Proofs of Genius
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CHAPTER 1

America Collecting Itself: National Identity and Intellectual Property in the Early Republic

The first decades of the United States offer us a rare glimpse into how the collected edition influenced and was shaped by the concurrent development of a nation. An examination of the development of the collected edition during the early Republic shows how the genre worked as a nation-building tool, how it reflected American notions of private property, how it grew in response to changing material conditions of book production, and how it eventually served as a special memorializing genre for a growing bellettristic middle class. Many of the materials examined in this chapter are by amateurs, were privately or only regionally distributed, and are decidedly noncanonical. These volumes offer a fascinating look into the ideological underpinnings of our notions of authorial genius, intellectual property, and artistic creation, all of which continue to shape how we think about our national literature.

1. THE COLLECTED EDITION AS PROOF OF PERSONAL, REGIONAL, AND NATIONAL GENIUS

Despite a proliferation of newspaper presses in major northern U.S. cities such as Philadelphia and New York, the American literary market of the early nineteenth century was still dominated by British imports. Several factors gave British publications an edge over American ones. A lack of effective international copyright laws meant that American printers could reprint British books more cheaply than paying American authors for original works. Additionally, Britain dominated the international book trade, especially in dealings with its former colony, because of the sophisticated
trade infrastructure it developed as its empire expanded, as well as a laxer approach to postpublication censorship than many of its European counterparts, which had allowed the British book industry to flourish in the preceding century. Finally, American consumers still looked to Europe for cultural leadership and were slow to encourage American cultural developments. In a biting opinion, a writer for the *North American Review* (probably the editor, William Tudor) explained in 1815:

> Our literary delinquency may principally be resolved into our dependence on English literature. We have been so perfectly satisfied with it, that we have not yet made an attempt towards a literature of our own. In the pre-eminent excellence of this foreign literature we have lost sight of or neglected our own susceptibility of intellectual labor. So easy is it for us to read English books, that we have hardly thought it worth while to write any for ourselves.²

American deference to British literature would persist well into the nineteenth century, bolstered by the implicit belief on both sides of the Atlantic that the United States lacked a history sufficiently developed to support a national literature.³

Collected editions had been subtly but effectively bolstering nationalistic ideology in Europe since the Renaissance, when an increase in secular intellectual and cultural goods, coupled with a developing capitalist economic system, allowed the author to be valued for his originality rather than for his agility in reworking texts and forms of the past.⁴ In a global cultural market, the collected edition allowed beauty and talent to be associated with the individual, and by proxy the nation of which the author was a subject. The piece in the *North American Review* decries the undeveloped literature of the United States as a matter of intellectual and patriotic negligence, framing the failure to write as a lazy failure to work. Such an approach to authorship spoke to the entrepreneurialism of the new country and drew upon developing views of the author as a producer of cultural capital, views that would prove conducive to the rise of the collected edition in the United States.

Many Americans in the early Republic, as well as some European observers, were at least implicitly aware of the power of the collected edition to assert America’s cultural status. Though this chapter will not attempt to closely study the long and complex history of theological publications in America, it is worth noting that the first collected edition of an Ameri-
can writer was *The Works of John Woolman*, published in two parts by Joseph Crukshank in Philadelphia in 1774. The publication of this collection of autobiographical reflections and religious essays was implicitly political: Woolman was an itinerant Quaker minister and radical social activist devoted to the cause of abolition. Since Quakers were actively persecuted not only in Britain but also within the North American colonies outside of Pennsylvania, Woolman would have been read as an inherently politicized figure. Moreover, Crukshank, the printer, was also a Quaker with strong Quaker political sympathies. He was the leading publisher of Quaker texts, and during the years leading up to the Revolution he hid one of his journeymen for months in his printing house as he was pursued by the British for failure to pay taxes in support of the militia. The first collected edition of an American writer, then, reflected radical anti-British sympathies on the eve of the American Revolution.

The first collected edition of an American author published after the formation of the United States was *The Poems of Philip Freneau: Written Chiefly During the Late War*. The volume arose from an ongoing relationship between Freneau and the printer, Francis Bailey, both of whom were deeply invested in nation-building. Though the title of the volume implies that it was a comprehensive edition, Freneau, like many authors who would release collected editions over the next century, was at the beginning of his literary career: the book was published when Freneau was thirty-four and had four productive decades ahead of him. Freneau began his career in 1775 by writing anti-British opinion pieces. In 1778, after a maritime stint in the West Indies in which he focused on nature poetry, he returned to the United States to fight in the war. Soon thereafter he started contributing political pieces to the *United States Magazine*, a revolutionary newspaper published in Philadelphia by Francis Bailey. This collaboration would prove instrumental to the publication of Freneau’s poetry collection. In 1780, Freneau was taken prisoner at sea by the British and endured a grueling six-week ordeal aboard the British prison ship *Aurora*. Upon his release, suffering from near starvation, he convalesced at his family home in New Jersey and wrote “The British Prison-ship,” his most vehement anti-British writing to date, in which he detailed the inhumanity of the British forces toward their prisoners of war. In 1781, the poem was published by Bailey, who was concurrently beginning the *Freeman’s Journal*, a weekly anti-Federalist newspaper. Freneau and Bailey had been corresponding about collaboration during Freneau’s convalescence, and the very first issue of the *Journal*
included an advertisement for Freneau’s “Prison Ship,” to be sold at Bailey’s shop. While Bailey advanced Freneau’s poetic career through printing, selling, and advertising his works, Freneau powered Bailey’s newspaper with a constant supply of materials. In fact, Freneau’s contributions to Bailey’s paper were so numerous that one of Freneau’s early biographers has suggested that it would be more accurate to consider Freneau the editor of the paper and Bailey the publisher.5

In the spring of 1781 Congress had ratified the Articles of Confederation, and Francis Bailey was appointed official printer. By May, the Freeman’s Journal was advertising the Articles, as well as the Declaration of Independence, a collection of state laws, and the Treaty of Paris, alongside Freneau’s “Prison Ship” (fig. 1). Bailey—perhaps with Freneau’s input—was clearly marketing Freneau’s major work as the poem of the Revolution. Like the other political documents, it was attributed to no author.

Bailey and Freneau continued their collaboration on the Freeman’s Journal, as well as on other editorial and translation projects, until Freneau went back to sea in 1784. Two years later, upon the ten-year anniversary of the new nation, Bailey published The Poems of Philip Freneau, enshrining

Fig. 1. Advertisement for the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, and “The British Prison Ship.” Freeman’s Journal, May 2, 1781, 3.
the patriot poet whose reputation he had largely created. Bailey wrote a preface for the volume in which he seemed to verify that the collection, as the name implied, was complete. “The pieces now collected and printed in the following sheets,” he explained, “were left in my hands, by the author, above a year ago, with permission to publish them whenever I thought proper.” After explaining that many of the poems were written during the Revolutionary War and were published in the *Freeman’s Journal*, thereby accentuating Freneau’s political background and his ties to Bailey’s ongoing publication, he explains that they have been read with pleasure by “persons of the best taste.” The volume of poems runs four hundred pages, which is stunning considering that it represents a single decade of a career that would span five. Two years later, Bailey released *The Miscellaneous Works of Mr. Philip Freneau Containing His Essays and Additional Poems*, which he sold as an eight-volume set to supplement the 1786 volume of poetry. No American poet before Freneau, or for several years after, received such treatment: a long, multivolume collection predicated on his identity as a uniquely American writer. The edition was the last major collaboration between the men, and stood as a culmination of their work together, in which the revolutionary printer helped to canonize the revolutionary poet as an author who was inextricably bound up in the political and aesthetic identity of the newly formed United States.

Many American writers in the first decades of the United States followed a much different course than Freneau, whose literary reputation was made on American soil. Freneau benefited from the advocacy of an American printer eager to publish patriotic works, but often the new American printing industry and its reading public were squeamish about investing in American writers, even those with proven reputations. American publishers seemed to prefer receiving Europe’s benediction before enshrining an author in a collected edition. Surprisingly, even a figure as widely revered in the early United States as Benjamin Franklin did not find an American publisher willing to take on his collected works until the text had made a circuitous route through the European book trade. In 1791 an incomplete version of Franklin’s autobiography supplemented by a biographer was published in Paris in French as *Mémoires de la vie privée de Benjamin Franklin*. Two years later, the autobiography was translated back into English and published in London, then this translation of a translation was quickly reprinted in New York as *Works of the Late Doctor Benjamin Franklin: Consisting of His Life Written by Himself, Together with Essays, Humorous, Moral,*
Literary, Chiefly in the Manner of the Spectator. Even the works of one of the nation’s founders found validation only through success in the European market and, remarkably, was only available in the United States as a retranslation of the French text back into English. Thirteen years later, in 1806, a British collection of Franklin’s works, this time much more exhaustive, was released. A British reviewer’s reaction to the collection confirms how, in the early nineteenth century, collected editions had become evidence of both a nation’s cultural accomplishments and its population’s investment in those accomplishments. He began his review, “Nothing, we think, can show more clearly the singular want of literary enterprise or activity, in the States of America, than that no one has yet been found, in that flourishing republic, to collect and publish the works of their only philosopher.”

To this British reviewer, the failure of the United States to produce a collected edition of one of its most accomplished citizens was evidence of the inadequacy of the nation’s cultural production.

Franklin’s circuitous route through European publication was typical of many authors from the period who were eventually canonized in collected editions. In 1823, the French publisher Baudry began releasing the collected works of Washington Irving, who was only a few years into his literary career. The Baudry collection was reprinted in London, and in 1825 another French publisher, Galignani, released another nine-volume edition in Paris. The next year, the German publisher Sauerlander undertook a decadelong seventy-four-volume set, *Washington Irving’s Sammltliche Werke*, which, after the initial nineteen volumes, proved to be too ambitious to sell as separate volumes and was eventually consolidated into fewer books. Finally, in 1840, after these various grandiose European efforts to collect Irving’s works and capitalize on his name, an American publisher, Carey, Lea, and Blanchard of Philadelphia, republished Irving’s works in two volumes under the title *The Works of Washington Irving*.

Similarly, James Fenimore Cooper was honored with a collected edition in the United States during his lifetime, but only after he had proven worthy of such treatment abroad. In 1824, Charles Gosselin in Paris began publishing *Oeuvres completes de M. James Fenimore Cooper, americain*. Four years later, Carey and Lea began the first of multiple collections of Cooper that they would put out over the next decade: the first a sixteen-volume *Cooper’s Novels*, which they expanded into a twenty-six-volume set in 1832, and finally a twenty-eight-volume *Novels and Tales* released from 1835 to 1846. Carey and Lea were among the first American publishers to adopt the
modern practice of paying royalties to authors and assuming the risks of publishing themselves, rather than requiring authors to underwrite their own books. Carey and Lea purchased the rights to twenty-four of Cooper’s works over eighteen years of his prodigious career before the publishers and the author had a falling out over what the publishers viewed as the deteriorating quality and marketability of Cooper’s later works. For almost two decades, though, starting with the publication of Last of the Mohicans in 1826, Carey and Lea found Cooper to be a worthy investment. Last of the Mohicans was almost immediately reproduced in England, Germany, and France, including as part of the ongoing French collected edition put out by Gosselin. It seems likely that Cooper’s demonstrated international appeal made him, along with the European success Washington Irving and European authors such as Charles Dickens, the suitable subject of a collected edition from Carey and Lea.

For the most part, only amateur or little-known authors published collected editions in the United States in the first three decades of the nineteenth century without first proving themselves on the European market. Two notable exceptions include Charles Brockden Brown and the dramatist William Dunlap, both of whom were published in collected editions in the United States before a collection was published in Europe, though Brown had already demonstrated his European appeal through the publication of single-volume works.

Dunlap, who began publishing his own collected works in 1806, had planned an ambitious ten-volume collection that ended because of poor sales after the third volume was published in 1816. He began the edition at a time when the American public was palpably unfriendly to native productions. In 1795, toward the beginning of Dunlap’s career, Judith Sargeant Murray lamented the cruel reception of American dramas by audiences who seemed to evidence their own good tastes by disregarding the work of their fellow citizens:

Is it not . . . of importance to supply the American stage with American scenes? I am aware that very few productions in this line have appeared, and I think the reason is obvious. Writers, especially dramatic writers, are not properly encouraged. Applause, that powerful spring of action . . . is withheld, or sparingly administered. No incentives are furnished, and indignant genius . . . disdain[s] to spread the feast for malevolence and ingratitude.
As he framed his collected edition, Dunlap carefully responded to the prejudices of his compatriots by positioning his work as both original and very much in keeping with orthodox European tastes. In the first volume of the aborted collection Dunlap positions his dramatic works as already tried by the court of public opinion through their successes on the stage. He indicates that much of his work is borrowed or imitated from other, presumably European sources:

> Those who are well-read in this species of literature will easily discover whence I have borrowed, whom I have imitated, and what parts of my work may be considered original in the strictest sense. To combine rather than to invent is the lot of modern dramatists. My readers may perhaps be tempted to lament that I have soared so often into the “heaven of invention.”

Here Dunlap is playing both sides of American tastes: on the one hand, he healthily borrows from recognizable, tasteful sources; on the other, he self-deprecatingly notes, he liberally invents his own materials. This is a careful self-positioning at a transitional moment in American literature, in which Dunlap asserts that he is not only well versed in and healthily deferential to European tradition, but also capable of ingenuity. Moreover, in his introduction to the first play in the collection, he protests that at the time of the collection in 1806, the play may appear derivative, but in fact its original publication predated the many similar plays circulating in Europe. “The character of Tattle has, to the best of my knowledge, fair claim to the title of an original,” he stresses. “The numerous tribe of kindred characters, which my contemporaries of Great Britain have produced, had not, at the period of its birth, an existence.” Dunlap wants his readers to know that his work is not only in line with British tastes, it predates them. A seasoned veteran of the struggling American stage, he apparently found this maneuvering necessary to sell a collected edition of an American dramatist to a public so often hostile to American productions; even so, the edition failed.

The only other major American author to have been published in a collected edition before 1830 without a prior European collection was Charles Brockden Brown.10 In 1827, Samuel Griswold Goodrich published a seven-volume collection titled *The Novels of Charles Brockden Brown with a Memoir of the Author*, the first posthumous collection of Brown’s works. While Brown technically had not been collected in Europe prior to this edition,
he had nonetheless demonstrated his European legitimacy as the first American author to have been translated for a European market. So while many amateur authors and a couple of major authors were first published in American collected editions, European validation generally helped ensure the viability of larger, more widely distributed collections in the first decades of the century, when so many American readers looked to Europe for cultural validation.

Despite the Europhilia undergirding collections of major authors, a thriving market for amateur editions steadily developed over the first decades of the nineteenth century, in which the collected edition became a sign of the creative accomplishment of both the author—whose output was prolific and valuable enough to merit collection—and his locale, which was culturally fertile and economically prosperous enough to produce such a consummate author. Amateur poets—many of whom were young enough to anticipate writing for many more years—began publishing volumes of poetry at their own expense, and chose to present them as collected editions rather than as limited poetic projects. By collecting them under the name of the author, the volumes asserted that the author was sufficiently accomplished and important to merit such treatment—an implication that would be lost if the volumes were given work-specific titles. James Elliot, a young military veteran, published one of the first of these vanity collections in 1798. Elliot was a mere twenty-three years old at the time, and a four-volume *Poetical and Miscellaneous Works of James Elliot* seems a bit premature if not ostentatious. Elliot opens his volume with an excerpt from Pope's "The Temple of Fame" that begins with the lines, "Nor fame I slight, nor her favours call, / She comes unlook'd for, if she comes at all." This excerpt seems particularly disingenuous at the beginning of a self-published multivolume collected edition of a man barely into his twenties, but it underscores that the collection was meant to appear as self-evident proof of a poet's accomplishment.

Similarly, in 1817, another young amateur poet published a collected edition in a plain attempt at boosting his social reputation. Benjamin Dolbeare was a twenty-eight-year-old surgeon when he published *The Poetical Works of Dr. Benjamin Dolbeare* in Richmond, Virginia. The book includes mostly poems about romance and courtship, and begins with a suspiciously flattering preface written by an anonymous "friend." The preface depicts Dolbeare as a man too sensitive for his family's vocation of farming, who left the
countryside and worked his way through medical school, then launches what seemed to be a personal ad for Dolbeare: he is described as having a “majestic appearance, his countenance . . . full of fire,” and “an agreeable smooth way about him, which is peculiarly pleasing to the ladies.”

While some amateur authors, such as Dolbeare and Elliott, used the collected edition for simple personal aggrandizement, others implemented the genre to make more complex statements about how their writing reflected the larger concerns of the young nation. In 1806, the Boston publishers Etheridge and Bliss released *The Poetical Works of David Hitchcock*, which they may have partially financed or entirely subsidized. The author, as the preface explains, had been an orphan who labored in poverty and was consistently mistreated by his guardians, yet came to provide an inspirational example of how, through hard work and frugality, a diligent genius can achieve intellectual success: “Such has been the origin and progress . . . of a man, who, struggling under all the disadvantages of a want of education, indigence, obscurity, and the contumely of the world, has produced, by the astonishing efforts of his genius, the following Poem.” Hitchcock’s biography frames him as a particularly American poet, one whose own hard work—he commits his poems to paper only after putting in a full day’s work as a shoemaker, the preface explains—allows him to come before the public eye. The publishers, who wrote the preface, clearly expected Hitchcock’s rags-to-riches story to appeal to American readers and help sell the volume.

In 1812, when South Carolinian John H. Woodward published a collected edition of his poems, *The Poetical Works of John H. Woodward*, he framed the volume in a narrative that would appeal to his readers’ patriotism. He explains in the preface that the poems were mostly written during years of political strife as the nation was forming, that they had achieved some popularity in periodicals, and that they are being reprinted in the current volume in an effort at “giving celebrity to his native and favorite country.” Then, after a long-winded poetic prologue, Woodward opens the collection with “To the Patrons of American Literature,” in which he directly appeals to readers who view it as their patriotic duty to support the literary development of the United States:

Ye generous patrons! Whose expanded souls
Spurn kingly power, or lordling’s base controul;
Whose glowing breasts feel the patriot’s flame,  
Reward of merit, and Columbia’s fame;  
Borne on the trustful patronage ye show,  
Oh! that the muse would teach my verse to flow.

Woodward’s volume shows that even as critics viewed a lack of collected editions of American writing as evidence of the new republic’s cultural failings, amateurs within the country sometimes attempted to use the genre as evidence of its cultural successes. An intriguing piece of evidence for this use of the genre lies in a collected edition that was in fact never published, *The Posthumous Poetical Works of George Beck*. George Beck had been a fairly well known British landscape artist who immigrated to the United States in 1795 at the age of forty-six, eventually settling in 1804 or 1805 in Lexington, Kentucky, where he ran a girls’ boarding school with his wife, Mary. Both he and his wife were dismayed by what they viewed as a failure of Beck’s new countrymen to appreciate his talents. An obituary in the *Kentucky Gazette* explained, “He languished here almost unnoticed . . . and Mr. Beck’s last years were embittered by the consciousness of neglected and almost useless talents, confined to the drudgery of a day school.” After Beck’s death in 1812, Mary was desperate for money and auctioned off many of his paintings. Finally, in 1818, she attempted to profit from his writings by publishing a collected edition. As was common in the early nineteenth century, the prospective publisher required evidence that the volume would sell before investing in its publication, so Mary circulated an advertisement soliciting subscribers for the volume (fig. 2).

The advertisement reveals Mary’s strategy. Despite the fact that Beck had been born and was trained in England, that he spent a mere eight of his sixty-three years in Kentucky, and that they were miserable years at that, his wife believed that her best chance at securing subscribers to the volume would be if she positioned her husband as a distinctly Kentuckian artist. “The circumstances that render this publication most desirable, are,” she wrote, “that it will exhibit to the world a proof of Kentuckian genius, and the existing and progressive state of the Arts in the Western country.” Unfortunately for Mary, the citizens of Kentucky seemed no more interested in Beck’s genius six years after his death than they did during his life, and the volume did not gather enough subscribers to prove viable. However, the failed attempt demonstrates that the collected edition was commonly accepted as a cultural currency representing a place’s ability to produce talent.
2. “NOTHING IS MORE PROPERLY A MAN’S THAN THE FRUIT OF HIS STUDY”: THE COLLECTED EDITION AS INTELLECTUAL ESTATE

It is difficult to know how many of these amateur volumes were produced, as they tended to be vanity publications produced in small numbers and distributed privately and locally. However, by 1843, when amateur New York poet Mary L. Gardiner paid to publish her *Collection from the Prose and Poetical Writings of Mary L. Gardiner*, the phenomenon was well known. Gardiner writes that she is publishing her poems in “a period when productions of a similar character have become not only common, but, probably in the opinion of the great mass of readers, quite too frequent, to be useful.”12 Indeed, by the 1840s, the appeal of the genre, in combination with advances
in bookmaking and an increasingly literate public, led to an explosion of collected editions by politicians, theologians, well-known authors, and any number of amateur writers who financed their own vanity editions.

What accounts for the appeal of vanity press collected editions? Nationalism and self-aggrandizement contributed to their popularity but do not sufficiently explain the rise of the collected edition as the chosen form. I contend that a rapidly changing notion of intellectual property from the late eighteenth through the nineteenth century crucially contributed to Americans seizing upon the eponymous collected edition as a way of organizing literary texts.

Beginning in the Renaissance and flourishing in the eighteenth century, the concept of the author as an original, creative genius replaced older views of authorship, which held the author variously as a craftsman who mastered traditional themes and forms, or as a demigod who created imagined worlds inspired by and in imitation of God himself. Premodern conceptions of authorship minimized the credit due to a particular author, whose talents were generally seen as lying in derivation and imitation. During the eighteenth century, this view of authorship gave way to a view that found the author himself to be the source of creative inspiration.

The notion of the creative genius gained particular traction in the United States, where intellectual property developed differently than in much of Europe. In the nation’s first century, several factors coincided to establish an individual’s creative output as his individual property in the laws and public opinion of the United States. The American economy shifted its emphasis from agriculture to industry, which relied on innovation and invention and required that they be legally protected. Ideologically, the Lockean foundation of the American government—including, among other ideals, the belief in an individual’s right to life, liberty, and the fruits of his own labor—positioned the nation to guard intellectual property early in its history. The first U.S. Congress in 1790 passed the U.S. Copyright Act, finally taking steps to legislate what an early committee from 1783 had concluded: “nothing is more properly a man’s own than the fruit of his study, and . . . the protection and security of literary property would greatly tend to encourage genius.”

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the United States viewed literature as the property of its author, and safeguarded it as a special kind of property that must be protected to encourage genius and national development. It is worth mentioning that the first U.S. copyright legislation
did not protect the intellectual property of foreign authors, which had the unfortunate consequence of undermining American cultural production. Because American authors owned rights to their work and British authors did not, American printers and publishers saw the piracy of British materials as a sounder investment than the development of American texts—British texts, already proven on the British market, could be reprinted at will, while untested American works required financial negotiations with a copyright holder. This state of affairs irritated American and British authors alike: Americans because they found pirated texts to undercut the value of their own work, and British authors because a booming overseas industry was built on their unremunerated work. In the British market these problems also rankled, as American texts were pirated with little to no financial gain for their authors—Uncle Tom's Cabin and Leaves of Grass, for example, both enjoyed particularly healthy sales in the UK via pirated editions. The lack of international intellectual copyright stood until the passage of the Chace Act of 1891, when the United States had become a net producer rather than a net consumer of intellectual goods. Prior to this point, it would not have seemed in the interest of the American economy to push for international copyright, since it would cost more in the consumption of imported intellectual goods than would be reclaimed in the export.

These broad shifts in the Western concept of authorship, combined with the distinctly American emphasis on Lockean rights to the fruits of one's labor, made the eponymous collected edition a way for amateur and later professional authors to publicly proclaim their texts as their property. The possibility of average citizens creating literature and thinking of it as their property was relatively new, enabled not only by recent protective legislation and shifts in authorship but also by rising literacy rates and access to affordable printing. Consequently, laying claim to this property in public held an appeal that we as modern readers, fully acclimated to a history of aggressive copyright laws, may fail to appreciate. Titles of amateur editions such as The Poetical Works of John H. Woodward (1812), The Poetical Works of Jacob Dixon (1833), The Poetical Works of Thomas J. Lees (1839), and The Poetical Works of John Snowden Hopkins (1842) were ways of publicly expressing property claims, sometimes only midway through the author's life.

We can find evidence of this in the handful of odd volumes that seem to break the conventions of the collected edition. The Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker in Prose and Verse was the first posthumous edition of an American author published in the United States, in 1793. In 1777 Bleecker
was forced to flee her New York estate on foot with her two daughters, mother, and sister as British troops approached. On her journey to Albany, her mother, sister, and infant daughter died of dysentery. Bleecker lived for six more years, during which time she wrote elegies detailing her insurmountable grief, as well as the captivity narrative *The History of Maria Kittle*, for which she would be most known. Bleecker never recovered from her devastating losses and died six years after her ordeal, when her surviving daughter Margarettta was only twelve. Margarettta, later Margarettta Faugeres, grew up in the dismal cloud of her grandmother’s, aunt’s, and little sister’s death, as well as her mother’s inconsolable melancholy, and edited the posthumous collection of her mother’s work ten years after her death.

When Faugeres—by then an abolitionist and activist—edited her mother’s writings, she included numerous selections of her own work. We can only speculate about her motives: perhaps she hoped to garner interest in her own work at a time when she needed money (her ne’er-do-well husband having recently squandered her fortune); or perhaps she wanted to place her own writings alongside those of a mother she dearly missed. Whatever her motives, by including writings by two authors, the volume offers a rare exception to the solitary genius model of authorship upon which the collected edition is typically predicated. However, if the collected edition is an expression, however unwitting, of property ownership, it is not surprising that writings by women, whose rights to property in the early Republic were unstable at best and sometimes virtually nonexistent, could cohabit a single volume.

In fact, the few cases of collected editions that include writings by multiple authors were all written by authors whose property rights were generally unprotected. There are at least two such volumes in addition to Bleecker’s and Faugeres’s: *Memoir and Poems of Phyllis Wheatley, a Native African and a Slave* (1833), and *The Literary Remains of Joseph Appleton Barnett and Emily Maria Barnett* (1837). Wheatley’s collection included poems by George Moses Horton, a slave from North Carolina. The Barnett’s were minor siblings who died of tuberculosis. The early American collected edition, a subtle articulation of an individual’s property ownership, sometimes assumed ambiguous boundaries for authors with weak claims to property rights in general: women, slaves, and children.¹⁶

Further evidence that the collected edition was viewed as an expression of property ownership lies in the popularity of publishing “literary remains” or “poetical remains” in the nineteenth century. The term “remains”
as applied to creative accomplishment is tantalizing in its gesture toward the corporeal and legal: it seems linguistically to tie literary works both to the corpse of the author and to his or her estate. The remains, like the body, are what the author has left behind, and also the property that must be gathered and settled after his or her death. While not new to the nineteenth century—“remains” appeared in a collection title as early as 1631, with The Remains of the Reverend and Famous Postiller, John Boys, Doctor in Divinitie, and late Dean of Canterburie—the genre of the collected edition was particularly appealing to an American public who, due to a confluence of ideological factors, wanted to see the writing of their loved ones enshrined in an enduring volume that would assert the author’s creative genius, reflect well upon his or her community, and settle his or her intellectual estate.

Some books, such as The Literary Remains of Joseph Brown Ladd, M.D., seem to embody all of these aspirations at once. Published in 1832, about fifty years after Ladd’s untimely death, the book was edited by his sister, Elizabeth Haskins, and is dedicated to his family and friends, as if in a late effort to distribute his intellectual estate to those who would find it most valuable:

To you . . . who knew and loved him, who witnessed the dawning of his bold and bright intellect, and wept over his untimely grave—to you, sir, with a sense of obligation for the permission, the literary remains of Joseph Brown Ladd are respectfully inscribed. (iv)

The intended audience was not limited to Ladd’s close acquaintances, however. His literary remains, written in the first decade after the nation’s founding, were meant to reflect the country’s early incubation of genius:

It is hoped [Ladd’s writings] will prove not an unwelcome offering to those who love to dwell upon the early history of our republic; since genius and labors of genius form an important ingredient in that glory of a nation, which the patriot is wont to contemplate with honest pride. (iii–iv).

Gaining momentum from this appeal to national pride, Haskins makes the rather implausible claim that the book evidences her brother’s “readiness to claim for our country every ray of glory shed upon her annals by the genius and achievements of her sons” (iv).

By the mid-nineteenth century, “poetic remains” and “literary remains” had become such a common way to collect and distribute the writings
of the dead that one unscrupulous editor went so far as to publish a fake collected edition in order to cash in on a national scandal. In 1845, Albert Terrell, a married Bostonian man from an established family, gruesomely murdered a prostitute, Maria Bickford, with whom he had been having an affair. His trial became a major news event, and despite widespread fixation on the trial, Terrell was acquitted on the unlikely defense that he had somehow nearly decapitated his lover while he was sleepwalking. To profit off of the media frenzy surrounding Terrell's trial, Silas Estabrook published *The Early Love Letters and Later Literary Remains of Maria Bickford*, ostensibly the collected writings of a fallen woman, but actually the product of her editor's pen.

3. BOOK BINDING AND “FAÇADES OF RESPECTABILITY”

By midcentury the collected edition was flourishing as a means of claiming intellectual property, glorifying personal genius, and reflecting national talent. Collected editions sprang up across the nation and increasingly functioned as an assertion, if not always a reliable indicator, of literary reputation. Besides the spate of amateur editions, prominent American authors were increasingly enshrined in collected editions. Among the notable volumes published at midcentury were Fitz-Greene Halleck in 1847, James Russell Lowell in 1848, John Greenleaf Whittier in 1848, Oliver Wendell Holmes in 1850, Richard Henry Dana in 1850, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1852. Technological developments in bookmaking made this midcentury flourishing of the genre possible.

Well into the nineteenth century, the division of labor within the American publishing industry was not as distinct as it would become later in the century. Printers and publishers were usually one and the same, and the terms were used interchangeably. Publishing itself, that aspect of book production responsible for soliciting, selecting, and marketing texts, would not emerge as a clearly delineated activity until the national book market—buttressed by a more mature transportation system—grew robust enough to support it. Consequently, early nineteenth-century printers usually published books for which they could be assured a return on their investment, either by requiring authors to underwrite their own books or to solicit subscriptions, or by publishing authors of proven reputation. Even then, the role of the printer/publisher was limited, and what he usually delivered to
booksellers—typically sellers in the same region, if indeed the books were
distributed beyond his own shop—were the unbound, stitched quires. From
the first years of the handpress era all the way into the nineteenth
century, the reader, not the printer, was usually responsible for having the
book bound. Consequently, copies of the same book often had different
covers, and in fact, readers with developed libraries would often bind books
of roughly the same size together in order to save on this significant ex-
 pense. As Jeffrey Todd Knight has pointed out, modern readers tend to lose
sight of this important aspect of preindustrialized bookmaking, and fail to
consider that in the past readers “were sometimes more likely to reshape
such texts according to their own desires than to venerate them as reser-
voirs of literary content, frozen in time” (305).

However, the malleability of the individual volume ended around 1830,
when the development of case binding allowed for the large-scale commer-
cial binding of books, and ushered in an era of homogenous book covers.
For the first time since Gutenberg, two copies from a large print run were
likely to look alike on the outside, unless the publisher took advantage of
mass binding to offer grades of binding at different prices. The industrial-
ization of bookbinding, like the industrialization of gunmaking and dress-
making, offered the advantages of consistency, interchangeability of parts,
and affordability, but effectively put an end to both the craft of individu-
alized bookbinding, and the resulting diversity among the final products.
With industrialized bookbinding, the decision about what comprised the
text of a single volume shifted from consumer to producer: the publisher,
not the purchaser, determined which text or texts would sit within a cover,
and that determination fixed the individual physical book purchased by a
reader as a token of a type, rather than as evidence of idiosyncratic prefer-
ences about bindings and collection.

The shift from consumer binding to publisher binding helped establish
certain textual genres as natural ways of organizing texts. If the publisher,
not the purchaser, was to determine how to fill a cover, he must choose a ba-
sis for collection or selection that would seem sensible to potential custom-
ers. Because industrialization made binding cheaper, he could afford to bind
single texts alone, whereas in the hand-binding period, texts usually cohab-
ited a cover. But for very short works, which would still seem too spare to
justify publication under a single cover, or for the production of handsome,
multivolume editions that could conspicuously occupy shelf space in the
home library, the individual author, fully ensconced in both Romantic and
capitalist notions of individual genius and burnished by shows of national pride, provided an uncontroversial basis for textual organization.

The industrialization of bookbinding was a key factor in the rise of the collected edition as a popular way of preserving creative production. It afforded the publisher control over the most visible portion of the book, allowing him both to market collected editions in targeted ways and to insert his brand on the face of the book. Two midcentury publishers, Theophilus Peterson and Justus Starr Redfield, used collected editions to advance their reputations as publishers while simultaneously contributing to the boom of collected editions by populating American bookshelves with collections by popular authors.

Theophilus (T. B.) Peterson, a Philadelphia publisher experimenting with new possibilities for selling books, mostly published cheap dime novels, but as John Tebbel has noted, occasionally put out “elegantly printed and illustrated books of real literary quality” to “give himself a façade of respectability.” Peterson’s first collected editions were of oft-pirated European authors, such as Dickens and Scott, who cost nothing in royalties and were proven sellers. In the early 1850s, though, he began publishing “uniform editions” of American authors, beginning with the works of Caroline Hentz, the antiabolitionist novelist. Industrialized bookbinding had led to an increase in the production of such uniform editions, multivolume editions in which each volume was printed and bound in a standardized way. Uniform editions provided a way of easily and economically populating a parlor with handsomely bound evidence of one’s cultivation without requiring much selectivity on the part of the consumer. They were precursors to the twentieth-century collections of “classics” such as the Harvard Classics—sold as a “five foot shelf of books”—or Everyman’s Library. Almost a century later, as such collections inundated the market, one critic would decry them as books used as a “color note,” “books published only to be bought,” and “books kept as feeble proof that someone has been educated.” Often, book historians think of multivolume editions as products of twentieth-century conspicuous consumption, but in fact the large-scale marketing of books as parlor decorations is at least as old as the uniform editions of the mid-nineteenth century, when Peterson and other publishers dressed up lowbrow American authors such as Hentz, E. D. E. N. Southworth, Ann Stephens, James Maitland, and George Lippard in handsome standardized binding to lend them an air of reputability and make them suitable for public display. Peterson invested in American authors who had
proven readerships, either through the periodical press or through dime novels, and used the venerability of the collected edition to transform disposable, popular literature into enduring work with the appearance of fine taste. In fact, some authors, such as Ann Stephens, were funneled directly to Peterson for publication in respectable, lucrative uniform editions from Peterson’s brother’s publication, *Peterson’s Magazine.*

When an author had proven her success by drawing in readers to the magazine, she was deemed a sound investment for a collection.

Beginning as early as 1854 and continuing into the 1870s, he routinely placed in his books a catalog—on the order of a dozen pages long—for hundreds of his other works. Tellingly, he opened the catalog with a paragraph that only varied slightly over the two decades in which he ran it, explaining:

> The Books in this Catalogue will be found to be the very Best and Latest Publications by the most popular and celebrated writers in the world. They are also the most readable and entertaining Books, and are printed for the “Million,” at very cheap rates. . . . They are suitable for the Parlor, Library, Sitting Room, Railroad, Steamboat, or Chamber Reading.

Peterson’s advertisement elucidates what he had hoped his uniform editions could accomplish: they were meant to appear classic yet appeal to current tastes; they were printed cheaply for the masses, but appeared respectable enough to be displayed in the home or read in public. Directly below this introduction, works of popular American authors, such as Southworth and Hentz, comingle with works of more venerated European authors such as Dickens and Dumas. In other advertisements, Peterson clarified that the volumes of his uniform editions could be bought as a set or individually, allowing them to be used as parlor showpieces or simply bought for reading by people of humbler means. An advertisement he ran at the beginning of Southworth’s *Haunted Homestead* (1860), for example, explains:

> T.B. Peterson and Brothers also publish a complete and uniform edition of all of Mrs. Southworth’s works, any one, or all of which, will be sent to any place in the United States. . . . The whole of Mrs. Southworth’s works are also published in a very fine style, bound in the very best and most elegant and substantial manner, in full Crimson, with beautifully gilt edges, full gilt sides, gilt backs, etc., etc., making them the best and most acceptable books for presentation, at the price, published in the country.
Peterson here attempts to sell popular fiction to the masses by dressing the volumes up for conspicuous consumption. By the 1850s, Peterson was known as a publisher of uniform editions, and trade circulars described him as releasing scores of volumes for the uniform works of British and American authors. Peterson knew that comingling the names of popular American fiction writers and European greats would lend additional respectability to his American offerings. He also saw that offering them as a set—but not only as a set—would sell the most number of volumes, from the casual Southworth reader to the homemaker looking for a sophisticated “color note” for her parlor. By the mid-nineteenth century, the collected edition, a nebulous, unfixed genre, had emerged as an effective, subtle means for American publishers to sell volumes while asserting that American authors were laudable producers of intellectual goods for a developing national market.

The power of the collected edition to make or break literary reputation was nowhere more apparent than in an edition published by one of Peterson’s contemporaries, fellow Philadelphian publisher Justus Redfield. Redfield, who had begun as a printer and bookseller in New York City in the 1830s, responded to the developing book industry by refashioning himself in Philadelphia as not simply a printer but also a publisher. He ran two separate locations, one for his printing operation and one for his publishing offices, and would even credit both separately in his books, clearly reflecting a cognizance of the new complexities in the American book trade. In 1845–1846 he began to publish literary collections. In addition to a collection of a British poet’s works—those of Shelley, with a lengthy preface by Philadelphia author George G. Foster that framed the collection for American readers—Redfield also released two collections of American authors: *The Complete Works of N. P. Willis* and *The Poetical Writings of Elizabeth Oakes Smith*. Shelley, a venerable British author who had been dead for twenty-three years, seemed a natural choice for a collection, but both Smith and Willis were living American authors. What made Willis and Smith appealing to Redfield was their popularity in the periodicals press. Willis had been writing for or editing periodicals for two decades by the time of Redfield’s edition, while Smith was still early in her career, having published mostly anonymous pieces and one very popular, credited poem, “The Sinless Child.”

Redfield’s entrepreneurialism in the field of publishing was evident in his handling of collected editions. Leveraging this newly resonant genre, he struck up a mutually beneficial arrangement with his authors. The authors, who had made their reputations in the disposable, multivocal, heterogeneous pages of newspapers and magazines, could find relative perma-
nence in book publication, and through the collected edition in particular they could assert unambiguous single ownership of their work and achieve prestige as the geniuses around whom the volumes were organized. As the publisher, on the other hand, Redfield could count on their popularity in the periodicals press to ensure sales. Other genres were available to such authors—indeed, Willis's sister, Fanny Fern, would publish the first of several collections of her own periodical writing, *Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio*, a few years later in 1853, with no attempt to bill the volume as a collected edition. But for a printer and publisher like Redfield, the collected edition offered him an opportunity to allow a market of periodical readers to adorn their parlors with evidence of both the timeliness of their reading habits and their investment in American minds.

Over the next decade Redfield published several collected editions of American authors, including *The Poetical Writings of the Late Willis Gaylord Clark* in 1847. Clark's works had been published three years earlier as *The Literary Remains of the Late Willis Gaylord Clark*, but the substitution of “Poetical Writings” for “Literary Remains” made Redfield's volume sound more imposing.

However, Redfield's most significant collected edition, and certainly the most notorious exemplar of the genre, was the 1850 *Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe*, which would become the central feature of one of American literary history's most infamous episodes. The editor, the prominent man of letters and anthologist Rufus Griswold, was not only a friend of Willis but also edited the Smith volume, suggesting that he may have been influential in Redfield's early efforts to publish American collected editions. More importantly, Griswold had been Poe's nemesis, yet asserted himself as Poe's literary executor in order to libel Poe's posthumous reputation—crucially, he chose to ruin his enemy via a collected edition. In his “Memoir of the Author,” Griswold offers a portrait of Poe that varies between uncharitable and fictitious. He discusses Poe's “feebleness of will,” his “habits of frequent intoxication,” and describes an incident in which Poe called off an engagement with a woman in a cowardly way by intentionally making her leave him after “he committed at her house such outrages as made necessary a summons of the police.” He surmises, finally, that “Poe exhibits scarcely any virtue in either his life or his writings. Probably there is not another instance in the literature of our language in which so much has been accomplished without a recognition or a manifestation of conscience.” A reviewer from the mid-twentieth century would say of Griswold, “No name in the history of American publishing has been so hated: he became the Benedict Arnold of bookmen.”
Griswold produced the Redfield edition after securing the rights to Poe's works from Poe's mother-in-law, Maria Clemm, although Clemm was not the legitimate heir to Poe's estate. Clemm had hoped the Redfield edition would save her from destitution, and trusted Griswold to manage the publication in a way that would benefit her. In a note to the reader that opens the volume, Clemm explains that the edition was sold for her benefit. She writes, “In this edition of my son's works, which is published for my benefit, it is a great pleasure for me to thank Mr. Griswold and Mr. Willis for their prompt fulfillment of the wishes of the dying poet, in labors, which demanded much time and attention, and which they have performed without any other recompense than the happiness which rewards acts of duty and kindness.” Actually, though, after exploiting the gravitas of a multivolume collected edition of his nemesis's works to house his scandalous, extended maligning of Poe's reputation, Griswold magnanimously assisted Clemm by sending her nothing but a few copies of the edition. If poaching the rights to Poe's works, leaving his mother-in-law penniless, and using the ornate trappings of a collected edition to frame his libel were not enough, he seems to have orchestrated Clemm's introductory note in a way that would make Machiavelli blush: Clemm, ignorant of Griswold's intentions and likely willing to say anything to make the book a success, writes that Poe had made a deathbed request that Griswold should “superintend the publication of his works” and that he had “many times decidedly and unequivocally certif[ied] his respect for the literary judgment and integrity of Mr. Griswold.” The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe thereby became an elaborate vehicle of revenge: the author's collected works were gathered up, handsomely printed, framed with a lengthy introduction that asserted Poe as a second-rate writer and debauched human being, certified by a testimonial from his family, then sold to profit the man he hated most. Griswold's revenge hinged on the cultural stature of the collected edition in the mid-nineteenth century. Only the collected edition could so effectively smear Poe's reputation for a century: by inscribing his libel in volumes viewed as a monument to the author, Griswold had essentially engraved his view of Poe on his tombstone. The Poe debacle illustrates how by the 1850s the American collected edition had rapidly grown into a seemingly natural way to present texts and assert the reputation of their authors. As the next chapter will show, it also had profound effects on how some of the most canonical literature of late nineteenth century was disseminated.