This study has developed a better understanding of periodical fiction from a gender perspective while including the serial form. Theoretical concepts reveal that during specific times throughout the nineteenth century, women were portrayed with certain attributes. The literature review focused on Barbara Welter's concept of True Womanhood along with domestic ideology of the era. However, this analysis shows that during the antebellum era, women were portrayed in more than one way in magazine fiction. King portrayed women in high society as hordes attending dinner parties, eating, gossiping, and deserting the table as soon as dinner was completed. Defining the model woman through Welter's ideology limits the scope of research, which ideally should seek to understand the many *different* ways women were portrayed during the nineteenth century. This study is one way that scholars can research other illustrations of the portrayal of women in mid-nineteenth century periodicals.

Frances B. Cogan points out that women writers such as female advice writers exhibited "an early feminist note," because they "deplored the fact that women were not prepared with job skills to meet the emergencies that would undoubtedly beset them." Nascent feminism in the mid-nineteenth century came in a form that was qualified by an external factor. The Reverend Weaver qualified feminism by a need or crisis upon a woman's family, while an editor like Sarah J. Hale believed women should be educated, but only enough to instruct their children.[451] Augusta Evans illustrates another example of early feminism among women writers. In *Vashti* the female protagonist becomes a famous opera singer. Foregoing the traditional route for a woman during this time, the protagonist's ambition is thought to be selfish and cold by members of society.[452] In another example, Evans paints the protagonist in *St. Elmo* as "repeatedly [refusing] offers of marriage but finally succumbs in the last chapters of the novel," only to become a scholar.[453] In a novel by Mrs. A. D. T. A. Whitney, *A Summer in Leslie Goldthwaite's Life*, a female character is a "trained" naturalist enjoying life "much more than the bored mamas and dispirited daughters…"[454] King was only one among several early feminist writers. Women wrote advice columns, editorials and essays, as well as fiction. Consequently, future research on the portrayal of women in fiction or essays during the mid-nineteenth century will paint the portrait of a woman who does not always comply with the concept of True Womanhood.

Clearly, King was obsessed with the topic of woman's role in society and challenged several assumptions of an aristocratic and patriarchal culture, which compelled her to become a "nascent" feminist, according to Pease and Pease. This research supports their postulation that King "used her position as a published author to criticize the fundamental assumption of the

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[451] Okker, 38-58; Cogan, 213-215.
[452] Augusta J. Evans, *Vashti*; or "Until Death Us Do Part," (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1869); Cogan, 215-216.
[453] Augusta J. Evans, *St. Elmo*, (New York: G. W. Charleston, 1866); Cogan, 215-216.
[454] A. D. T. A. Whitney, *A Summer in Leslie Goldthwaite's Life*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1891 [1866]); Cogan, 216.

patriarchal system," and that her critique "was strongly related to [her] unconventional attitude" toward." In fact, her "desire for autonomy and independence was in itself a challenge to patriarchy."[455] Like King's work in novels, her short stories were very much a protest against the machination of a society siding with vanity and "worldly" views. King's ideology helps reveal the movement of female authors and editors, such as Sarah J. Hale, to expose society and specifically object to unreasonable characteristics and behaviors. For instance, Hale supported the education of women based on the need for mothers to education their children, whereas King protested many of societies' cultural values as they pertained to the lives of women. One difference between Hale and King is that the latter's work resided in the realm of fiction rather than editorials. However, each of these women supported the outward mobility of women in society.

Marriage, interpreted in King's fiction, was part of the domestic duty of women in high society. Rather than working in a kitchen or bearing children, as prescribed in mainstream magazines, domesticity in King's narratives ended with marriage. Women who married were unhappy and had no desire to bear children, and rarely worked anywhere near the kitchen. Most had slaves or domestic servants for those household duties. In a very public fashion, King scorned these roles because she was rebelling against a patriarchal society. King's fiction also shows that mothers and men were to blame for the misery of their young and innocent victims.

Although King challenged societal values, she usually failed to contrive a solution for these women as a whole, because her stories normally provide the audience with a moral as opposed to a resolution. Her moralizing statements insist that women should merely follow their heart when it comes to love and romance. However, in her final novella King offers another

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[455] Enrico Dal Lago, "South Carolina History Through Women's Eyes," *Reviews in American History*, 30(1) (2002): 13-21.

avenue for the happiness of its female protagonists – an occupation. Even so, King illustrates to the audience that women who act in a way that challenges high society culture are usually punished by society. While her work is heavily overt and didactic, King is included in the Southern literary canon because she is an anomaly in the very public way she confronted societal values. King is also important because of the witty repertoire she inserted into her short stories and the creative ability to address societal issues.

King herself worked as a writer to earn some income. When she married for the second time, she never wrote again. King's ambivalence of high society is represented in her fiction because it illustrates the vacillation between the outward criticism of high life and simultaneous desire to be one of its members. King wanted to be a part of high society, however, she did not want to be criticized for opinions or actions contrary to their cultural norms. Instead, her fiction criticized society for its disagreeable cultural values.

Limitations

There are certain limitations to historical research, especially one where the analysis specifically focuses on a single writer. The short stories analyzed for this study were limited in number and contained within three publications considered general-interest as opposed to a woman's magazine or mainstream periodical. Additional research on other authors is needed to make broader generalizations.

This study also examined one class of nineteenth century society. In order to have a better understanding of the different ways women were depicted in nineteenth century periodical literature, scholars should investigate all classes of society, especially the portrayal of slave laborers and working class women. This study is also limited in the literature review since only studies of *The Lady's Book* and *Graham's* were utilized to understand the portrayal of women in

mainstream periodicals. More research needs to be conducted in other mainstream publications so that others may make a better comparison of the different ways women were represented through mainstream and non-mainstream media.

King's fiction is limited in scope because oftentimes the plot centered on romance, marriage, or gossip as opposed to "hot" topics of the antebellum era such as abolition or secession. King did not acknowledge the abolitionist movement in her work because her characters were limited to the genteel society who owned slaves. Most of high society Charleston supported secession, while a small number opposed the movement. Although James Louis Petigru was an avid unionist, his daughter initially was not. In fact, King ridiculed the political and cultural battle of secession just prior to the war. Consequently, King's plots focus on a very specific subject matter, limiting the focus of the study itself.

Summary

King's short stories were flirtatious and rebellious, and qualify as a voice of protest against a genteel society. In this way, she became an early spokesperson for women in a male dominated society. Mass communication history includes the study of magazines and periodicals, and this research contributes to scholarship that focuses on historical examinations of mass media. This study is unusual because it addresses fiction and examines several serial texts since several of King's stories were published in the serial form.

A complete examination of King's short fiction has never been conducted. Therefore, this study adds to the biographical life and writing of an author of merit while also examining her work from a gender perspective. This research has illuminated the ways King contributed to early feminism, but also hints at her fictional inadequacies since she neglected to offer resolutions. However, King's writing was controversial and radical at times. Her attempts to

challenge societal norms should be acknowledged because it is seminal to understanding the many different ways women were portrayed in mass media.

This study has added to mass communication history by providing a "mirror" of unacceptable social mores for the time period, and by examining works that were published in the serial format. Similar to Kirk's research, this study contributes to mass communication history by illustrating the way one woman writer protested social mores of the time period. Although middle class fiction and magazine stories have been researched, a gap remains regarding other classes and other types of fiction. Through their fiction women writers of the upper echelon of society also painted a portrait of women during the antebellum era.

This study has added to knowledge about Susan Petigru King's life by bringing together her biography and short stories to examine the ways in which women were portrayed in high society. It offers a better understanding of King's short stories and the major topics presented through her work. King's short stories, as Pease and Pease found of her novels, illustrated impatience with restrictions set upon the Southern woman. Through her narratives, King was able to address the restrictions of marriage and certain virtues of womanhood, which did not correspond with the True Woman ideology. In fact, King's heroine represents the life King desired, but never quite achieved. Susan Petigru King is one example of the way women contributed to society through their work. King's fiction also illustrates that the True Womanhood concept is not the sole ideology for the portrayal of women during the antebellum era. As an early feminist, King had the ability to address issues through her fiction, and bring them to an audience of both men and women.

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APPENDIX

1.1 SDPK-B List of Works

1. *Busy Moments of an Idle Woman.* Appleton, 1853.
2. *Lily: a Novel.* Harper's, 1855.
3. *Gerald Gray's Wife*. 1864.
4. "A Braid of Auburn Hair." *Russell's Magazine*, (June 1857): 219-223.
5. "A Little Lesson for Little Ladies: The Story Her Uncle Told Lucy." *Russell's Magazine*, (October 1858): 73-77.
6. "A Little Lesson for Little Ladies: Cora's Dream." *Russell's Magazine,* (August, 1858): 448-451.
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10. "Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach: Gossip." *Russell's Magazine*, (October 1857): 47-51.
11. "Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach: Marriage of Persuasion." *Russell's Magazine*, (November 1857): 111-115.
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17. "My Ball Tablets." *Russell's Magazine*, (January 1860): 355-363.
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19. "Sylvia's World: The Heart-history of a Heartless Woman." New York: Derby and Jackson, 1859.
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