Writing to Evert Duyckinck on 12 February 1851, Melville offered this extensive comment on the state of America’s literary economy:

As for the Daguerreotype (I spell the word right from your sheet) that’s what I can not send you, because I have none. And if I had, I would not send it for such a purpose, even to you.—Pshaw! you cry—and so cry I.—“This is intensified vanity, not true modesty or anything of that sort!”—Again, I say so too. But if it be so, how can I help it. The fact is, almost everybody is having his “mug” engraved nowadays; so that this test of distinction is getting to be reversed; and therefore, to see one’s “mug” in a magazine, is presumptive evidence that he’s a nobody. So being as vain a man as ever lived; & believing [sic] that my illustrious name is famous throughout the world—I respectfully decline being oblivioted by a Daguerretype (what a devel [sic] of an unspellable word!). (Correspondence 180)

The “purpose” to which Melville refers is the Duyckinck brothers’ plan for “a series of articles on contemporary authors, with portraits,” to be published in Holden’s Dollar Magazine, presumably with less “puffery” and more emphasis on quality than had characterized that magazine under its previous editors (Horth 178–79). By highlighting his use of the word “mug,” Melville may have intended to evoke not only the common meaning of “face” but also the association with what was deemed low, common, ugly, foolish, and incompetent. (These associations were present in
English in the middle of the nineteenth century, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*; the phrase “mug shot” to refer to a photo in a police record apparently entered the language somewhat later.) Melville fictionalized the same situation in his novel *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*; *Pierre* reflects that “instead of, as in old times, immortalizing a genius, a portrait now only *dayalized* a dunce. Besides, when every body has his portrait published, true distinction lies in not having yours published at all. For if you are published along with Tom, Dick, and Harry, and wear a coat of their cut, how then are you distinct from Tom, Dick, and Harry?” (254).

Duyckinck apparently had requested not only the daguerreotype but a contribution to *Holden’s Dollar Magazine*, to which Melville in the same letter replied:

> I can not write the thing you want. I am in the humor to lend a hand to a friend, if I can;—but I am not in the humor to write the kind of thing you need—and I am not in the humor to write for Holden’s Magazine. If I were to go on to give you all my reasons—you would pronounce me a bore, so I will not do that. You must be content to beleive [sic] that I have reasons, or else I would not refuse so small a thing.—(*Correspondence* 180; emphasis in original)

Melville’s disinclination to write for *Holden’s* almost certainly had to do with his sense that this particular publication was simply not worthy of his effort; it was intended by the Duyckinck brothers to cater to what George Duyckinck referred to as “the million”—literature for the masses, indeed (Yannella 65–66). Melville had referred to this mass audience in his 1850 review of Hawthorne’s *Mosses from an Old Manse* as “superficial skimmers of pages” (“Hawthorne and His Mosses” 251). At this time in his writing career, he was aiming for “true distinction,” and he held the belief, typical for his time, that recognition as an artist entailed, paradoxically, not being recognized—that is, not being recognized by a mass audience. Soon after writing to Duyckinck, in fact, he satirized the brothers in the “Young America” portions of *Pierre* (Books XVII and XVIII) and sympathetically portrayed the romantic hero of that book as a “poor be-inked galley-slave” catering to “Mediocrity” (Yannella 70–71, quoting from *Pierre* 261). As early as the publication of *Mardi* he had written to his father-in-law that attacks by critics “are matters of course, and are essential to the building up of any permanent reputation” (letter of 23 April 1849 to Lemuel Shaw, *Correspondence* 130).

Thomas Wentworth Higginson made a similar request of Emily Dickinson; her reply in July of 1862 was more congenial than Melville’s but
similar in how the writer distances herself from what she terms a dishonorable activity:

Could you believe me—without? I had no portrait, now, but am small, like the Wren, and my Hair is bold, like the Chestnut Bur—and my eyes, like the Sherry in the Glass, that the Guest leaves—Would this do just as well?

It often alarms Father—He says Death might occur, and he has Molds of all the rest—but has no Mold of me, but I noticed the Quick wore off those things, in a few days, and forestall the dishonor—You will think no caprice of me—(Letters L268)

Only one photographic image of Dickinson is known to exist, the daguerreotype taken by William C. North in Amherst in late 1846 or early 1847 (Kromer Bernhard 595–96). According to Kromer Bernhard, Dickinson’s brother and sister “were vehemently opposed to publication of the daguerreotype” after her death, feeling that this image failed to capture “the play of light and shade in Emily’s face” (Kromer Bernhard quoting Millicent Todd Bingham 598). Perhaps, as Kromer Bernhard says, “the Dickinson family did not value North’s daguerreotype of Dickinson” (598); perhaps Dickinson herself did not value it. It would seem most unlikely for a mature writer seeking possibly a magazine audience and at least the opinion of one of the era’s leading persons of letters—if not a wider audience—to send an image taken when an adolescent. Possibly, also, Dickinson’s experience with the medium in general was not of the sort that would have led her to trust it; Mary Loeffelholz, for instance, comments insightfully on how Dickinson seems to have imagined and represented “the nexus of physiognomy and the rhetoric of temporality” (464). Juxtaposed against Melville’s letter to Duyckinck, however, several of this letter’s details stand out: her desire to “forestall the dishonor” (“to see one’s ‘mug’ in a magazine, is presumptive evidence that he’s a nobody”) and her desire not to seem capricious (“Pshaw! you cry—and so cry I”). Such similar comments from two individuals so different merit closer study in the context of the marketing of and markets for literature.

PHOTOGRAPHY, CAPITAL, AND CLASS

The requests from Duyckinck and Higginson together with the replies of Melville and Dickinson invite some broad questions. What did it mean, socially, culturally, and economically, to have a photographic image made?
To send or receive one? What did it mean to have one’s image published in a magazine or in some other form allowing for mass circulation? These questions can be answered in part with a review of the cultural work performed by the daguerreotype and subsequent photographic technologies, work that contributed to the creation of economic and symbolic capital.

The daguerreotype was introduced into America in 1840 (just a few months after Daguerre announced the process), reached its zenith early in the 1850s, but remained widespread throughout the decade, the practitioners numbering 938 in 1850 and 3,154 in 1860, according to United States census data, with an estimated three million daguerreotypes produced in 1853 (Taft 60–61, 63). Although “by 1857 [daguerreotyping] was a minor branch of the photographic trade,” into the 1860s it had a market among “first-class people” (Taft 101, 122, 136, quoting an unnamed writer from 1862). Other forms of photographic imaging became popular during the 1850s, but the census continued to list only the occupation of “daguerreotypist,” suggesting that the term was still widely used in 1862, functioning perhaps the way “Xerox” or “Kleenex” does today—as a generic label. Lacking Higginson’s letter, we don’t know whether he specified a type of image. He might, for instance, have asked her for a carte de visite, which exploded on the scene in 1860, so much so that it sparked the immediate development of the family-album industry (Taft 140–41). Melanie Hubbard argues that this is exactly what was requested (“‘Turn it’” 118). However, the carte de visite was much smaller than a standard daguerreotype, and the image was not of the same quality—much less suitable for reproduction, were that in Higginson’s mind.

In any case, Dickinson could certainly have known that during this period the process for mass-producing an image (by reproducing the image photographically on wood and then if needed on a more durable medium) improved dramatically, meaning that any image could easily become a commodity (Taft 422–23). On the other hand, if Higginson requested an actual daguerreotype, he could have intended his request to imply an association with cultivation and privilege—an association with the likely readers of the Atlantic, for instance. The historical details reveal that the phenomenon of the photographic image was involved, but in a complex way, in the era’s discourse about social and economic class. An image could be destined for “the street,” implying mass production and an appeal to a range of audiences from low-brow to high-brow, or it could be shown to and circulated in its singular form among select individuals and thus preserve (in the case of an image of an author) an association with the elite and the romantic—“the garret.” The language used by Melville and Dickinson in their replies strongly evokes the social-class aspect of this street/
garret distinction; they cared deeply about preserving their reputation in the eyes of an (unnamed) elite. The mark of “true distinction,” after all, was to have no image published.

Dickinson’s attitude toward photographic images probably was also influenced by what Betsy Erkkila describes as her privileged “class position” as “the daughter of a conservative Whig squire” ([Wicked Sisters] 45). Erkkila notes that Dickinson, in contrast to “many of the women writers of her age” such as Stowe and Fuller, “returned to a pre-Revolutionary and aristocratic language of rank, titles, and divine right to assert the sovereignty of her self as absolute monarch” (51). Erkkila links Dickinson’s “poetic revolution” with the “elitist, antidemocratic values” of her household. These values would scorn sitting for a daguerreotype, which could have a leveling effect because it could serve as the basis for a mass-produced and distributed image. Dickinson’s class and economic position probably helped prevent her from feeling pressured by Higginson’s request (as well as by those from people wanting to publish her work).

The photographic image was also central to another related discourse, that of the American “national character,” which exhibits elements of both garret and street. Whether Higginson intended to appeal to the vanity of his barely known correspondent, his and Duyckinck’s requests could have been understood by their interlocutors within this national context. Duyckinck wanted to include Melville’s image in a proposed “series of articles on contemporary authors, with portraits,” to include such notables as Hawthorne and Prescott. This was a strikingly new possibility in publishing. Richard Rudisill writes that “[b]y 1850 . . . the medium of engraving made national distribution of pictures possible” (13–14). The daguerreotype itself could not be reproduced, but it could serve as the basis for a wood engraving or an electroplate from which thousands of reproductions could be made. According to Rudisill, this technology served the national need to create definitive images of icons central to the national identity, for example George Washington, and to make these images available for personal possession (31–32). The literary ventures of figures like Duyckinck were probably intended to contribute to this national search for a visible identity and an “American” character type. Rudisill makes the claim that photographic images in America at this time functioned as “[t]he ultimate determiner of a type of national iconography of character” by “condition[ing] the process of visual perception along particular lines of development so that people came to conceive of certain kinds of visual images as being true, or permanent, or typical” (225). This conditioning could take place because, first of all, images were available for possession by individuals on a scale not seen before: even the lower-class...
household could pay homage to George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and others by displaying images either purchased individually or taken from magazines. Second, the images were understood to be accurate representations—exactly what the owner of the image would have seen had he or she been standing where the camera had stood. Third, the images defined as true and accurate a particular style: a frontal view emphasizing the torso and head, with relatively less reliance on elaborate backdrops and props than was common in European images.

This solidification and marketing of the American character by means of the photographic image was the enterprise in which Duyckinck explicitly invited Herman Melville to participate and in which Higginson may have been inviting Emily Dickinson (or in which she could have felt invited) to participate. But there were two dark sides to the enterprise. Most obviously, an artist could feel owned by a mass public without necessarily profiting from the sale, while the publishers who succeeded in creating the most desirable, representative images stood to profit enormously from getting these images into “households and public places in every part of the nation” (Rudisill 225). These publishers would garner economic capital; they would also define a standard by which a household’s patriotism and Americanness could be assessed.

In addition to this economic aspect, from which artists with a romantic sense of their role might want to remain aloof, the lifelikeness of photographic images caused many people to feel that evil or at least mysterious forces could be at work: the phenomenon of photography was like animal magnetism or mesmerism in its cultural function. Alan Trachtenberg, who has done the best recent work on the daguerreotype as a cultural phenomenon, writes that by 1851 it was a “common experience” to notice that whether the viewer sees a “shadow or image, or indeed one’s own visage flashed back from the mirrored surface, depends on how one holds the palm-sized cased image, at what angle and in what light” (“Seeing and Believing” 461–62; emphasis added). That is, not only can the image either seem to be present or absent, as is the case with any image under glass, but the surface may also replace the subject’s image with that of the viewer, an outcome that surely would have appalled Emily Dickinson. Equally appalling would have been the sensationalistic literature in which daguerreotyping played a major role: young men falling in love with a daguerreotype and stalking the sitter, daguerreotypes falling in love with each other, a daguerreotypist capturing the soul of someone by taking that person’s portrait. These and similar plot elements reflect the symbolic weight carried by daguerreotyping in America at this time (Trachtenberg, “Mirror” 62–71).
This symbolic weight stemmed in part from the American desires to transcend time and to represent national characteristics, desires dramatically embodied in Emerson’s emphasis on sight as a means to insight, especially the famous “transparent eyeball” passage in *Nature* (Rudisill 17–19, 27, 31). As the link to Emerson suggests, the daguerreotype “both reflected and activated national faith in spiritual insight and truth obtained from perceiving the works of God in nature” (Rudisill 5). Some of these significances were embodied by Hawthorne in his character Holgrave, from *The House of the Seven Gables*, who saw the camera “as a sort of insight machine by which limited human capacity is enabled to receive the truth which nature provides out of herself. It becomes a means of intensifying human perception to the point that man can produce pictorial records of the essence underlying nature and within man himself” (Rudisill 233). The camera could do this because it used light, which was regarded as nature’s painter. Dickinson read *The House of the Seven Gables* at a time in her life—her early twenties—when she was prone to “cut out the vivid bits [of her reading] and paste them into her unfolding life” (Habegger 246). She could have come to understand the daguerreotype as Hawthorne did, a cultural practice doing cultural work, according to Trachtenberg: “By questioning popular assumptions about the medium, by casting a skeptical eye on the claims of a photographic power independent of self-reflective structures of meaning, Hawthorne represents photography as a new political mode of seeing with unforeseen consequences” (“Seeing and Believing” 479). Thus she could have regarded photography as a “political mode of seeing” with consequences for gender relations. As the sensationalistic literature dramatized, for a woman those consequences were profoundly troubling. Likewise, “Melville was uneasy with the nascent cult of personality that he saw emerging with the growth of photography. . . . A fairly private man, Melville balked at the new demands the image-hungry public was starting to make” (Hayes 482). Yet Melville might have benefited from having his image made public: “He was, after all, quite handsome, and those who knew him tended to project the romantic experiences he related in *Typee* onto him. Recording her first impressions of Melville, Sophia Hawthorne commented, ‘Mr *Typee* is interesting in his aspect—quite. I see Fayaway in his face’” (Hayes 482). I will return shortly to this possibility.

Clearly, if photography is regarded as an “insight machine,” the images embodying those insights can become not only descriptive but prescriptive. Both photography and language led Dickinson to ask basic questions about capturing reality: “[D]oes technology reveal or create the soul? Does the material world simply express something interior but already present,
or does it somehow create that interior? And what does it mean that our representations, upon which we depend for our consciousness, can kill, fix, replace, and misrepresent the world?” (Hubbard, “‘Turn It’” 126). These same questions intrigued Melville; throughout his writing career he thematized the relationship between a surface and whatever might be beneath that surface and thematized as well the human drive to read deep significations into surfaces. He surely noticed that various banks had appropriated for the paper currency they issued the well-known whaling painting by Ambroise Louis Garneray which he mentions in chapter 56 of Moby-Dick (Kelly 346–49). Given his symbolic imagination, he probably remarked on how those bank notes not only asserted the economic significance of whaling but also, by reproducing the likeness mechanically, eliminated the individuality of each whaleman. He could even have concluded that this appropriation ultimately reduced the whalemen to pieces of currency that passed from hand to hand, in the same way that a printed book or image turned an author into a commodity.

The responses of Melville and Dickinson to their mentors’ requests evoke considerations of class having to do both with economy and with the social and cultural position of the artist. Both writers associated the reproduced image with commonness, Melville insisting that the publication of one’s “mug” marks one as common, Dickinson going so far as to intimate that there’s a “dishonor” in even having such an image made. The language used by Melville and Dickinson reflects the struggle in mid-nineteenth-century America over “literary legitimacy,” that is, determining “who are authorized to call themselves writers” (Bourdieu, Field 78). Are the legitimate authors those whose images are widely distributed or those who scorn such distribution? As Bourdieu explains, the question is complicated: “one of the most significant properties of the field of cultural production . . . is the extreme permeability of its frontiers,” a property that explains “the conflicts between rival principles of legitimacy” (79). These conflicts are significantly influenced by economic and social class, education, and institutional and personal connections, with the major dichotomy being between economic and symbolic capital. A third important type, cultural capital, functions in part as a cultural space in which economic and symbolic capital can be converted one to another: “Symbolic capital refers to degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour. . . . Cultural capital concerns forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions” (Randal Johnson 7). Symbolic capital is accrued by the producers of art; in its most basic form, it equates to prestige. Cultural capital is accrued by “social agents” and allows these agents fully to participate in a culture’s artistic activities.
As models by which authors might construct their own sense of legitimacy and might be understood within literary marketplaces, writing for the street and writing in the garret functioned as mutually exclusive methods of achieving legitimacy in mid-nineteenth-century America. Symbolic capital is like social class; it is valuable to the extent that it is not available to every “Tom, Dick, and Harry,” and in particular it is associated with genius and inspiration because of the still widespread belief that art is produced by especially talented individuals rather than by a system in which the artist is only one component. While almost any household could lay claim to a bit of cultural capital simply by putting magazine photos of Washington, Franklin, Prescott, and Emerson on their walls, accruing symbolic capital required not just knowledge but artistic activity—or at least the impression of artistic activity—specifically, artistic activity carried out in the garret. The artist should display no interest in what everyday people on the street might think of (or be willing to pay for) her or his products.²

For symbolic capital to be accrued, art must be marketed, a process that requires what Bourdieu terms a field of restricted production, which he contrasts to a field of large-scale production. These two fields, which are essential for understanding Melville’s and Dickinson’s relationships to their audiences and sense of themselves as authors, can be sketched as follows:

Field of restricted production:
- Works within this field tend to be “destined for a public of producers of cultural goods” (Bourdieu, Field 115).
- The field has its “own [autonomous] criteria for the evaluation of its products” (115).
- Works tend to be pure, abstract, and esoteric (123).
- Works are “consecrated” by such “agents” as salons, literary and critical circles, journals, publishers (121).
- Works are understood to “create their public” (127).

Field of large-scale production:
- Works are intended for “the public at large” (115), hence evaluative criteria are heteronomous.
- The producer “submits to the laws of competition for the conquest of the largest possible market” (115).
- “[C]onsecration” is irrelevant, market share being the only criterion for success (115).
- Works are understood to be “created by their public” (127).
All forms of capital can circulate within these two types of field, but the natural home of symbolic capital is the former, and that of economic capital is the latter. Symbolic capital is autonomously evaluated within a field of restricted production, whereas a field of large-scale production exists to serve the needs and expectations of an entire public and thus circulates economic capital through the entire society. Evaluative criteria within a restricted field will emphasize style over function and will tend to support class distinctions, because these criteria appeal to a more educated and affluent public that has been trained to and can afford to mingle with the “agents of consecration”—those individuals and institutions that create a work’s symbolic value (117–23).

Neither type of field should be seen as monolithic, although at first glance the two types appear identical to “high” and “low” culture as that bifurcation began to develop in America in the nineteenth century. The most restricted field would be the single-member audience, or an audience consisting of single individuals each of whom receives a unique copy of the work. Metaphorically—and sometimes literally—this work is understood to be produced in a garret, that is, with an eye toward the most autonomous criteria, “internal norms of perfection.” To say that a work is “understood to be produced” in a particular way is to describe how the work will be received: as if it was produced solely for the sake of art, not even for the appreciation of those with the power to consecrate, because to appear to court consecration is already to move away from the ideal of art for the sake of art.

Nineteenth-century American literary culture assumed that a work produced in a garret could succeed in the street (in a field of large-scale production) as Fanny Fern dramatizes in *Ruth Hall*. (I discuss this in chapter 2.) But such a possible outcome has little influence on the producer of the work if that producer is an artist in a garret. This is because a good produced within a field of restricted production is “a two-faced reality, a commodity and a symbolic object” whose symbolic and commercial values “remain relatively independent, although the economic sanction may come to reinforce their cultural consecration” (Bourdieu, *Field* 113). One of Bourdieu’s most important points is that consecration cannot be accomplished by the artist, in spite of “the ideology of creation” held by most artists since the beginnings of romanticism and ostensibly held as well by the creators of symbolic capital. Instead, this value is created first by the “cultural businessman” who markets the work and ultimately by the field of production as a whole, “understood as the system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of the struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated” (78).
Bourdieu also insists that a work’s symbolic capital, created within the field of restricted production, “always in the long run guarantees ‘economic profit’” (*Field* 75). This “guarantee” is in part a matter of definition: “‘Symbolic capital’ is to be understood as economic or political capital that is disavowed, misrecognized and thereby recognized, hence legitimate” (75). But the guarantee is also a function of how the culture industry operates: “For the author, the critic, the art dealer, the publisher or the theatre manager, the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a name for oneself . . . a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with a trademark or signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition, etc.) and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation” (75). Bourdieu emphasizes that the “disavowal” of economic reality “is neither a simple ideological mask nor a complete repudiation of economic interest,” but rather involves the realistic acceptance and “practical mastery of the laws of the functioning of the field in which cultural goods are produced and circulate” (76). Or, as Melville wrote in a letter to James Billson in December 1885, near the end of his writing life, literary “fame” is nothing more than a reputation that is manufactured by publishing houses (*Correspondence* 493), a letter in which he also, interestingly, refers cheerfully to sending Billson a photograph.

The long-term guarantee of economic profit manifests itself in the Melville and Dickinson “industries” that arose in the twentieth century, as I will demonstrate in chapter 5, and as Melville himself seems to have understood early on: “All ambitious authors should have ghosts capable of revisiting the world, to snuff up the steam of adulation, which begins to rise straightaway as the Sexton throws his last shovelful on him.—Down goes his body & up flies his name,” he wrote to Evert Duyckinck on 5 April 1849 (*Correspondence* 128). But the material, biographical, and textual evidence also shows that both writers were well aware of the “two-faced reality” of works produced for careful reading and that this awareness influenced their opposition to the commercial endeavor. According to Bourdieu, the “commercial value” of a work of art is commensurate with “the cost of production,” which is “the product of a vast operation of *social alchemy* jointly conducted, with equal conviction and very unequal profits, by all the agents involved in the field of production”—not just those agents involved in the production of any single object but those involved in the production of all objects that have symbolic value (*Field* 81). Because they adhered to the romantic “ideology of creation” but were critical of this “vast operation of social alchemy,” Dickinson never, and Melville only at the beginning of his career, unthinkingly embraced wide-scale publication. In fact, Melville shows in stories such as “Bartleby” and “The Tartarus of Maids,” not to mention in much of the economic
subtext of *Moby-Dick* and the experiences of Pierre in New York City, that a manufacturing economy troubled him greatly not only because laborers shared little if at all in the profits but because the process tended to erase both the laborers and their labor. His sense of irony would have led him to approve of Bourdieu’s phrase “social alchemy.”

For the individual artist, the laws and principles described by Bourdieu operate through what he terms “habitus,” a “practical mastery” that allows the artist to feel “what needs to be done,” where to do it, how and with whom. . . . Choosing the right place of publication, the right publisher, journal, gallery or magazine is vitally important because for each author, each form of production and product, there is a corresponding natural site in the field of production, and producers or products that are not in their right place are more or less bound to fail” because they will not find a “receptive audience and sympathetic critics” (*Field* 95; emphasis in original). Habitus and social origin especially influence the development of a new artistic position: “As a rule those richest in economic, cultural and social capital are the first to move into the new positions” (68). As I explain in chapter 2, Dickinson and Melville understood—although the latter refused for years to accept—that their “natural sites” were those associated with the garret rather than with the street. It is a truism in Dickinson studies, but an important one, that she could afford not to publish; Melville of course, as he wrote in the famous “dollars damn me” letter to Hawthorne, tried to “get a living by [writing] the Truth,” but this turned out to be for him the shortest path to “the Soup Societies” (*Correspondence* 191, letter of 1 (?) June 1851).

Melville’s and Dickinson’s reaction to the enterprise of photography provides a helpful although partial view of their habitus. To participate in this enterprise, they apparently believed, was to allow evaluation to be based on the public’s perception of something extraneous to the work—the artist’s “mug.” Unlike the work itself, which should be able to make its own way with respect to an audience, a photograph would soon lose its vitality, its “quick.” In fact the image would limit the writer’s identity to a preestablished shape, as Dickinson was possibly emphasizing with her repeated reference to the image as a “mold.” Their reactions to their mentors’ requests are consistent with Bourdieu’s description of a writer seeking to amass symbolic capital within a field of restricted production. This writer is not concerned with popularity or financial success, does need to be taken seriously, will be unwilling to produce ephemera, and—most important—must work within a system of production that also controls the criteria for evaluation, criteria that are explicitly not based on market share.
It is an oversimplification to state that a writer who desires to accrue symbolic capital must embrace a “poetics of failure,” as André Kaenel describes Melville’s reaction to Duyckinck (35). Certainly, Melville expressed the belief that commercial success would make metaphysical greatness impossible. However, when Melville was writing to Duyckinck he probably was still hoping for economic success, as shown by his negotiations for the publication of *The Whale* in both England and the United States. “All the evidence shows that Melville, when he entered the literary life, thought of himself not as an artist but as the kind of practical writer who can be called, without prejudice, a journalist . . . [intending] to communicate, in familiar language and literary forms, materials which readers could absorb and understand without special antecedent knowledge and without any great concentration or effort” (Charvat 208). By the time of writing what was to become *Moby-Dick*, Melville was experiencing a tension between his desire to make a living by reaching a mass market and his recognition that to contribute something important to his culture could mean limiting his audience to the “thought-divers” he had earlier identified as the most valuable readers (*Correspondence* 121)—that is, he definitely had identified another audience who would require different strategies and yield different rewards from those he experienced when writing and seeking a publisher for *Typee*. When responding to Duyckinck’s request, Melville probably still believed that he could command both economic and symbolic capital. Perhaps he even believed what he wrote to Duyckinck, that his fame could only be “oblivionated,” not enhanced, by a published daguerreotype.

Given the dramatic decline in his economic capital, perhaps Melville should have listened to his mother, who advised that if he did not do the same thing that Hawthorne, the historians George Bancroft and W. H. Prescott, and others were doing and allow a daguerreotyped image to be widely distributed, he would “appear very strangely stiff” (Horth 785). Apparently she understood that the way toward gaining either influential friends or a reading public would be smoothed by an impression of conviviality and conventionality and that this new technology was one means to that end. Melville’s image had already been established verbally, in the public’s eye, by his first two novels; as he disparagingly and no doubt out of frustration noted in his famous June 1851 letter to Hawthorne, he was known as the man who had “lived among the cannibals” (*Correspondence* 193). Had he allowed his “mug” to be seen in the daguerreotyped company of such literary notables as Bancroft and Hawthorne, that public identity might have been altered or even replaced, given the power of a visual image. The 1847 oil portrait done by Asa Twitchell shows a soulful-looking young man with large, gentle eyes, a full head of well-combed
hair, and a modest beard—not at all primitive or cannibalistic. (See figure 1.) Similarly, the 1861 carte de visite image taken by R. H. Dewey shows Melville as serious and respectable—certainly no longer the romantic-looking person painted by Twitchell, but obviously a mature and worthy member of society. (See figure 2.) The Twitchell image or a similar one could have helped prepare even a fairly large audience for the writer’s turn toward what reviewers disparaged in *Mardi* and *Moby-Dick* as “metaphysics”; the Dewey image could likewise have helped Melville reshape himself in the public eye as a poet.

Dickinson may have had a more nuanced understanding than did Melville of the influence of visual images on the acquisition of symbolic and cultural power. Her description of herself in the letter to Higginson seems calculated to evoke a sense of romantic mystery: her hair is both “bold” and like the “Chestnut Bur” (did she really mean spiky, like the hard covering around the chestnut?), and her eyes are “like the Sherry in the Glass”
(visual image of color and probably sparkle) “that the Guest leaves” (mystery). Offering him a verbal portrait also enhanced the sense of intimate, imaginative connection necessary for accruing symbolic capital within the fields of portfolio poetry and personal letter. This description, she says, is her living self (“the Quick”), not a lifeless replica (“Mold”). While the mainstream literary economy was increasingly identifying an author’s work with the author’s photographic image, Dickinson presented a self in terms that were self-consciously not economic.⁵

Although Dickinson’s situation and personality set her against the new technologies of photographic reproduction, those technologies were not intrinsically inimical to symbolic capital, especially because the production of symbolic capital was ideologically linked to America’s developing identity.
The daguerreotype contributed to this identity by providing “symbolic representations of objects” in the context of which Americans could identify themselves (Rudisill 31). Both Melville and Dickinson could have done what Poe and Whitman did, embracing the opportunity offered by the new medium actually to enhance their literary stock. The photographic images of Poe—most dramatically the virtual disappearance of the philtrum (the vertical indentation above the center of the upper lip)—show that he “learned how to shape his personal image for the camera” just as he shaped the verbal images in various biographical sketches (Hayes 486). In a sense he was turning himself into a visual icon. Whitman did the same several decades later. Beginning in 1876, each edition of *Leaves of Grass* “opened with a frontispiece portrait, never the same, all showing him as he looked contemporary with the book” (Trachtenberg, *Reading* 67). This technique paralleled what Whitman had done verbally, anointing his persona “Walt” and insisting that *Leaves of Grass* was physically identical with its maker.

Both Poe and Whitman were attempting to craft their photographic images to conform to the culture’s notion of a poet. Poe modeled himself according to the romantic tradition, emphasizing his slender build and large forehead. Poe’s marketing acumen allowed him to recognize this vacuum in the field of the visual icon: America as yet recognized no poet as representing the nation on the world stage, so he may have felt he could establish his credentials by becoming a visual as well as a verbal presence and contributing his photographic image to the nation’s developing sense of the American character. Whitman, perhaps even more than Poe, embraced the culture’s desire to create a single commodity by fusing the poet with his work. Whitman benefited from Emerson’s descriptions of the American poet, creating in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* a complete package: visual image (the famous photo of him in casual attire, looking very much like “one of the roughs” rather than like one of the consecrated poets), a statement of purpose echoing and extending Emerson’s description (the preface), and a body of poetry that could never be mistaken for anything that had been produced up to that time in America. The fact that Whitman’s book in its many editions took half a century to begin to be influential may say less about its revolutionary quality, however, than about Whitman’s attempt to bypass the producers of symbolic capital, as he handled the marketing of both book and self.

The daguerreotype was an important component of this process of production. The success of American daguerreotypes in world competitions reinforced the national sense that American technology was superior and reflected a particular knack for inventiveness and pragmatic problem-
solving that was believed to be part of the American character. Daguerreotyping was also tied to “photography’s cultural work within a society rapidly undergoing unsettling change toward market-centered urban capitalism” (Trachtenberg, “Seeing and Believing” 463). In Reading American Photographs, Trachtenberg notes that Oliver Wendell Holmes wittily but also insightfully equated photographs with money: both were “intangible tokens of exchange,” but the former did not fluctuate in value (19). Daguerreotyping began in America as the province of lower-class workers but rapidly became professionalized, with two main groups of practitioners, “the rural and small-town itinerant” and “the city entrepreneur with an established gallery” (21–22). “By the early 1850s, professional daguerreotypists were insisting publicly, through their newly founded journals and in advertisements, that amiable and pleasing images required the same craft and sensibility as painted miniatures”; these individuals linked their “economic self-interest to the cultural and political interests of their clientele,” appealing to “the superior taste of superior people” (25). Practitioners of the profession of photography felt themselves to be on a mission to reflect and preserve images of the best characters, both of public figures and of private persons (31–32)—or at least they paid lip service to this mission for economic gain. There emerged among the middle class a “discourse on the daguerrean portrait, a discourse of instruction and advice to both operators and sitters: how to arrange the body, where to allow the light to fall, what background and furniture to provide, what to do with sitters’ hands and legs and eyes, with linen and wool and lace” (26). This discourse contributed to the larger “obsession with ‘character,’ how to achieve it, how to show it and preserve it, and most of all how to recognize it in others” (27). Trachtenberg argues that “[t]he millions of surviving daguerreotypes . . . show people learning a new way of seeing themselves in the eyes of others, seeing oneself as image” (29).

Melville and Dickinson opposed that “new way” because it connoted turning the individual into an object that could become a commodity and could even become fetishized in the sense described by Karl Marx. That is, capitalism “produces objects of desire only insofar as it produces subjects, since what makes the objects desirable is only the constitutive trace of subjectivity those objects bear” (Michaels 20)—or, capitalism produces both the object and the subjects who desire it, and the value of that object is the amount by which subjects desire it, an amount whose “trace” is carried by the object. While commodities must have some usefulness, “their value as exchangeable commodities is ‘physically imperceptible’” (Michaels, quoting Marx, 20–21). When commodities come to be regarded neither as things that have a use in themselves nor as the products of human labor
but as specific exchange values, they have become fetishized: “Commodities come to look neither like things as such nor like things that represent human labor but like things that are somehow human” (26). Dickinson and Melville would have found this kind of transformation appalling, but other, more practical considerations were also at play in their dislike of photographic images. For instance, Rudisill references Dickinson’s letter to Higginson and comments that the “wooden image” embodied in the one known daguerreotype may have “conditioned her aversion to photographs and other likenesses” (212). He also notes that it was common to be dissatisfied with one’s own image and to desire an image of loved ones in case of death, as Edward Dickinson did of his children (210–12, 217–20). Both writers also disliked fads and doubted that any human construction could “accurately” record a phenomenon. They probably also reacted against the mechanical nature of the various photographic media, in the same way that some visual artists denigrated images produced by so-called “drawing machines” and the camera obscura—these images were considered not works of art but the products of a relatively unskilled craft. For the majority of Americans “the mechanical nature of the process guaranteed its freedom from human fallibility”; “the medium was acceptable because it served human needs and because it was both utilitarian and reliable as to its truth” (Rudisill 230–31). But these characteristics would not have resonated positively with Dickinson and Melville.

**Fields of Restricted Production and the Legitimizing of Artists**

Bourdieu developed his theory as a way of describing and explaining what happened to culture in France during the nineteenth century, when producers of symbolic goods (artists, intellectuals, salon owners, publishers, and so forth) became increasingly free “from aristocratic and ecclesiastical tutelage as well as from its aesthetic and ethical demands” (*Field* 112). The potential market grew; even more important for the development of fields of restricted production was the diversification of society, which allowed a greater variety of producers to achieve a measure of economic independence (112). This independence was accompanied by the development of a “cultural industry” within which a work of art could not be reduced “to the status of a simple article of merchandise” (113–14). This combination of conditions did not exist in early nineteenth-century America, which had no extensive patronage system. More importantly, the market for culture during colonial and early federalist times was relatively small and the profit
margin narrow, leading producers to pirate British goods rather than invest in homegrown authors. By the middle third of the century, however, while printing costs were declining, the American reading public was expanding rapidly both geographically (to the south and west) and among the educated, especially women (Charvat 304–5). These two developments gave American writers a better chance of achieving economic independence.

Toward the end of this period, a somewhat diverse set of fields developed within the market, but there was still no commercial field of restricted production that could accommodate works whose evaluation was independent of commercial considerations (“autonomous” evaluation in Bourdieu’s terms). As late as 1859, in an Editor’s Table column in Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, the point is made that the phenomenal demand for “cheap literature,” by which is meant “cheap, portable editions of books,” is “nothing more than the wants of the public asserting themselves and calling for supply” (“Readers by the Millions” 838). Literature is termed “the most democratic thing in existence” as a result of the intellectual and spiritual “elevation” of society (838). Thus it is that America has become “a nation of readers” who are “just entering on the incipient stage of literary tastes” (839). The unnamed author concludes that “[a]uthors were never so sure of sympathy, appreciation, and substantial recompense as now. The real state of the case is, that the people consider literature as their property—a new estate superadded to trade, commerce, politics—and they intend to enjoy their sovereignty over it without ‘let or hindrance’” (840).

Stephen Railton aptly notes that authors reading this passage would feel a “conflict . . . between the imperatives of self-expression and the demands of performing for this American public” (20). “Readers by the Millions” implies that this large public audience constituted a field of restricted production that was emerging out of a field of large-scale production. This emergent field would support “our higher literature” economically. However, because this field was skewed toward the conservative end of the spectrum, where evaluation was governed by the same heteronomous criteria albeit somewhat refined, “self expression” had relatively little value. Moreover, this author is quite clear that any such “higher literature” produced will be owned by the public, a concept in keeping with the purpose of American copyright law, as I discuss in chapter 3, but inimical to autonomous evaluation. There did exist in America at that time, as there still does, a conflict between the leveling tendency of democracy and the desire to create a culture that preserved distinctions between social classes; as Robert Milder says, “The problem of establishing intellectual and aesthetic standards in an egalitarian society was and remains a difficult and politically volatile one in American society” (63–64).
Other conditions, too, inhibited until late in the nineteenth century the development of a field of restricted production like the one Bourdieu describes in France. Genres were demarcated by gender, with the novel being recognized, at least in antebellum America, as a “woman’s form,” enforcing Victorian ideals of duty and self-control” while avoiding “anarchistic, self-expressive tendencies” (Baym 21, 24). Reviewers also tended to oppose the development of new artistic positions; they recognized that geniuses often break rules but were likely also to regard rule-breaking as a result of simple unruliness or of the author engaging in egoistic self-expression and self-advertising (Baym 253). Similarly, the poetic models available in America, whether in the magazine verse or in the volumes by Bryant, Longfellow, Emerson or other widely read men, were of little help for a writer desiring to pursue new directions by transgressing conventions. In sum, because both cultural forces and market pressures privileged conservative novels and poetry, American writers searching for a field of restricted production within the publishing industry were less likely to succeed than were their continental counterparts. Insofar as such a field existed, it was dominated by the “higher literature,” whose producers (not just writers, of course, but publishing houses, magazine editors, and reviewers) controlled the available symbolic capital. Only toward the end of the century did a field of restricted production develop in which producers could accrue both symbolic capital and at least a modicum of economic capital (resulting from traditional print publication) on the basis of criteria established within the field. However, as I will show in chapters 2 and 3, there were several such fields outside of the realm of commercial print publication, fields which Dickinson targeted throughout her writing life and that Melville committed himself to no later than his agreement in 1879 to allow the remaining copies of Clarel to be pulped.

In America, the literary marketplace had become, by the middle of the nineteenth century, a scene of significant economic profit, as Americans developed the talent and skills to produce not only books but the materials needed for books (paper, type, printing presses, and so forth), and as the number of readers increased dramatically. These conditions led to the significant development of the form of legitimacy Bourdieu associates with bourgeois taste. The art-for-art’s-sake form of legitimacy was also beginning to develop but was taking a different shape from that described by Bourdieu in France: like bourgeois taste, it was located within the growing middle class and manifested itself in items produced by that class—keep-sake books, commonplace books, poetry portfolios, and other forms of handwritten work.
The value of such forms had been established by Emerson. In pieces such as “Self-Reliance,” “The American Scholar,” “The Poet,” and “Nature,” Emerson emphasized that the American artist or intellectual should serve as a conduit for the spirit of the people but should also follow an inner light not subject to mass-market pressure. “The poet has a new thought,” Emerson wrote in “The Poet”; “he has a whole new experience to unfold; he will tell us how it was with him, and all men will be the richer in his fortune. For, the experience of each new age requires a new confession, and the world seems always waiting for its poet” (200). He offered this anecdote: “I remember, when I was young, how much I was moved one morning by tidings that genius had appeared in a youth who sat near me at table. He had left his work, and gone rambling none knew whither, and had written hundreds of lines, but could not tell whether that which was in him was therein told: he could tell nothing but that all was changed,—man, beast, heaven, earth, and sea. How gladly we listened! how credulous!” (200). This anecdote expresses several tenets of romantic ideology specifically relevant to a field of restricted production and supporting the principle of autonomous evaluation: the myth of individual creation, the connection of the artist to nature more than to society (nature is thus available as a standard of evaluation separate from society), and the uniqueness of the artist’s production. Emerson was also influential with the conduit metaphor, according to which truth flows, essentially unaltered, from nature through the poet to an audience—the youth knew only that “all was changed,” and his audience listened “gladly” and credulously—and with the principle of self-reliance, which according to Donald Pease challenged both the national “Revolutionary mythos” and the dominance of “memory” in the formation of individual identity (35–36, 208), a challenge consistent with a view of art and the artist as autonomous at least with respect to the nation’s ideology and mythos. The fields fulfilling these conditions were portfolio poetry and the letter—indeed, any work circulated only in manuscript. I will discuss these fields in chapter 2, but here I want to emphasize that within them evaluation is grounded in (a) the sense of personal, noncommodified relationship between writer and reader; (b) a realm of external, divine nature rather than domesticity or society; and (c) the uniqueness and inspiration of the work of art.

A second set of conditions allows for evaluation according to criteria (a) and (c) but is located within the domestic realm. These conditions received no single articulation but can be inferred from their artifacts: commonplace books, diaries, and so forth written privately, like portfolio poetry and letters, intended to be shared yet unlike those forms evaluated
according to the criteria of sentiment and usefulness. Sharing these works was intended to create a sense of intimate community, yet the materials out of which these forms were made (blank copybooks, blank diaries, etc.) were part of a system of economic capital. I will say more about this category of forms in subsequent chapters.

Both Dickinson and Melville esteemed “publication by manuscript”—that is, participation in an extremely limited field—not only because they felt authorized by the romantic ideology of creative inspiration and the American emphasis on self-reliance but also because publishing had become so commercialized in America. Perhaps they would have felt more at home under the old system of book production, which “resembled nothing more closely than the provincial book trade of England” and was “decentralized . . . unspecialized and undercapitalized” (Winship, *American Literary Publishing* 11–12). But the new system, with its mechanization of printing and binding and the “well-organized national book trade” based on advances in transportation, banking, and marketing, contradicted romantic ideology. This trade “included a number of specialized firms, many of considerable size, dedicated to a particular branch of book manufacture and distribution: papermaking, typefounding, stereotyping, printing, binding, jobbing, or retail bookselling” (Winship 11–12). Authors who desired to create art would also have been troubled by the expanded role of the publisher as “the entrepreneur of the book trade, the one who makes the decisions and takes the risks necessary to keep the whole enterprise in motion” (13). Within the nineteenth-century American book trade, publishing occupied the center; creation was only one branch, along with financing, manufacturing and supply, and distribution and reception (13–14). Furthermore, creation includes editors, illustrators, book designers, and anyone else who has a hand in preparing what is ultimately “published.” Social and cultural contexts can influence any of these branches in obvious or subtle ways; for instance, “economic censorship may arise from a lack of financing for particular works,” and audiences exert financial pressure (13–14).

Wholly rejecting commercial publishing, however, was not an easy, clear-cut choice, because many publishers themselves espoused an “artisan ideology” and believed (or at least found it expedient to assert) that “progress, liberal values, and the democratization of society and, by extension, the reading public were intertwined” (Zboray 182). Like the romantic ideology of artistic creation, the publisher’s artisanal self-concept was out of step with social, political, and economic reality but could still influ-
ence how an author conceived of her or his relationship with a publisher. In reality, the publisher was a capitalistic entrepreneur rather than “an heir to the artisan tradition,” books were not generally more accessible to the public (although newspapers were), and the “rationalized system of production” was transforming laborers from “men” (as in “journeyman”) to “hands” and “girls” (182–85). Thus, in America as in France, the ideological celebration of artists and artisans conflicted with the reality that the true cultural entrepreneurs were not artists but, especially, publishers; they were the bestowers of legitimacy. To esteem publication by manuscript was explicitly to oppose economic institutions and, as I show in chapter 3, also to oppose the essential state legal institution of copyright law. These “positions”—of poet, pure writer, artist—were ideologically useful but otherwise scarcely connected to the realities either of the mass literary marketplace or of the slightly restricted marketplace implied in “Readers by the Millions.”

Melville’s and Dickinson’s distaste for the marketing of art and artists, especially marketing by “mug,” must be viewed not only within this cultural framework but also as a specific reaction to specific individuals and practices. Among the leading entrepreneurial publishers were George and Evert Duyckinck, the Harper brothers, and George Putnam, all of whom were involved either directly or indirectly in both magazine and book publishing, understood the importance of market share, and not only responded to readers’ tastes but attempted to shape those tastes. George and Evert Duyckinck “knew how to turn a dollar, had a business instinct and talent to make money . . . [and] were attempting to cash in, and with some success, on the emerging mass market in publishing that appeared in the two decades before the Civil War” (Yannella 70). Similarly, *Harper’s Monthly* was intended from its inception in 1850 to be a national publication; it was able to reach this goal because of its extensive piracy of British works, the publisher’s early commitment to technology, and a surge in literary nationalism (Phegley 64). The magazine always had “one unifying mission: the initiation of common readers into the culturally informed middle class”; it carried out this mission by targeting married, middle-class women readers and by insisting on their responsibility to inculcate literary culture into their families (73–74). “Harper’s defined itself as a magazine for the literate but under-educated masses, but not of them,” intending to guide these masses toward the “best literature of the day” as determined by the magazine’s editors (74). This mission was best fulfilled by aiming at the female audience, which was deemed more malleable: “If women readers could gain literary taste and an appropriate sense of national duty, they would transform the public realm by nurturing the literate and literary
Americans of the next generation” (75). The magazine attempted to control “American sentimental fiction” by serializing what it deemed the best models, such as Dickens’s *Bleak House* (79–80); this attempt helps explain why Melville, who had been a major author in the Harper line, was not more strongly supported—for example, the magazine printed only one extract from *Moby-Dick* but serialized all of *Bleak House* (80–84).

By the time he turned to the writing of magazine fiction, Melville had become much more aware of the market complexities than he had been when he wrote to John Murray, offering him *Mardi* and “reiterate[ing] his confidence that his reputation has reached the status of ‘guinea author,’ deserving of publication in a more expensive format” (*Correspondence* 114). But even with *Mardi*, Melville was feeling conflicted about the value of his reputation and thus in the same letter desired that *Mardi* not be associated with his earlier work: “Unless you deem it very desirable do not put me down on the title page as ‘the author of Typee & Omoo.’ I wish to separate ‘Mardi’ as much as possible from those books” (114–15). The publication of “Bartleby” in *Putnam’s Monthly* within a month of the completion of the serializing of *Bleak House* constitutes Melville’s critique of the values endorsed by the house of Harper and specifically of Harper’s and that magazine’s apparent unwillingness fully to support American authors who did not fit the sentimental realism rubric (Phegley 85). Another example of his market awareness is his rethinking of *Israel Potter*, after that work was rejected by Harper’s, in order to “meet the editorial policies” of *Putnam’s*, which began in 1853 “as a critical commentary on the times and as a direct contrast to the political conservatism” of the older magazine (Post-Lauria 118). The editors of *Putnam’s* aimed for a critical and representational style, feeling that “the sentimental style of Harper’s fiction severed the link between social problems and the teller’s emotional response to them by highlighting abstracted sentiment rather than the actual subject” (123). On the other hand, *Putnam’s* was also strongly pro-American, whereas Harper’s was more oriented toward England, making the former perhaps a better vehicle for what Melville wanted to thematize in *Israel Potter* (129). “Putnam’s editors hoped for precisely such independent and direct writing from their contributors. Melville’s story of a rebellious hero whose life dramatized the contradictions inherent in commonly held ideologies of the Founding Fathers reflected magazine policies perfectly” (130).

The publishing of poetry was influenced by the same considerations as was the publishing of prose, but these considerations did not always play out in the same way. For instance, the house of Harper treated Melville’s volume of Civil War poetry as if they expected or hoped that it would
Marketing by Mug

do well. Compared to Whitman’s *Drum-Taps* and other single-authored volumes, *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* “was a quality production: as attractively printed and bound as any of the single-author volumes, with clean, distinct typeface and more generous margins, by a leading house (Harper’s) that promoted it vigorously. Harper’s ran six poems in its monthly magazine (with one of the best, on Sherman’s march to the sea, displayed in an unusual large-type two-page spread format); distributed a quarter of the volumes as review copies; and touted the book in a *Harper’s Magazine* review” (Buell 127). These signs of legitimization, however, must be read in their immediate context. The favorable review occupied 8 lines of a densely printed 2-column 3½-page “Literary Notices,” in which the lead item, *Personal Recollections of Distinguished Generals* by William Shanks, filled a full page. The review, the shortest in this article, reads, in its entirety, thus:

Mr. Melville has broken a long silence in a manner hardly to have been expected of the author of “Typee” and “Mardi.” Among these poems are some—among them “The March to the Sea” and that upon “Stonewall Jackson, ascribed to a Virginian”—which will stand as among the most stirring lyrics of the war. (“Literary Notices,” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* 34, no. 200 [January 1867]: 265)

Likewise, the fact that the magazine ran six poems signifies less than it seems, because typically the only author identification was to be found in the table of contents. That said, Buell is correct that the “literary commodity” of the Civil War poem seems to have served Melville as a source of energy and focus (134), and the poems he produced were surely pushed by the house of Harper because his name carried symbolic capital even as the poems would (or were expected to) contribute to that capital. The reviewer’s desire to invoke Melville’s prestige may explain the unusual mention of *Mardi*, which was typically recognized (albeit not positively) as more metaphysical and poetical than Melville’s other early works. In every other Melville notice I have located from the house of Harper, if only two titles are referred to they are *Typee* and *Omoo*.

If Melville’s value as a “commodity” was not strictly economic, profit nevertheless was uppermost in the minds of the Harper brothers. Dickinson was certainly aware that profit could not be ignored in the publishing business and that it was in part based on the author’s visage as a commodity. During her lifetime, the only poem of hers that appeared first in a magazine was “Some keep the sabbath,” published as “My Sabbath” in the 12 March 1864 issue of the *Round Table*, which was founded
in December 1863 by Charles Humphreys Sweetser and Henry Edward Sweetser (Scholnick 166–67). This was to be an independent, wide-ranging publication, but the Sweetzers realized that they would have to take in advertising in order to keep afloat (168). Dickinson’s poem “Publication is the auction” may have addressed the practice of “paying off the reviewers and periodicals,” a practice that the *Round Table* also condemned (171). Further, Dickinson’s term “auction accurately describes a literary marketplace where authors were in fact bought and sold. For instance, in 1852 *Graham’s* offered fifty dollars per poem to the two most popular American poets . . . [Longfellow and Bryant], but it insisted on dictating the length of the poems, their subject matter and treatment, and the frequency of composition” (171). Scholnick concludes: “In publishing in the *Round Table* Dickinson did not have to worry about being the victim of advertising; here was one periodical that did not print contributors’ names. And in view of her close family connections to the Sweetzers, no doubt she did not have to worry about entering the literary marketplace and auctioning her work to the highest bidder” (180). (Scholnick mentions that they did append to their first volume the names of their regular contributors—170.) Given the Sweetzers’ idealism, it is not surprising that they were critical of Longfellow, because they felt that popularity was inconsistent with “the real work of poetry” (179). Circumstantial evidence suggests that Dickinson may have authorized publication of this poem, but there is no material link to prove that she did so: when the poem first is known to have appeared in manuscript, in 1861 or 1862, Charles Sweetser was still a neighbor of Dickinson’s and was “much interested in poetry” (Franklin, *Poems* 1:258–59).

These specific examples of *Israel Potter*, “Bartleby,” *Battle-Pieces*, and “Some keep the sabbath” illustrate the complexity of the literary marketplace contemporaneous with Melville and Dickinson. Thoughtful and informed as these writers were, they knew that while writing itself is simple, to consider going before a public in a relationship mediated by a publisher involved advertising, pandering to the public’s desire to know as much as possible about the author (and thus in a sense to possess the author’s identity), the exploitation of laborers, a concentration on economic profit—in short, capitalistic entrepreneurship clothed in patriotic and romantic ideology. The artist’s “mug” might be considered one focal point of all of these issues: it could be easily mass-produced and thus easily owned by thousands or even millions of anonymous individuals, and it catered to the cult of the author even while turning the author into just one element in the production stream. They also knew that other marketplaces existed that were not based on commercial publication. Within
these noncommercial venues, work could earn symbolic capital without requiring the writer to make her- or himself a commodity—name, visage, and work blended by an entrepreneurial publisher into a single marketable package.

Clearly, during the two decades of daguerreotyping’s market prominence, it produced economic capital. To a lesser extent, daguerreotyping and the other forms of photography that replaced it were also associated with the production of cultural capital: these methods could portray and thus help codify the American “character” and were recognized in Europe as an example of the emerging American excellence in mechanical matters. In this context, Melville might have found himself regretting his decision to deny Duyckinck’s request—who knows but that he might have ended up as part of some display of American types. But ten years later, the daguerreotype craze having swept the country, it is easy to imagine Dickinson appalled by the idea of participating, aware as she was of the “oblivionating” of the unique individual that Melville presciently noted in 1851. During the craze, individual portraits accounted for “over ninety-five percent of all daguerreotypes made in America” (Rudisill 198). Daguerreotypists, especially in cities, advertised their service by creating large galleries of their work, including both the famous and the ordinary persons who had sat for them; in fact “photographic portraiture” was at times described as fine art for the masses (213). Melville and Dickinson believed that there could be no such thing: in their eyes, the garret and the street were irreconcilable realms. The latter was the abode of “superficial skimmers,” of the “admiring Bog” as Dickinson termed them in “I’m nobody” (Fr260), and to lower oneself to their level was to be at best “dayalized.” For a writer with an eye toward immortality, Melville and Dickinson felt, photographs were a mark of failure.