MANUFACTURING A PERSONAGE:
PHOTOGRAPHY AND AMERICAN LITERARY CELEBRITY, 1839-1860

A Thesis
presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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MAY 2013
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MANUFACTURING A PERSONAGE:

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Dedicated to my parents
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank John Evelev, whose guidance throughout the writing process proved crucial to the conception and execution of this project. I would also like to express my gratitude to Tom Quirk and Kristin Schwain for their expertise and input at various stages of writing.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the ways in which the daguerreotype influenced literary celebrity in the United States from the time of its invention in 1839 to the beginning of the Civil War in 1860. The daguerreotype was introduced to America in the midst of the printing revolution that took place in the second quarter of the 19th century. Advancements in printing technology, transportation, and public education created a mass readership that made literary celebrity possible, and the accurate visual representations of authors that the daguerreotype created played a crucial role in the public imagination of these celebrity authors.

After a brief overview of the historical background of the era and the project’s methodological approach, this study considers the effect of the daguerreotype on the writing and reputations of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville. The first chapter provides a reading of *The House of the Seven Gables*, arguing that daguerreotypy figures in the novel as a function of Hawthorne’s concern with the public/private divide. The second chapter reads Poe’s “The Literati of New York City” in relation to his photographic portraiture to explore how the construction of his public reputation was predicated on his visual image. Finally, the third chapter intervenes in the critical dialogue surrounding Melville’s *Pierre, or the Ambiguities* to investigate the way in which Pierre’s literary celebrity comments upon the compositional history of the novel.
Introduction

Modern notions of celebrity are so intertwined with photography that one has difficulty imagining the experience of those who were seeing for the first time, some 170 years ago, those lifelike images of public figures that began adorning the walls of daguerreotype studios of early practitioners such as Mathew Brady. For the reader of literature, encountering such images of authors long imagined but never seen must have been equally fascinating. Add to this the consideration that authors in America were, during this era, struggling to define the country as one of international literary prominence, and the appeal of photographs both for readers and for authors doesn’t seem to necessitate any explanation at all. However, early photography and the forms of celebrity it introduced represented a vexing issue for authors. Authors concerned with privacy, with reputation, and with literature as a mode of truth-telling responded variously to this new medium, often with suspicion. Photography was introduced to the country during a time of rapid advances in several other areas, including book publishing and transportation, that changed the way that literary celebrity was configured in the United States, and therefore provides a unique lens through which to explore the relationships and tensions between readers and authors that were being negotiated in the antebellum era.

It is the project of this thesis to examine the reactions of three prominent authors of the 1840s and 1850s—Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville—to this new medium, and to trace its influence on both their writing and their careers. Each of these authors’ responses to daguerreotypy—variously (and often simultaneously) apprehensive, manipulative, or suspicious—together form what is a representative account of the role of early photography
in the creation of literary celebrity in antebellum America. Particularly, photography is used as a starting place to investigate the increasingly complicated relationship between audience and author that it began to mediate in the second quarter of the 19th century.

The years between 1825-1860 saw a confluence of sociological and technological advancements that made a mass readership in America possible for the first time. The widespread literacy caused by compulsory education and the proliferation of affordable magazines and newspapers made reading a leisure activity for the middle class. The inventions of paper-making machines, mechanical typesetting, and the mechanical iron press led to a fully mechanized form of book printing that allowed for a staggering increase in the production of books.¹ As John Tebbel notes, “there was no mass market for books in America” before 1830 (Tebbel, Between Covers 67). However, the introduction of these technologies in the intervening decades culminated in the years 1845-1857 with “the greatest boom the book business had ever witnessed” (71). The available statistics attest to this: between 1820 and 1856, the American publishing industry grew from a value of $2.5 million to $16 million (Blake 38); the total annual production of American book titles between 1837 and 1855 increased 800 percent (Hruschka 92); and in 1855, the most productive American publisher, Harper & Brothers, could boast annual quantities reaching into the millions (94). Simultaneously, the construction of the railroad allowed for a readership that was expanding in distance as well as

¹ For a more in-depth account of the evolution of these technologies, see John Hruschka, How Books Came to America: The Rise of the American Book Trade, Penn State UP 2012: p. 61-69.
Beginning in 1830, steam drove both the railroads that carried books and the book industry itself to ever-widening markets... By 1850, nine thousand miles of track connected all the major cities of the Northeast and connected population centers in the South and the West" (68). The practice of reading, as well, was accorded an important place in the culture, as evidenced by a substantial increase in the number of libraries and bookstores.²

It was in the midst of this revolution in the literary marketplace that the daguerreotype was introduced to America. In 1839, news from France announced the invention of the device, and daguerreotype portraits rapidly gained popularity throughout the 1840s, resulting in as many as 17,000 daguerreotype studios in the country by 1853 (Williams, “Daguerreotyping Hawthorne and Poe” 14). Portraiture, for the first time, was made widely available to the poor and the working class, though claims that this advancement was a completely democratic one often overstate the case. While daguerreotypes commissioned by common citizens were kept and viewed privately, those of notable people were distributed in a complex marketplace of images, used to publicize their subjects for commercial or political ends. Thus, despite the democratic access to the new medium, a hierarchy was kept in place according to the status of those commissioning their portraits. Daguerreotypes of prominent political and cultural figures were often displayed in front of daguerreotype studios to attract customers, and it was not long before such a publicity tactic found its place in the publishing world. Theophilus Peterson was one of the first publishers to take advantage of the new market for cheap paperback editions of

² For an overview of the changes in reading practices in this era, see James Machor, Reading Fiction in Antebellum America, The Johns Hopkins UP 2011: p. 18-35.
books, and it is to him that the publishing industry owes one of its first advertising tactics, “to issue a catalogue with portraits of his principal authors and biographical sketches of their lives and works, of the kind common to dust jackets today” (Tebbel, *Between Covers* 72). As early as 1843, Edgar Allan Poe was planning to follow suit, and included in his prospectus for his magazine *The Stylus* plans for “full length and characteristic portraits” of its featured writers, among the first of whom was to be Nathaniel Hawthorne. Daguerreotypes of authors were purchased by bookstores to be displayed in their windows, and single engravings of daguerreotypes of authors could be purchased and collected by readers. In addition, engravings of daguerreotypes soon began illustrating books, and became an important feature of biographies of authors.

The cultural consequences of the invention of the daguerreotype, however, reached much further than simply advertising. The ontological revolution that photography initiated has led critics to divide history into pre- and post-photographic eras. William Ivins has suggested that “the histories of techniques of art, of science, and of thought, can be quite properly and cogently divided into their pre- and post-photographic periods” (116). Roland Barthes, in his *Camera Lucida*, describes this break:

To see oneself (differently from in a mirror): on the scale of History, this action is recent, the painted, drawn, or miniaturized portrait having been, until the spread of Photography, a limited possession, intended moreover to advertise a social and financial status—and in any case, a painted portrait, however close the resemblance (this is what I’m trying to prove) is not a photograph. Odd that no one has thought of the disturbance (to civilization) which this new action causes. (12, italics in original)

Photography, according to Barthes, turns subject into object, and the distribution of that object
results in a reversal of the public and private spheres. In his conception, “the age of
Photography corresponds precisely to the explosion of the private into the public, or rather into
the creation of a new social value, which is the publicity of the private: the private is consumed
as such, publicly” (98). Thus, the complications that daguerreotypy represented for antebellum
authors transcended financial or career-oriented aspects related to advertising and necessarily
reconstituted their relationships with their audience.

Due to this project’s interest in audience reception, a few words need to be said
regarding its methods in historicizing modes of reading and conceptions of authorship. Both of
these issues have received considerable attention since the onset of reader-response theory in
the 1970s, which progressed into reception theory in the 1980s and more recently into what is
called the history of reading. James Machor outlines the various problems and approaches that
have arisen in the historicizing of readership in this time. Reader-response theory, in the
1970s, sought to place the interpretive act wholly with the reader, although this practice
troublingly reduced the interpretive act to one predicated on an ill-defined or overly general
interpretive community or even on features of the text that demanded certain types of reading.
This difficulty in grounding reading practices in historically specific contexts was the impetus for
reception theory, but Machor notes that reception theory’s tendency to find this context in
authors’ or critics’ reading practices overlooks the experience of general readers. Recent work
with the history of reading places its emphasis on “common” or “real” readers, finding primary

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3 See Reading Fiction in Antebellum America: Informed Response and Reception Histories,
sources in historical materials such as diaries and marginalia. This practice is still constrained by
a variety of factors, including the inherently self-selected nature of the source material (those
readers who wrote about reading were the exception and do not necessarily represent the
experience of reading in general in the antebellum period) and the fact that modern readings of
historical documents are themselves informed by reading practices that critics may not be able
to analyze or even perceive. Still, the combination of these three focuses—hermeneutical
processes that can be recovered from the text, authorial and critical responses, and historical
documentation—promises to address the issue of a history of reading by creating what Machor
terms a “historical hermeneutics.” Historical hermeneutics can, by recognizing the limitations of
response criticism, reception theory, and the history of reading, go some way in uncovering the
real experiences of readers of fiction in the antebellum period.

Barbara Hochman’s *Getting at the Author* puts into practice a historical
hermeneutics very similar to the one that Machor lays out. Basing her work partially on Robert
Darnton’s “First Steps toward a History of Reading,” which suggests building a history of
reading from the literary text on the one hand and reading practices on the other, Hochman
reads her primary texts “with the purpose of extrapolating reader roles, scenes of reading, and
figures for the reader and the author.” However, noting that “the reading habits of real readers
constitute a major problem of conceptualization in and of themselves,” she also draws from
“letters, diaries, and commonplace books of nineteenth-century readers... published essays and
reviews of the period, and the personal letters and published comments of well-known writers”
(5) to find instances where they point to shared practices.
The mode of reading that Hochman identifies as most prevalent in the era before the turn toward realism at the end of the nineteenth century is that of “friendly reading” or “reading for the author.” Reading was seen as a sort of conversation between reader and author wherein the author’s character was immanent in the text. In the relatively stable communities of antebellum America, the act of reading was a straightforward one, with the assumption that an author’s personality could be deduced from their language just as a friend’s or neighbor’s could be. Additionally, the narrative voice of antebellum novels was often familiar, using the first- and second-person singular that the realists sought to avoid.

This is not to over-simplify or ignore the multiple, often contradictory modes of reading that were practiced during the first half of the nineteenth century. Gillian Silverman has outlined one such contradictory mode. What she terms “railroad reading” is the autodidactic, productive form of reading based on efficient time management and mastery over texts that was often expounded in contemporary behavior manuals. With the exponential distribution of texts after the technological advances in bookmaking and transportation came attendant anxieties about the number and type of books to be read. In an attempt to reduce non-productive, purely pleasurable forms of reading, manuals “attempted to transform reading from an irrational consumer practice to a productive activity, as regular and predictable as the railroad” (23). However, Silverman compares “railroad reading” with “wayward reading,” a practice much more in line with Hochman’s “friendly reading.” Wayward reading consisted of a meeting of reader and author outside of time; it had a vagrant quality associated with self-forgetting. Wayward reading was conversational, intimate, and required a similar
understanding of the author as a legible personality. Friendly or wayward modes of reading
complicated the relationship between author and audience in a way that autodidactic modes of
reading did not because they assumed an intimacy on the part of the reader that the author
could not partake in, interrupt, or control.

If the author’s character was considered available and legible through his texts by
friendly or wayward readers in the antebellum period, how exactly did they define an “author”?
Basing their work on William Charvat’s studies of literary professionalism, critics such as J.
Gerald Kennedy, Leon Jackson, and Michael Newbury have marked the 1820s as the decade
in which professional authors began to be recognized as such in America. What Michel
Foucault termed the “author function” was at this time defined by a complex set of associations
between an author’s biography, literature, and visual appearance. Readings of any of these
aspects of the construction of the author could be conflated with the others: an author’s
biography could influence readings of their literature, and etc.

After the invention of photography, readings of the visual record increased in
importance in the public’s conception of an author. William Pannapacker summarizes the
effects of the combination of the historical prominence of the author with the invention of
photography:

The critical methods of biography, which formerly relied more exclusively on textual
evidence, began to direct more attention to records of physical evidence, to the body of
the author itself... This shift from engravings to photographs during the consolidation of
the author function had significant implications in the management of the public and
private spheres of author-reader relations as well. The use of photography resulted in
increasing public exposure of authors and diminishing control over their private
identities, particularly when infinitely reproducible (and surreptitiously taken)
photographs could be used as the basis for many new forms of scientific character
The already problematic endeavor of controlling one’s public reputation was exacerbated by the uncontrollable distribution of authors’ images. The importance of physiognomy and phrenology, each concerned with analyzing a person’s character based on their physical appearance, attests to the prevalence of the notion that photographs communicated essential personal information about their subjects. For the generation of authors that began writing before the photographic era, negotiating the new medium’s impact on their careers was a process fraught with complications. Hawthorne’s, Poe’s, and Melville’s respective reactions to this new form of publicity provide representative examples of the types of complications that had to be addressed.

The first chapter of this thesis investigates Hawthorne’s apprehensions toward daguerreotypy. It takes as an example the Whipple daguerreotype, taken around 1848, arguing that this photograph provides the impetus for the exploration of the public/private divide that makes up much of *The House of the Seven Gables*. Judge Pyncheon is read as a celebrity figure who struggles to control his public persona against the distribution of Holgrave’s daguerreotype of him. Upon his death, a second daguerreotype is made and distributed, rendering Pyncheon legible to the community and reversing the conditions of privacy and publicity that were in place for the majority of the novel. It is my contention that *Seven Gables* explores Hawthorne’s anxieties regarding literary celebrity and the difficulty in controlling a public image.

If Hawthorne was anxious regarding the implications of daguerreotypy for his public
representation, it could be said that Poe was in many ways his opposite. Chapter two focuses on Poe’s manipulations of his image in the second half of the 1840s. The “war of the literati” resulting from Poe’s “The Literati of New York City” series in *Godey’s Lady’s Book* was predicated largely on slanders between Poe and Hiram Fuller based on their respective physical appearances, and indicates Poe’s investment in controlling his visual representation among his audience. After the McKee daguerreotype of 1843, which is arguably a more realistic indexical representation of him, Poe’s daguerreotypes take on a strikingly similar appearance that Kevin Hayes argues is the author’s attempt at making himself into an icon. Expanding on this argument, I explore the audience reception of a later daguerreotype, the “Ultima Thule” of 1848. Conversations between biographers, critics, readers, and photograph collectors regarding this daguerreotype provide a real-world example of the lack of authorial control that results from the distribution of one’s image. After his death, Poe’s character was alternately maligned and defended based largely on the visual evidence of the photograph. This discussion is further complicated by the distribution of several apocryphal daguerreotypes that provide evidence for a circular relationship between Poe’s reputation and image-- Poe’s iconic look was either misattributed or co-opted to signal the Gothic or macabre work that he was best known for.

Melville, as opposed to Poe, apparently goes even further than Hawthorne in his suspicion of photography and provides an alternate reaction to the medium by flatly refusing to sit for a daguerreotype to be taken of him. His letter to Evert Duyckinck in which he refuses to have a daguerreotype taken and the later dramatization of this exchange in *Pierre, or the*
Ambiguities forms the basis of the third chapter. I argue that behind Melville’s simple refusal lies a complex stance on popular fiction that informs his writing of Pierre. Melville’s struggle with his own popularity, from his initial success with Typee to his turn toward philosophical fiction with Mardi, finds expression in the style of Pierre and its portrayal of the publishing world. What I term Melville’s “celebrity of absence” is not an attempt to shy away from the reading public, but rather a way to garner celebrity by becoming an exception to the increasingly popular and, in his view, de-individuating distribution of authors’ photographs.

The conditions of modern literary celebrity were created in a startlingly short amount of time in America. The advances in bookmaking technology, transportation, education, and access to books transformed the reading public from a relatively small elite to a mass audience in the span of a quarter century. With much of this audience being made up of “friendly” readers who assumed legibility from the author, the invention of photography posed a problem to antebellum authors that was new to history: how does one maintain privacy when a nation of readers presumes to know you?
Selling My Head to Some Photographer: Hawthorne, Celebrity, and Privacy

It’s turning writers into kind of penny-ante or cheap versions of celebrities. People aren’t usually coming out to hear you read, they’re coming out to see what you look like, and see whether your voice matches the voice that’s in their head when they read.
- David Foster Wallace

David Foster Wallace, in an interview for a German television station upon the release of the translation of *Infinite Jest* in 2003, describes the state of literary celebrity at the turn of the 21st century as one predicated on the public appearance of the author. Readers, in his experience, are more interested in the visual and oral aspects of the experience of going to a reading than they are in the text itself. The private reading of the text, however, necessarily precedes and informs readers’ experience of the event, as their motivation in attending is to “see if [the author’s] voice matches the voice in their head.” The present tense that Wallace uses here when referring to the audience’s tendency toward the visual (“It’s turning”) is an indication that this version of literary celebrity is a recent phenomenon, one that is still in the process of coming-into-being.

This visual and participatory nature of literary celebrity is often cast as a 20th century phenomenon that resulted from the invention of film and television. However, as many critics have noted, the types of reading and the visual technologies that catalyzed this mode of celebrity can be traced to changes in antebellum American culture.⁴ A prominent example, and

⁴ The most notable argument for the conception of this form of celebrity in the 20th century is Richard Schickel’s *Intimate Strangers: The Culture of Celebrity*. Those critics who place it in the 19th century include Michael Newbury in his *Figuring Authorship in Antebellum America*,
one that echoes Wallace’s concerns, is “The Complimentary Fruit and Flower Festival, Given to Authors, by the New York Publisher’s Association” that took place in 1855. Here, tickets were sold to the public for the privilege of seeing for themselves and hearing speeches from some of the most prominent authors of the period. The Festival traded on the popularity of lyceum speeches by authors, but divorced from such events their educational motivation, making a spectacle out of the mere presence of the authors that the Publisher’s Association could then profit from. This event “may have helped to reinforce and construct a new kind of conspicuously public space for the celebrity, one which caused some discomfort for many antebellum authors” (Newbury 80). In the first half of the 19th century in America, a combination of social and technological factors made the construction of celebrity Wallace describes possible—simultaneously reinforcing and constructing a mode of engagement with celebrity that persists into the 21st.

In this chapter, I will examine how the newly constituted form of celebrity in the 19th century “caused some discomfort” for one particular antebellum author: Nathaniel Hawthorne. I would like to suggest that the contemporary method of advertising authors’ works through their images after the development of daguerreotypy influenced his perception of his relationship to his audience and subsequently his writing. The House of the Seven Gables is symptomatic of Hawthorne’s concern over the issue of the destabilization of the public/private divide that photography represented for authors and their audiences. In Roland Barthes’

Thomas N. Baker in his Sentiment and Celebrity: Nathaniel Parker Willis and the Trials of Literary Fame, and David Haven Blake in his Walt Whitman and the Culture of American Celebrity.
formulation, this project is an attempt to “reconstitute the division of public and private... to utter interiority without yielding intimacy” (98, italics in original). The notoriously private Hawthorne confronts the reversal of the private into the public within the pages of Seven Gables. Judge Pyncheon, I will argue, acts as a celebrity figure that must negotiate his own form of authorial control over the circulation of his image, just as Hawthorne did at this time of flux in the popular notion of celebrity.

The invention and subsequent popularization of the daguerreotype in the decade leading up to the writing of Seven Gables was a major cause of this flux. As Susan Williams points out in her work with antebellum photography, “private forms of exchange were being replaced by an increasing commercialization of the image” in this period (Confounding 45). A complex network of individuals related to the publishing industry, including readers, photographers, publishers, and magazine editors made it increasingly difficult for authors to negotiate the market for their writing without also addressing their audience’s desire for their image. Although daguerreotypes were one-of-a-kind, they could be reproduced through wood or steel engravings that could then be fairly easily printed in magazines or sold singly through bookstores. And, as we will see below, the fact that these images were based on daguerreotypes, and were therefore considered accurate representations, made them of high interest to the readership of the time. Because of the high demand for celebrity portraits, daguerreotype galleries would make their reputation largely on which celebrities’ images they could obtain first. In addition to showing them in public galleries, they would sell engraved copies to customers and bookstores. Writers and publishers were often just as eager to create
daggerreotypes for distribution, as the circulation of one’s image served as an advertisement and as a sort of public canon formation.

Magazine editors, as well, took part in this system of exchange by commissioning daggerreotypes for inclusion in their publications, with a notable example being Edgar Allan Poe. In 1843, while planning his journal *The Stylus*, he wrote to James Russell Lowell with a request that he ask Hawthorne to sit for a daggerreotype: “You perceive I proceed upon the ground that you are intimate with Mr. H. and that making these inquiries would not subject you to trouble or inconvenience” (*Letters* 1:232). Daggerreotypes reproduced in magazines reached a far wider audience than those sold singly in studios or bookstores, and were therefore a troublesome proposition for authors like Hawthorne who were already tentative about the prospect of being photographed. The tact with which Poe addresses the issue (through a mutual friend who is “intimate” enough with Hawthorne to make the suggestion) attests to the suspicious outlook many authors had regarding the technology. The “increasingly complex array of print illustrations” being exchanged within the literary marketplace “pointed to the fragility of the fantasy of authorial control” (Williams, “Daggerreotyping” 18). This form of exchange became so widespread by 1863 that Hawthorne was able to ask his famous question to James T. Fields: “Don’t you think that I might sell my head to some photographer, who would be willing to return to me the value in small change--that is to say, in a dozen or two cards?” (*CE*: 18, 615). Hawthorne was aware of the economy of images in which his daggerreotypes would circulate, and painfully aware of the limited role that he had in it. An author could not control the creation, distribution, or reception of his image, upon the
manufacture of which it became entirely in the hands of a mass audience of distant and various readers.

These readers, despite their increased distance from the author, persisted in the mode of “friendly” reading that this exchange of images reified. If authors such as Hawthorne experienced the fragility of their fantasy of authorial control due to the distribution of their images, readers who sought out and collected those images only enhanced their fantasy of intimacy with the author. Friendly reading, combined with “what Karen Halttunen has described as the ‘sentimental typology of conduct’ in which ‘all aspects of manner and appearance were visible outward signs of inner moral qualities’” (Williams, *Confounding* 47), meant that readers that had access to an author’s image could more accurately “converse” with them through reading their texts. Perhaps the most famous example of this is Melville’s review of *Mosses from an Old Manse* for the *New York Literary World*. As Hochman notes, “Melville’s representation of reading Hawthorne suggests that, for Melville, to read a text was to proliferate questions about the writer’s ‘personal character’—his heart, soul, mind, physiognomy” (Hochman 16). Melville pays particular attention to Hawthorne’s physiognomy as he insists upon the description of him entering “a room in neglected attire, with the aspect of a thinker, but somewhat too rough-hewn and brawny for a scholar” (Melville qtd in Hochman 16). The context Melville presents here may be somewhat deceptive, as he is insisting on a purely imaginative portrait on his part, when he may have already met Hawthorne by the time he wrote this passage. Still, it is important for Melville that Hawthorne have “the aspect of a thinker” but be “too rough-hewn and brawny for a scholar,” both in his own imagination and
the imaginations of possible readers of the *Old Manse*.

A more private example of this type of imagining on the part of a “friendly” reader is from the Hawthornes’ friend Mary Abigail Dodge. She wrote to Sophia in 1863, remarking, “I find one thing that I am in possession of [is] a photograph of Mr. Hawthorne. Not any one of yours—nor any that... hang in the the shop windows—one that I took myself—or rather one that took itself” (qtd in Williams, “Daguerreotyping” 18). Dodge is describing the mental image of Hawthorne that she imagined upon reading him. For her, the very act of reading spontaneously leads to the conjuration of an image of the author-- it “takes itself” in the natural course of conversing with an author through his text. This letter, unlike Melville’s piece on Hawthorne, was not meant for publication. Dodge had no motive for publicity in imagining Hawthorne as she read; her description of her mental image is not meant to describe the man himself but rather her own reading practices.

While both Melville and Dodge had the good fortune of meeting Hawthorne in person before they imagined him during their respective readings of his work, most contemporary readers would not have had the chance to do so. One such reader, the writer and anti-slavery activist Charlotte Forten, describes her experience upon seeing two of Hawthorne’s daguerreotypes owned by his sister: “there is in his countenance no trace of that gloom which pervades some of his writings. I had pictured the author to myself as very dark and gloomy-looking. But I was agreeably disappointed” (qtd in Zboray 108). Here, Forten has decided for herself that Hawthorne is “very dark and gloomy-looking” based on her experience of his writing. Upon seeing his image, her impression of him is reversed, and
agreeably so. For readers without access to authors themselves, then, images of them became indicators of their temperaments that could then be read back into their work. Because of this, the accuracy of the image was important in the reading process. This accounts at least partially for the persistence of the efforts of magazine editors to obtain daguerreotypes to print alongside the works of their featured authors. Editors such as Poe believed that trustworthy reproductions of daguerreotypes were crucial in presenting the author to their audience in as meaningful a way as possible. And although The Stylus did not receive enough funding to reach print, Hawthorne did, hesitantly, oblige for other magazines.

The first daguerreotype of Hawthorne to be engraved and distributed widely, and the only one still surviving today, was made by John Adams Whipple. In commentaries for both the Literary World and Baillou’s, the accuracy of the engravings of this daguerreotype are their defining attribute. The Literary World called it “a more faithful and characteristic likeness than any hitherto issued, either in photograph or engraving” (qtd in Williams, “Daguerreotyping” 15). The commentator for Baillou’s not only remarks on its accuracy but on how the photograph is to be interpreted: “Nathaniel Hawthorne. --From a Daguerreotype by Whipple & Black. Mr. Barry has been successful in catching from the daguerreotype plate, the true

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5 The Whipple daguerreotype is listed in the Library of Congress as having come from the studio of Mathew Brady between 1845 and 1853, though as Rita K. Gollin notes, in both the Century and the Salem Proceedings its date is given as “about 1848” (27). There was a space of some seven years before it was printed, first in 1855 for Baillou’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion, and then in 1858 for the Illustrated London News. It was later published in the Literary World in 1883 and then the Century in 1886. For the complete history of the Whipple daguerreotype, see Gollin’s Portraits of Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Iconography.
character and expression of Mr. Hawthorne’s head. It is the face of a scholar, a man of thought and refinement, and a poet” (qtd in Gollin 27). It is important for the commentator to ensure the readers of the magazine that the engraving is from the daguerreotype, and that it is successful in capturing the “true character and expression” of Hawthorne. The description of “the face of a scholar, a man of thought and refinement, and a poet” mirrors Melville’s earlier description of him and once again emphasizes Hawthorne’s attributes as a writer.

Though these magazines were insistent on pointing out the realistic aspects of the Whipple daguerreotype, there is evidence that the Hawthornes themselves, and particularly Nathaniel, found the picture discomfiting. In all likelihood Hawthorne agreed to sit for the daguerreotype at the insistence of his publishers. The suggestion was first made in 1845 by Hawthorne’s friend John L. O’Sullivan in support of a possible political appointment from President Polk:

For the purpose of presenting you more advantageously, I have got Duyckinck to write an article about you in the April Democratic; and what is more, I want you to consent to sit for a daguerreotype, that I may take your head off in it... By manufacturing you thus into a Personage, I want to raise your mark higher in Polk’s appreciation. (qtd in Gollin 27)

O’Sullivan’s language here recalls Hawthorne’s later ironic quote regarding the commercialization of his image: his head will be taken off and traded; his person will be manufactured into a Personage. Barthes’ “explosion of the private into the public” is made manifestly physical. Ultimately, Duyckinck’s article did appear in the United States Magazine and Democratic Review, but without an engraving of Hawthorne. The tentativeness on Hawthorne’s part regarding publishing his image was apparently still very much in effect.
However, at least by the winter of 1850, Louise Hall Tharp notes that a daguerreotype had been made “probably at Fields’s expense” (qtd in Gollin 26). As there is no evidence of any other daguerreotype being made in the interim, the Whipple daguerreotype is most likely what Tharp is referring to. However, neither Nathaniel nor Sophia liked this daguerreotype and Sophia “would not let the daguerreotype be used for publicity and she rarely showed it to anyone” (Tharp qtd in Gollin 27). Instead, Sophia thought that the contemporary painting by Cephas Thompson, completed in 1850 and printed in 1851 in the Boston Museum, gave his “true likeness.”

What happened between 1848 and 1855 to convince the Hawthornes to print the Whipple daguerreotype is not known. However, it is notable that the Thompson and Whipple engravings, the first instances of Hawthorne’s image to be printed from painting and photography respectively, were both made during the time that Hawthorne was gaining prominence and literary fame directly before the writing of The House of the Seven Gables. It is here that Hawthorne is working out the problem of the public/private divide which has been noted by critics like Michael Gilmore with regard to the marketplace. I would like to expand on this discussion by suggesting that the function of daguerreotypy within the novel serves to negotiate the space of celebrity that Hawthorne was invested in at the time of its writing.

Though the Hawthornes felt that painted portraits reflected Nathaniel’s “true likeness” better than daguerreotypy, as I have shown above, readers were convinced that daguerreotypes were necessary to appropriately imagine the author in his writing. This notion has persisted even into recent Hawthorne criticism. Clark Davis remarks, concerning the Osgood portrait of 1840, that “to readers of Hawthorne’s fiction it can come to seem
inadequate, even deceptive... the blue eyes raise suspicions. What are they hiding? What are their secrets? We would not ask, of course, were it not for the fictions, the masks, were it not for the reluctant exposures, the shy man’s games” (Davis 1). For Davis, the painting is inadequate because of the experience of reading Hawthorne’s “fictions”-- Hawthorne must be hiding something as he sits for his portrait, as his writing seems to contradict such a complacent demeanor. In contrast, the Whipple daguerreotype provides a transparency that painting cannot: “No other picture so closely reflects the image of the fictional voice, of its style: meticulous, bourgeois, graceful yet malicious enough to look sharply, to hover between malice and an emerging, though ambiguous, smile. He is not so much ‘our Hawthorne’ as his own--nervously fashioned, publicly private” (Davis 4). Here, we get the fictional voice caught, as it were, unveiled. This is not “our Hawthorne,” but his own. However, this is precisely the concern that Hawthorne had at the time that the picture was made. Once distributed, this becomes “our Hawthorne” completely; no longer under Hawthorne’s control, it is open to interpretation by readers eager to consume authorial images. This represents the breakdown of the public/private divide that is at issue in The House of the Seven Gables.

In addressing the concern outlined above, Hawthorne uses Judge Pyncheon as a model for a celebrity who must maintain his authorial control against the circulation of his image within the novel.6 When Phoebe first sees Holgrave’s daguerreotype, she is not able to read it without

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6 Louise Hall Tharp has also compared the Whipple daguerreotype and Judge Pyncheon’s daguerreotype, though she stops the comparison at the similar physical descriptions of each. See Tharp, The Peabody Sisters of Salem p. 196.
reference to a form of portraiture already known to her and she misinterprets it as a copy of
the painting of the former Judge Pyncheon found in their parlor. Holgrave, however, corrects
her:

I can assure you that this is a modern face, and one which you will very probably meet. Now, the remarkable point is, that the original wears, to the world's eye,—and, for aught I know, to his most intimate friends,—an exceedingly pleasant countenance, indicative of benevolence, openness of heart, sunny good-humor, and other praiseworthy qualities of that cast. The sun, as you see, tells quite another story, and will not be coaxed out of it, after half a dozen patient attempts on my part. Here we have the man, sly, subtle, hard, imperious, and, withal, cold as ice. Look at that eye! Would you like to be at its mercy? At that mouth! Could it ever smile? And yet, if you could only see the benign smile of the original! It is so much the more unfortunate, as he is a public character of some eminence, and the likeness was intended to be engraved. (Seven Gables 85-86)

This description, of a “public character of some eminence, [of whom] the likeness was intended to be engraved,” cannot but suggest the Whipple daguerreotype at the time of Hawthorne’s writing. This is not to suggest that Hawthorne intended for Judge Pyncheon to act as an author-figure for himself, but rather that the Pyncheon daguerreotype opens up a space in the novel in which the Judge can act as a figure for the larger problem of literary celebrity as Hawthorne perceived it-- an attempt at authorial control that is constantly at odds with the distribution of one’s image. Judge Pyncheon, who attempts to control his public reputation in person, cannot mask his true character as it is presented by the daguerreotype.

Holgrave is most often regarded as the author-figure in Seven Gables, and for good reason: he published stories in both Graham’s Magazine and Godey’s Lady’s Book, just as Hawthorne did, and his “authorship” of the “Alice Pyncheon” chapter blurs the line between
himself and Hawthorne further. However, Holgrave is an idealized author-figure in that he has complete control over his audience. After completing his story, Phoebe is completely mesmerized to the point that Holgrave has time to contemplate his effect on her before awakening her. It is also notable that the story of Jaffrey Pyncheon’s death is “obtained by the daguerreotypist” from a “mesmerical seer” (Seven Gables 270), as this connection to daguerreotypy echoes the contemporary rhetoric of the process’s truth-telling potential and of its seemingly magical properties. As both a daguerreotypist and an author, Holgrave is an arbiter of truth who has the ability to control his public reception and therefore achieve autonomy in the community.

Judge Pyncheon, however, is the only character in the novel presented as being eminent in the community, and therefore is a more fitting figure for celebrity. If Holgrave is an ideal author-figure that can maintain authorial control, Judge Pyncheon is the site where the nature of literary fame is problematized. The problem of the accuracy of his public presentation becomes a primary focus. It was, presumably, the Judge’s concern that he would reveal his guilty conscience concerning his past that made him suppress the engraving of the daguerreotype. The daguerreotype, as external evidence of his private realm, makes public “an interiority which... is identified with... truth” (Barthes 98). However, he can still never fully represent himself to the public as he wishes to. It is through the failure of his self-conscious presentation that Phoebe is able to realize that he is the subject of Holgrave’s daguerreotype, “and that the hard, stern, relentless look, now on his face, was the same that the sun had so inflexibly persisted in bringing out” (Seven Gables 108). It is fitting, then, that Judge
Pyncheon, who himself circulates throughout the town, is deeply invested in the control over the daguerreotype that Holgrave created. He becomes inextricably linked to the daguerreotype and the problem of the control of one’s public image. Despite his attempts at figuring his own public presentation—his “authorial control” of his own story—his private self always threatens to come to the forefront.

While he was alive, Judge Pyncheon sought to include the rest of the Pyncheons in the authorial control of his own story—particularly, the death of his uncle. As the most prominent Pyncheon, his reputation inevitably colors that of the others, most notably Clifford’s. By seeking to keep his own past deeds private he makes Clifford unwillingly public—condemned to be known as a murderer. Similarly, his storing up of the inheritance that rightfully should have fallen to Clifford forces Hepzibah to open her cent shop, which operates as the most notable example of the incursion of the public into the private sphere in the novel.

It is only after Judge Pyncheon’s death that he becomes legible to everyone in the community. When Holgrave shows Phoebe the daguerreotype of the dead Judge, she has none of the problems of interpretation that she had for the previous picture: “‘This is death!’ shuddered Phoebe” (Seven Gables 263). The rhetoric that follows in the final chapter is representative of a common sentiment regarding death portraiture in the 19th century. “It is very singular how the fact of a man’s death often seems to give people a truer idea of his character, whether for good or evil, than they have ever possessed while he was living and acting among them. Death is so genuine a fact that it excludes falsehood, or betrays its emptiness” (Seven Gables 269-70). As Williams notes, “Daguerreotypes taken of the dead
were thought to be able to reveal whether the deceased had died with a guilty or innocent conscience; they were also able to reveal truths of character that underlay social masks” (Confounding 54). Therefore, the death of Judge Pyncheon acts as an agent of truth in the novel in much the same way as death portraiture was configured at the time. He was no longer able to wear his “social mask,” or to attempt to control his public self. Holgrave’s daguerreotype of the dead Judge then comes to figure in the novel as the counterpart to the suppressed one of the living Judge: the circulation of his private self that he previously sought to contain.

The consequences of the truth as revealed by Holgrave’s death portrait and his “mesmeric seer” make up a seemingly unrealistic ending: Holgrave and Phoebe get engaged, the Pyncheons receive a massive inheritance, Clifford regains his health and is able to regain (if he so chose) his public reputation. While this series of events is unrealistic, I argue that it is to be read as the symbolic reversal of the public/private dichotomy that Judge Pyncheon determined in the earlier sections of the novel to maintain. Now that the Judge, as celebrity, can be read legibly through his death portrait, all of the circumstances enacted by his authorial control are lost.

The end of the novel has long been regarded as a failure of intention on Hawthorne’s

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7 Walter Benn Michaels makes a similar comparison in The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism, University of California Press 1987: p. 99-100: “Holgrave’s job is thus made easier by the fact that the judge has stopped breathing, but the real point here is that the daguerreotype always sees through to the fixed truth behind the fluctuating movements of the ‘public character.’”
part. F.O. Matthiessen’s criticism was that “Hawthorne evidently overlooked his own warnings about the evils of inheritance,” (332) while William Charvat argued that “Hawthorne, in concluding his book as he did, was yielding to the world’s wish that in stories everything should turn out well” (qtd in Gilmore 172). More recently, Alan Trachtenberg has called it “the quick fix of a hastily arranged fairy-tale ending” (“Seeing and Believing” 463). Walter Benn Michaels, in his treatment of the ending, argues that Judge Pyncheon’s death frees the others from the “Past” and the “Novel,” “to spend their days within the stone-protected realm of ‘Romance’” (95-101). I would like to suggest, without disagreeing with the merits of the above assertions, that if the operative terms of engagement with the text are defined as “public” and “private” as Hawthorne outlines them regarding Judge Pyncheon’s function in the text as a celebrity, the ending of the novel can be read as a resolution of the tension in the novel between the public and private spheres.

Immediately after his death, in “Alice’s Posies,” the formerly permeable house was once again kept private; all previous intruders were repeatedly turned away at even their most persistent efforts. The inheritance, then, does not reflect a loss of the control of the plot, as Matthiessen suggests, but rather serves as the necessary circumstance under which the cent shop can be closed, privacy restored, and the publicity that the house was formerly open to stripped of its power. Likewise, the removal of the Pyncheons to their deceased relative’s house ensures that their privacy remain unobstructed. Holgrave’s desire that “the family might have altered the interior, to suit its own taste and convenience; while the exterior, through the lapse of years, might have been adding venerableness to permanence” (Seven Gables 274)
speaks to the desire for private expression without public intrusion. And finally, as Clifford’s health is regained, he is given the option of confronting the public in order to restore his good name, though he of course abstains, as he knows all too well that “What he needed was the love of a very few; not the admiration, or even the respect, of the unknown many” (Seven Gables 272).

If we read Judge Pyncheon as a figure of the indeterminacy of the role of the celebrity as an actor in the social sphere, The House of the Seven Gables is symptomatic of Hawthorne’s hesitancy in committing himself, or his image, to the public. The result is a loss of control of one’s privacy (the death portrait and its attendant legibility), as well as the loss of one’s authorial control (Judge Pyncheon’s story about Clifford and its ultimate loss of credibility). For the author that was concerned with keeping “the inmost Me behind its veil,” as he wrote his fiction, it is apparent that such concerns were at the forefront of Hawthorne’s work as he himself had to determine how to navigate a reading public increasingly insistent on reading for the author and seeking out images of authors.

The right to privacy is the thematic core of the novel. Milette Shamir reads The House of the Seven Gables as hinging on the distinction between the literary and the physical: “The contested plot at the center of the romance is, in that sense, not the physical but the literary one: Hawthorne asks who has the right to the private stories that haunt the gabled house’s interior, rather than simply who has the right to own the land on which the house was built” (149-150). Considering the role of daguerreotypy as one that is also predicated on this distinction lets us consider another question that Hawthorne asks: who has the right to private
images and the stories they tell, when they appear to be manifestly in the public domain? The Whipple daguerreotype, like Judge Pyncheon’s daguerreotype, exists in the fraught space between public and private, the tensions of which made it necessary for Hawthorne to question how far the right to privacy can be insisted on in the face of a popular audience that requires visual images of its authors.

It may be, as Charvat suggests, that the ending of *Seven Gables* is indicative of Hawthorne’s submission to the wishes of his expanded readership, but it can also be said that the function of the celebrity and his relation to the public/private divide in the novel is a commentary on the author’s place in the newly established “conspicuous public space” that he was working in. The Whipple daguerreotype is particularly redolent of such a concern, and its influence in the crafting of the novel provides possible insight into Hawthorne’s attitude toward himself as a celebrity.
A Europeanised Poe: The Author in the Reader’s Imagination

I love fame--I dote on it--I idolize it--I would drink to the very dregs the glorious intoxication. I would have incense ascend in my honour from every hill and hamlet, from every town and city on this earth. Fame! Glory!--they are life-giving breath, and living blood. No man lives, unless he is famous! How bitterly I belied my nature, and my aspirations, when I said I did not desire fame, and that I despised it.
- Edgar Allan Poe

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s ambivalence with regard to his celebrity leading up to the writing of *The House of the Seven Gables* can be seen in his early prefaces. Introducing the publication of *Twice-Told Tales*, he claims that the effect of their modest initial reception was “far better than fame,” (12) just as he desires in the preface to *The Scarlet Letter* to “keep the inmost Me behind its veil” (4). Even if these statements are read as self-consciously humble, it is clear that Edgar Allan Poe did not care to participate in any such misdirection regarding his own desire for fame. The above epigraph, from a conversation Poe had with his friend Mary Gove Nichols in 1846, makes obvious his intentions regarding his own place in the American literary scene. If Hawthorne was a hesitant participant in the nascent culture of literary celebrity in America, Poe took an active role in negotiating his own status as a celebrity. Just at the end of Hawthorne’s years as the “obscurest man of letters in America,” Poe was gaining renown for himself from the publication of “The Raven” and beginning to take practical steps in his search for fame.

As Leon Jackson notes, although Poe’s posthumous fame and canonicity have recently become topics of interest to scholars, Poe’s own opinion of his fame is often overlooked.

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8 Recorded in *Reminiscences of Edgar Poe*, Union Square Book Shop 1931: p. 11-12.
Jackson accordingly provides a sociological analysis that does much to explain the reasoning behind such ostentatious statements of Poe’s as is above. Drawing on the work of the sociologist Gerhard Lenski, he argues that Poe experienced “status incongruence,” or the state of having dramatically less prestige in one status regime (income, political power, education, etc.) than another. Being fostered but not adopted by the Allan family left Poe educated but poor, at the margins of the elite society in which he grew up and unable to return.

Literature, then, would provide Poe with an opportunity to reclaim his previous elite standing in at least one status regime. In this chapter, I will investigate Poe’s negotiations within the status regime of celebrity in the literary world as well as the consequences of these negotiations with regard to his reception among the contemporary readership. Poe’s career is marked by such negotiations in his roles as writer, reviewer, and editor for several literary magazines in the 1830s and 40s. His strategies to get his work published and distributed in each of these roles have been examined by a number of scholars. What have not been examined, however, are his strategies in the role of photographic subject, or author-as-image. Poe, as both writer and editor, understood the value of daguerreotypes for the publicity of an author, and beginning in the late 1840s manipulated his public image with this in mind. However, I argue that this attempt to transform his daguerreotypes into icons provides an

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9 For this analysis, as well as a more general overview of Poe’s views on the culture of celebrity as a whole, see Jackson’s “‘The Rage for Lions’: Edgar Allan Poe and the Culture of Celebrity,” from Poe and the Remapping of Antebellum Print Culture, Louisiana State UP 2012: p. 37-61.
10 Of particular note with regard to Poe’s strategies for distribution as self-promotion, see Meredith McGill’s American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853.
example of the ultimate impossibility for an author to assert control over the reception of his printed image. After a discussion of the ways in which Poe used physical descriptions of his contemporaries to comment on their character in “The Literati of New York,” I investigate Poe’s self-presentation in his daguerreotypes. By way of a case study, I examine the “Ultima Thule” daguerreotype of 1848, tracing its reception and eventual cooptation by his audience. The distribution of the “Ultima Thule” manifests Hawthorne’s concern regarding the loss of authorial control that results after the circulation of a daguerreotype among an audience of “friendly” readers and the subsequent creation of an image/reputation. For Poe, the result was a posthumous debate among his biographers regarding his true character which still influences his reputation among readers and critics today.

A large part of Poe’s professional life can be related through his participation in magazine and newspaper culture. From his first publication of “Manuscript Found in a Bottle” after its entry in the Baltimore Saturday Visiter’s literary competition in 1833 to the printing of “The Raven” in The Evening Mirror and the American Review in 1845, his career was largely predicated on the distribution networks that magazines and newspapers provided beginning in the 1820s. This was initially because such magazines and newspapers accepted unsolicited works and therefore provided amateurs such as Poe with a public outlet they may otherwise have lacked. However, these networks became increasingly important to his career considering his “uncanny understanding of the power of magazines and newspapers to create cultural icons” (Kennedy 13). Throughout his career, whether in the role of writer, editor, or prospective proprietor, Poe participated in the flurry of activity surrounding magazine culture
that promised to publicize and even canonize a fledgling generation of American writers.

Poe wished to position himself as the arbiter of this literary scene through editorships at magazines such as the *Southern Literary Messenger* and *Graham’s Magazine*. His “Autography” series, first for the *Literary Messenger* in 1836 and then for *Graham’s* in 1841, provides a telling example of Poe’s attempts to form an authoritative canon of contemporary American writers.\(^{11}\) In these series, Poe printed engravings of the autographs of prominent figures in the publishing world, including authors, editors, and publishers. In the 1841 edition, he claimed to have chosen the 127 printed autographs from hundreds that were sent in to him. He then included a chirographic analysis of each, which enabled him to remark on his selections with apparently scientific accuracy. In this way, he presented himself as a critical voice with the authority to select the literary figures of merit in the country while commenting on them with various amounts of respect or derision. He was able to publish his canon of writers while simultaneously currying favor with editors and publishers who could later purchase and print his own work. More importantly, the connection made between an author’s handwriting and their personality is evidence of Poe’s manipulation of the reading public’s interest in physical representations of literary figures—chirography, like phrenology and physiognomy, was another way of getting at the author.

Such strategies geared toward gaining critical prominence and presenting his version of

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\(^{11}\) For a more comprehensive analysis of Poe’s “Autography” series as well as descriptions of several other attempts on Poe’s part to define an American canon, see J. Gerald Kennedy’s “Inventing the Literati,” from *Poe and the Remapping of Antebellum Print Culture*, Louisiana State UP 2012: p. 13-36.
the contemporary canon were common in Poe’s career, and were very much calculated for fame. In May of 1846, while writing for *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, Poe introduced the series “The Literati of New York City,” the purpose of which was to present the private opinion of literary circles concerning the reputations of notable authors to the public audience of the magazine. In addition to manipulating public opinion, Poe meant to increase his own chances for celebrity: writing to George W. Eveleth, he commented that “The unexpected circulation of the series, also, suggested to me that I might make a hit and some profit, as well as proper fame, by extending the plan into that of *a book* on American Letters generally” (*Letters* 2:332, italics in original). His goal was to unveil the process by which “ephemeral ‘reputations’ are manufactured” (*Essays and Reviews* 1118) in popular magazines and represent instead a more accurate portrayal of the authors covered. However, he was of course participating in the very process of reputation-building that he professed to remedy.

“The Literati of New York City” is exemplary of Poe’s paradoxical role of “serious literary critic and scandalmongering literary libeler” (Evelev, “The Literary Profession” 159). Whether Poe praised his subjects or scandalized them, he included a physical description meant to lend validity to his treatment. Noting that he personally knew most of the authors he wrote about, he made sure to “avail [himself] of the acquaintance to convey, generally, some idea of the personal appearance of all who, in this regard, would be likely to interest the readers of the magazine” (*Essays and Reviews* 1121). His treatment of Hiram Fuller here sparked the “war of the literati.”

Responding to what he felt was an unfair profile by Poe,

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12 The details of the “war of the literati” are too extensive to enumerate here. For a full treatment, see Francis Dedmond, “‘The Cask of Amontillado’ and the War of the Literati,” 33
Fuller printed an attack in the *New York Mirror* that relied heavily on physical description to malign Poe’s reputation:

> His face is pale and rather thin; eyes gray, watery, and always dull; nose rather prominent, pointed and sharp; nostrils wide; hair thin and cropped short; mouth not very well chiselled, nor very sweet; his tongue shows itself unpleasantly when he speaks earnestly, and seems too large for his mouth; teeth indifferent; forehead rather broad, and in the region of ideality decidedly large, but low, and in that part where phrenology places conscientiousness and the group of moral sentiment it is quite flat; chin narrow and pointed, which gives his head, upon the whole, a balloonish appearance, which we may account for by his supposed light-headedness… (qtd in Dedmond 138-139)

Here, the conflation of physical appearance and character is made satirically, but Poe’s response to this attack illustrates how seriously he took the relationship between the two. In a letter to Joseph M. Field, the editor of the St. Louis *Reveille*, Poe asks him to correct Fuller’s description for his audience: “All that I venture to ask of you in the case of this attack, however, is to say a few words in condemnation of it, and to do away with the false impression of my personal appearance it *may* convey, in those parts of the country where I am not individually known” (*Letters* 2:319, italics in original). Aware of the impact that such a description of his person would have on his audience, especially in areas such as St. Louis where he is “not individually known,” Poe did the best that he could to defend his reputation against the implications of Fuller’s attack. This audience, stretching from the eastern seaboard to the far side of the Mississippi, created a public consensus regarding authorial reputations based on exactly such physical evidence, and these reputations, as Poe well knew, were manufactured through popular magazines like the *Mirror* and *Reveille*. Poe’s use of

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phrenological descriptions in “The Literati of New York City” and his defense against similar 
tactics used against him indicate that he was invested in manipulating his personal appearance 
to gain popular appeal. When he sat for daguerreotypes that would be distributed through such 
magazines, his appearance took on even greater significance.

Perhaps the most ambitious of his endeavors toward propagating his own American 
canon, and one that further illustrates the importance for Poe of physical appearance to the 
manipulation of public opinion, was his prospective literary magazine The Stylus. Though the 
magazine never received enough funding to be published, a prospectus printed in the 
Philadelphia Saturday Museum details Poe’s plans for the inclusion of engravings of 
daguerreotypes of prominent authors:

> An important feature of the work, and one which will be introduced in the opening 
> number, will be a series of Critical and Biographical Sketches of American Writers. 
> These sketches will be accompanied with full length and characteristic portraits; will 
> include every person of literary note in America; and will investigate carefully, and with 
> rigorous impartiality, the individual claims of each. (Essays and Reviews 1035)

This description combines the elements essential to the conception of an author in the 19th 
century: critical analysis of the author’s literature, information about their biography, and a 
“characteristic” visual image. This is another attempt at canon formation (“every person of 
literary note in America” would of course be chosen by Poe), but it also demonstrates Poe’s 
recognition of the importance of portraiture to the reception of an author. Therefore, it is 
important that the portraits be “full-length and characteristic,” so as to give as much information 
as possible to the reader concerning the author’s true character.

Considering Poe’s interest in phrenology, his interest in obtaining daguerreotypes of
other prominent authors, and his use of physical descriptions to manipulate his and his contemporaries’ public reputations, it is clear he was conscious of his own agency in the composition of the image when having his daguerreotype taken. Hayes, after tracing the evolution of Poe’s daguerreotypes from the first (the McKee daguerreotype, from 1843) to the last (the Trayler daguerreotype, from 1849), concludes that “his daguerreotypes have significantly influenced his biographers because he carefully shaped his photographic image in such a way that his posthumous biographers could not ignore it” (490). A modern audience would not recognize the McKee daguerreotype as Poe. He is seen looking slightly past the camera, his iconic moustache is replaced with prominent sideburns, his hair is neatly combed, and his face is full. Poe communicated his displeasure at the image immediately--after it was published, he sent a copy to F.W. Thomas with the note, “Herewith I forward a Saturday Museum containing a Biography and caricature, both of myself. I am ugly enough God knows, but not quite so bad as that” (qtd in Hayes 483). After the McKee, however, the daguerreotypes take on a uniform appearance: Poe looks directly at the camera, moustached, with his coat ruffled and unbuttoned. His hair is busily swept to one side, drawing attention to his prominent forehead (a sign of artistic inclination, according to phrenology). Benjamin MacFarland and Thomas Bennett have argued that this change is due to “aging effects,” but as Hayes points out, the difference in time between sittings--six years at the very most--makes this improbable (Hayes 486). Instead, he argues that “The McKee daguerreotype depicts Poe before he learned how to use the camera to his advantage. Once he learned to do so, he was able to fashion his image into something that was less characteristic of his actual appearance,
yet more indicative of his attempt to shape himself into a unique icon” (489). It is with these later daguerreotypes that Poe hoped to create his literary reputation.

Poe, then, is self-consciously manipulating his image, transforming his daguerreotypes from indexical representations of his actual appearance to iconic images that represent himself as he wishes to be seen. While this reading of Poe’s daguerreotypes does much to explain his strategies in creating a consistent public image, Hayes’ account of the reception of these images is problematic. He states that “The error of Poe’s biographers is that they have interpreted the iconic as indexical. They have looked at the carefully constructed images of Poe, and assumed that those images present copies of reality” (491). I would like to address this assertion by considering this tendency on the part of Poe’s biographers not as an “error” but simply as a continuation of the most prominent mode of reading photographs in the 1840s and 50s. The terms “iconic” and “indexical” are anachronistic when describing readers for whom daguerreotypes were defined as indexes of reality. Poe’s self-conscious representation was not mistakenly interpreted as indexical; rather, there was no language to describe it as anything but indexical.

Perhaps the most notable example of a contemporary self-fashioned literary celebrity, Walt Whitman took such self-conscious photographic representations the next logical step. However, as late as 1877, there is evidence that the popular conception of even the most blatantly manipulated photographs treated them as illustrative of documentary fact. The frontispiece to the 1889 edition of Leaves of Grass is a photograph of Whitman taken in 1877 that features him sitting in a wooden chair, with one hand in the pocket of a cardigan and the
other outstretched horizontal to his gaze, a butterfly perched on his index finger. A modern reading of this photograph renders it immediately suspect, and rightfully so--the butterfly was made of cardboard and tied to Whitman’s finger with twine. However, contemporary commentators were agitated at the possibility that the photograph may have been staged. The biographer William Roscoe Thayer commented, “How it happened that the butterfly should have been waiting in that studio on the chance that it might drop in to be photographed, or why Walt should be clad in a thick cardigan jacket on any day when butterflies would have been disporting themselves in the fields, I have never been able to explain. Was this one of the petty artifices by which Walt carried out his pose?” (qtd in Blake 3). Direct inquiries to Whitman would garner a publicity-savvy response: to one investigator, he answered, “Yes--that was an actual moth... The picture is substantially literal: we were good friends: I had quite the in-and-out of taming, or fraternizing with, some of the insects” (qtd in Blake 14-15). Over a quarter-century after Poe’s daguerreotypes were being taken, the most “carefully constructed” photographs were only tentatively being questioned as indexes of reality. A literal reading of the far subtler iconography found in Poe’s later daguerreotypes, then, cannot rightly be called an error.

It becomes more productive not simply to describe such readings as “errors,” but to treat them on their own terms and begin to map their ramifications on the reception and reputation of Poe. The conception of an author in the nineteenth century depended on a triangulation of their biographical, literary, and visual record. Nineteenth-century Poe biographers such as Eugene L. Didier, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Oliver Leigh, and his
fiancée Sarah Helen Whitman “saw their task as analyzing Poe’s ‘character’ rather than the value of his literary works. They regularly used Poe’s visual record in tandem with his writings” (Pannapacker 11). In biographies of Poe to come out in the latter half of the nineteenth century, claims are made that echo those found in the magazines featuring Hawthorne’s likeness in the same years: the biographers claim the daguerreotype displayed in their book is the most realistic and lifelike available likeness, and the implicit message of these claims is that the character of Poe is presented in the most accurate way for biographical purposes. In his own work on Poe from 1909, *The Poe Cult*, Didier remarks on this pattern: “Nine lives of Poe have been published, each of which contains a portrait, more or less different, but all claiming to be the ‘best’ likeness” (199-200). In this way, “the reciprocal relationship between image and text guided the construction of ‘Edgar Allan Poe’” as a public figure (Pannapacker 13).

Poe’s daguerreotypes became a scene of contention between those, like his early biographer Rufus Wilmot Griswold, who wished to depict him as a semi-mad, alcoholic degenerate, and those, like his ex-fiancée Sarah Helen Whitman, who wished to restore his reputation as a misunderstood poetic genius. The most famous of these daguerreotypes, and the most divisive, is the “Ultima Thule” daguerreotype from 1848. It is this photograph that most clearly illustrates the conflation between biography, literature, and visual appearance that

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13 For a complete history of the “Ultima Thule” daguerreotype, see Michael J. Deas’ *The Portraits and Daguerreotypes of Edgar Allan Poe*, University Press of Virginia 1988: p. 36-41.
defined the construction of an author figure in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Taken four days after a near-fatal overdose of laudanum and the morning after a drinking binge, it provided biographers who wished to read it as such with apparently decisive evidence that Poe was a writer whose vices could be read in his appearance as well as his works. Critics throughout the 20th century have pointed to this daguerreotype as one of the most influential in the posthumous construction of Poe’s reputation. As early as 1926, Hervey Allen stated that it was taken “probably at the very hour when he looked the worst that he ever looked in his life,” but it “has become the best known to the world” (2:782). Michael Deas has commented that “Likenesses such as the ‘Ultima Thule’ provided a kind of visual credence to Rufus Griswold’s defamatory description of Poe, and have been instrumental in shaping a popular image of the poet” (6). More recently, William Pannapacker has summarized its import:

By the early 1880s versions of the ‘Ultima Thule’ had been published frequently in books and periodicals, sometimes as the frontispiece for collections of Poe’s works, along with several articles and a prominent biography. Although the ‘Ultima Thule’ was not the only image of Poe in circulation, it seemed to replicate more closely than any other image the competing readings of Poe’s ‘character’: on one side, Griswold’s prosaic view of Poe as a literary hatchet man and rhymester ruined by moral weakness, on the other, Whitman’s poetic view of Poe as a romantic dreamer doomed by personal fortune. (11)

Using her personal contact with him as a source of authority, Whitman attempted to reclaim Poe’s reputation and recast him as a troubled poet beset by circumstance in her book, Edgar Poe and His Critics. Claiming that any photographic representation fell short of communicating Poe’s various moods, she criticizes almost every extant portrait of him. Of the
engraving found in Griswold’s *Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe*, she remarks that it is only “favorably noticed” by “writers personally unacquainted with Mr. Poe” (35). Of course, what Whitman elides is the fact that at the time of her writing, the vast majority of those who viewed any daguerreotype of him would be “personally unacquainted.” Daguerreotypes were the best source of visual information for readers of either his work or his biographies, and therefore they informed his audience’s reception to an extent that Whitman could not possibly influence. Whitman, of course, recognized this—-it is notable that she chose not to include a daguerreotype image of Poe in her own book about him.

Despite Poe’s manipulations of his image and Whitman’s defense of his character, then, the uncontrolled dissemination of daguerreotypes, and especially the “Ultima Thule,” still played a major role in the reception of his writings and the construction of him as an author. Phrenological analyses of such daguerreotypes played an important role in this construction. A notable analysis comes from the phrenologist John Moncure Daniel in 1850, shortly after Poe’s death. Daniel remarks that “the head, as a whole, was a decidedly bad one... It contained little moral sense and less reverence.” This analysis then becomes the basis of a reading of Poe’s works. He continues, “In Poe’s writings there is despair, hopelessness; and the echoes of a melancholy extremely touching to those who read with a remembrance of his broken life” (qtd in Pannapacker 21-22). Such a reading is exemplary of the conflation between image (through phrenology), writing (“despair, hopelessness”), and biography (his “broken life”) that

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14 Such phrenological analyses played a major role in work about Poe in the latter half of the nineteenth century: Pannapacker lists three from the *Phrenological Journal* alone, dating from 1850, 1893, and 1897.
made up the popular construction of the author function at the time.

Further complicating this construction is the fact that, after Poe’s reputation gained currency with the contemporary readership, his daguerreotypes were variously edited and manipulated to reflect it: the image that Poe participated in creating for himself was, after being received as an index, turned properly into an icon by artists and daguerreotypists who had never met him. The dissemination of these images, in turn, further propagated the cult of celebrity that had cast him as a doomed Gothic figure. The extent to which Poe’s image was co-opted by his audience to represent their imagined figuration of him can be seen by comparing his known images to Hawthorne’s. In Rita K. Gollin’s iconography of Hawthorne, there are only three apocryphal images of him, none of which are daguerreotypes. Deas’ iconography of Poe, however, lists no less than 42 drawings, paintings, engravings, and daguerreotypes of questionable provenance.\textsuperscript{15}

One of the most prominent daguerreotypists of the time, Mathew Brady, is guilty of claiming to have produced a retouched daguerreotype that was in fact a duplicate of the “Ultima Thule.” Brady likely never met Poe, but his claim that he produced an original daguerreotype of him gave Brady credibility both as a daguerreotypist and as a source for information about the author. What are more notable, however, are paintings that, while claiming the authority of having been produced from a daguerreotype, substantially change their sources to match the popular contemporary opinion of Poe. The “Davidson” portrait, based on

\textsuperscript{15} See \textit{The Portraits and Daguerreotypes of Edgar Allan Poe} p. 63-139.
the “Traylor” daguerreotype, reproduces the original image but includes a quill and a drapery behind Poe. Charles Hine’s portrait, based on the “Painter” daguerreotype, goes one step further in including a stack of books, a half-finished manuscript, and the bust of Pallas from “The Raven.” The French painter Nicolas-Francois Chiffliart created what Deas terms an “imaginary likeness” (102), entitled “A Europeanised Poe.” According to Susan Williams, this painting “effectively translated the high forehead and dark eyes emphasized by existing daguerreotypes in order to make him newly discernible for a European audience” (“Daguerreotyping” 19). In order to properly communicate the content of the French translation of Poe’s works to a new audience, the most characteristic elements of his daguerreotypes were exaggerated. Thus, to varying degrees, these apocryphal portraits complete a feedback loop of reception: daguerreotypes that were made to justify portrayals, like Griswold’s, of Poe as a vagrant, misanthropic Gothic character were then appropriated to help define the content of his works in posthumous releases.

Daguerreotypy and the machinations of celebrity with which it was associated presented for Poe an opportunity to instigate (but not control) a cult of celebrity around himself. The authority that the “true likeness” of daguerreotypes gave to biographers in substantiating claims about Poe and to readers in forming a popular opinion of him based on visual information far superseded the authority of Poe in manipulating the image. The popular conception of Poe that was created in the decades following his death is still the most prominent conception of him today: Poe’s political and professional role in the American Renaissance is overshadowed by the reputation for morbidity and vice that daguerreotypy,
with its peculiar resonances with phrenology and an audience of “friendly” readers, helped create. Recent work\textsuperscript{16} on Poe has striven to disassociate him from his reputation in order to more fully understand his importance to the history of antebellum American letters, but it is the persistence of this reputation that makes it exemplary of Hawthorne’s anxiety over the loss of authorial control and a productive catalyst to a more general understanding of theories of reception in the 19th century.

\textsuperscript{16} In particular \textit{Poe and the Remapping of Antebellum Print Culture}, cited above.
I Respectfully Decline Being Oblivionated: Melville and the Celebrity of Absence

I was in New York for four-and-twenty hours the other day, and saw a portrait of N. H. And I have seen and heard many flattering (in a publisher’s point of view) allusions to the “Seven Gables.” And I have seen “Tales,” and “A New Volume” announced, by N.H. So upon the whole, I say to myself, this N.H. is in the ascendant. My dear Sir, they begin to patronize. All Fame is patronage. Let me be infamous: there is no patronage in that.

- Herman Melville to Nathaniel Hawthorne, June 1851

The evidence we have regarding Herman Melville’s views on literary fame in the early 1850s suggests that he was of a characteristically double-minded attitude toward it. While he decried the pursuit of fame as “the most transparent of all vanities” (Correspondence 193) in the 1851 letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne quoted above, he was keenly aware of the need to attract a wide audience for his fiction. The resulting complications to Melville’s career have been long rehearsed in Melville criticism. After the initial successes of Typee and Omoo, he turned toward more serious fiction beginning with Mardi. The poor sales and negative reviews of his novels after this point caused Melville to become so frustrated with his audience that, by the time he wrote Pierre, he was actively antagonizing his readers.17 However, despite its prevalence, this account of Melville’s career problematically oversimplifies what was a complex attitude on Melville’s part regarding his contemporary readership. As James Machor

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17 This narrative of Melville’s career is well-established in the critical canon. James Machor lists more than a dozen critics who have subscribed to this reading in Reading Fiction in Antebellum America, The Johns Hopkins UP 2011: p. 139 n. 5.
argues, Melville “never acrimoniously abandoned the reading public during his fiction-writing career, nor did he even become exclusively—or even primarily—antagonistic toward his contemporary readers” (139). Rather, the movement of Melville’s career was defined by a set of deliberate adjustments to his content and style based on the tastes of his imagined audience. In the same letter to Hawthorne, Melville comments explicitly on the limitations he felt his audience imposed on him: “What I feel most moved to write, that is banned, -- it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the other way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches” (191). Melville struggled to balance his artistic inclinations with the expectations of a literary marketplace that he felt constrained by: a literary marketplace that made him famous not for philosophical fiction but for travel narratives that he had decidedly moved beyond. Yet, despite what he viewed as a negative influence on his fiction, he could never wholly commit to a writing style that did not cater in some way to his audience.

*Pierre, or the Ambiguities* is the most extreme case of the negotiation of the literary marketplace he was concerned with at this time. Writing to his British publisher Richard Bentley in April of the following year, Melville described *Pierre* as being “very much more calculated for popularity than anything you have yet published of mine--being a regular romance with a mysterious plot to it, & stirring passions at work” (226). This was after he was offered a substantially smaller contract for *Pierre* from his American publishers, the Harper brothers, than he had for his previous novels, and drastically changed the tone of the book by adding several chapters that comment negatively on the publishing industry. The final third of the novel strays from the sentimental style of the opening chapters and provides the most
straightforward elucidation on matters of literary celebrity that Melville published. Hershel Parker’s “Kraken Edition” of *Pierre* excises much of this section of the novel in order to present the book as Melville originally intended it. However, the novel as a whole—with both the original content and the later additions—must be considered as a discrete unit in order to present the most accurate portrayal of Melville’s strategies toward gaining a wider audience. Book XVII, “Young America in Literature,” which introduces Pierre’s authorship, should be read in relation to the earlier sections, as it comments on the matters of popularity and fame that influenced their composition.

“Young America in Literature” presents Pierre as a literary celebrity who must respond to the demands of an audience of “friendly” readers—readers who request autographs from the author of the popular poem “Tropical Summer,” invite him to speak at lyceums, and who all but demand he sit for a daguerreotype. The autobiographical resonances of this chapter make it “the most revelatory and most potentially misleading of all Melville’s works as a picture of Melville himself as a writer” (Yothers 3). As Perry Miller noted in 1956, the request of the editor of the “Captain Kidd Monthly” for Pierre to sit for a daguerreotype is taken from a correspondence between Melville and his editor Evert Duyckinck. Responding to Duyckinck in the midst of his composition of *Moby-Dick* in February of 1851, Melville refused to submit a daguerreotype to *Holden’s Dollar Magazine*, writing that “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; & beleeving that my illustrious name is famous throughout
the world -- I respectfully decline being oblivionated by a Daguerreotype [sic]”

(*Correspondence* 180).

Despite its ironic tone, this letter does not deny Melville’s interest in literary popularity, but rather explains his strategy in courting it. In view of this attitude toward daguerreotypy and its role in creating cults of celebrity, it is the intention of this chapter to treat “Young America in Literature,” in conjunction with the Hawthorne, Bentley, and Duyckinck letters, as the best evidence we have of an attempt on Melville’s part to attract the popular readership he lost after his turn toward philosophical novels with *Mardi.* By doing so, I make a tripartite intervention in the critical dialogue surrounding the composition of the book.

First, it has been suggested that Melville’s letter to Bentley was intentionally misleading in its description and that the tone of the novel is rightly read as a satiric take on the conventions of popular sentimental novels. This mode of reading relies on Melville’s dual conception of the contemporary readership, outlined in “Hawthorne and his Mosses,” as consisting of the “superficial skimmer of pages” and the “eagle-eyed reader.” I argue, following Machor, that “this version of Melville’s relationship with his audience is both jaundiced and oversimplified... Melville repeatedly sought to redefine for himself the nature and shape of the multiple audiences he projected, and he struggled to adjust his fictions to them” (139). Rather than relying on “eagle-eyed readers” to see past the sentimental veneer of the novel, Melville was negotiating the horizon of expectations of the contemporary readership, attempting to merge what he felt “most moved to write” with writing the “other way.” Melville, then, was earnest in his attempt to write a popular novel, as evidenced by his desire to publish *Pierre*
anonymously in England, explored below.

Another of Melville’s strategies in courting popularity that is detailed in the “Young America in Literature” chapter is his conception of photography’s influence on celebrity. His refusal to be photographed provides an alternative reaction to that of Hawthorne or Poe. What I term the “celebrity of absence” is Melville’s attempt to foster celebrity through exception. Theorizing that there is a threshold beyond which it becomes exceptional to not have your photograph published, Melville’s refusal to Duyckinck was not an attempt to distance himself from his audience, but rather to avoid participating a system of publicity that would ultimately limit that audience.

Finally, this reading shares with Hershel Parker’s compositional history the thesis that Melville, at the time of writing the main sections of the novel, was “confident (however wrongly) about the future success of the work in progress” (xl). However, Parker uses the succeeding change in tone of the last third of the novel to argue that the Pierre-as-author sections were “impulsively written and stuck into the manuscript at the likeliest spot [Melville] could find, [and] could only damage the coherent book he had written” (xxxviii-xxxix).

Parker’s compositional history of the novel is convincing and his “Kraken Edition” of the novel does much to add to our understanding of Melville’s original intention. However, impulsively written or no, the chapters in question provide a crucial source of information regarding Melville’s views on literary celebrity, and rather than damaging the final product, complicate Pierre in critically important ways.

If Melville is seemingly dismissive of literary fame, this attitude is in conflict with his own
actions in courting a popular readership. Although his reaction to Duyckinck’s request for a photograph was negative, the underlying motive was calculated not to resist an audience, but to cultivate one. Melville’s attitude regarding photography was, indeed, “presumptive evidence” that Pierre was “calculated for popularity.” Charlene Avallone has convincingly argued that Pierre was written for the audience of popular magazine fiction like that featured in Holden’s Dollar Magazine. Melville’s refusal to sit for a daguerreotype for Holden’s does not preclude the possibility that he wrote Pierre with the popular audience of such a magazine in mind.

Avallone enumerates a substantial list of thematic and stylistic aspects of the novel that were also prevalent in the fiction published in the magazine. The poor reception of Pierre is sometimes attributed to popular tastes that would balk at topics like irreligion and incest. This is certainly true of many of the published reviews of the novel. It was variously labeled with epithets like “An Unhealthy Mystic Romance,” “Inexcusable Insanity,” and “Hopelessly Frantic” in the press.18 Duyckinck, in his own review, called it “immoral” and “corrupt,” causing a fracture in their friendship that ended with Melville cancelling his subscription to the Literary World.

Considering these reviews as evidence that Melville was purposefully antagonizing his readership, or that common readers would be disturbed by his book’s content, however, is too much of an extrapolation. Holden’s, which we know that Melville read somewhat frequently,19

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18 Brian Higgins and Hershel Parker’s Critical Essays on Herman Melville’s Pierre; or, the Ambiguities includes more than two dozen reviews with similar titles.
19 For instance, Holden’s is where Melville first read Hawthorne’s “The Unpardonable Sin” in 1851. Merton Sealts, Jr. speculates that he likely subscribed to the magazine in the months leading up to the composition of Pierre in Melville’s Reading: A Checklist of Books Owned and Borrowed, University of Wisconsin Press 1948: p. 57.
often featured sensational tales filled with graphic violence, sexuality, and even incest. If, in the press, reviewers felt obligated to denounce such immoral content, the same tact was not expected of the writers and publishers at the magazines themselves. The popular taste, judging from the content of successful magazines rather than reviews, welcomed sensationalism. In *Pierre*, the link between magazines and popular reading is explicit. Pierre gains his notoriety “not in the imposing form of a book, but in the more modest and becoming way of occasional contributions to magazines” (281). Even if he declined to write for *Holden’s*, Melville likely looked to the magazine to gauge the popular tastes of the day for the “imposing” book that he was about to begin.

Despite its reception, then, Melville was hardly overstating the case when he told Bentley that his new book was “calculated for popularity.” Parker contends that “it is folly to look for ways of seeing the Pierre-as-author theme as unified with the rest of the book” (xlii). This is true in terms of the novel’s plot, but as an example of Melville’s evolving views on literary celebrity, the break in the novel at Book XVII is crucial to understanding the compositional history of the sections written previous to it. The scathing satire of the publishing industry is in response to the disappointment Melville encountered after what he thought was going to be a popularly successful novel was met with apprehension by the Harper brothers, and as such, remarks on his strategies for designing the initial sections for a popular audience.

The first notable similarity is in the Bentley letter, where Melville suggests to him that “on several accounts, (one of which is, the rapid succession in which my works have lately
been published) it might not prove unadvisable to publish this present book anonymously, or under an assumed name: "By a Vermonter" say" (Correspondence 227-228). Hershel Parker’s compositional history of Pierre puts the writing of “Young America in Literature” in the first half of January, 1852, a few months before this letter was written. However, its similarities to Pierre’s own consideration of publishing anonymously suggests that upon his disappointing contract in America, Melville began considering the advantages of publishing anonymously overseas with this novel, calculated for popularity as it was. Upon realizing he had acquired substantial literary fame with very few works, Pierre “regretted that he had not started his literary career under that mask. At present, it might be too late; already the whole universe knew him, and it was vain at this late day to attempt to hood himself” (Pierre 285-286). Melville, like Pierre, realized the constraint that his own celebrity put on the release of his work, not only because of the “rapid succession” of his publications, but because he was known primarily, as he lamented to Hawthorne, as the “man who lived among the cannibals” (Correspondence 193). A regular romance would not be expected, or desired, from the author of Typee whose more recent novels were already selling poorly.

The demands made of Pierre on the basis of his celebrity account for almost every conceivable desire an audience of “friendly” readers may have had. He refuses to autograph the absurd number of lady’s albums he receives, preferring instead to kiss lipographs and be done with all of them at once. He will not speak in public, as the crowds that would come to hear him speak would number in the hundreds and cause potential for a riot. His lack of a beard, which is necessary to the public’s idea of an “illustrious author” (289), prevents him
from having his portrait done in oil. And he has to physically free himself from the overzealous editor of the “Captain Kidd Monthly” who demands he sit for a daguerreotype. While the main object of satire in this section is obviously the publishing industry, each request made of him is based on the demand of an audience of “friendly” readers for images or physical keepsakes that will provide some account of the author’s personality, whether that account is chirographic, phrenological, or merely imaginary.

Pierre’s refusal of these demands is not due to a need for privacy, but due to his recognition of a public sphere that, by injudiciously manufacturing literary celebrities, places more importance on the proliferation of images than on the authors’ writing. The editor of the “Captain Kidd Monthly” demands Pierre’s daguerreotype on the grounds that it is “public property.” He continues to persuade by remarking, “my portrait is published—long ago published!” to which Pierre replies, “Can’t help that, sir” (290). Pierre then elucidates the implications of the preceding dialogue as to the decreased importance of photography to celebrity when private images are assumed to be public property:

he considered with what infinite readiness now, the most faithful portrait of any one could be taken by the Daguerreotype, whereas in former times a faithful portrait was only within the power of the moneyed, or mental aristocrats of the earth. How natural then the inference, 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. (291)

This passage mirrors Melville’s observation to Duyckinck that “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.” The
daguerreotype is here not at issue as an index of true character, but instead is only considered for the leveling effect it has after a majority of undeserving authors have their image published.

Susan Sontag has read this passage as indicative of a general anxiety regarding photographic portraiture in these years: “The fear that a subject’s uniqueness was leveled by being photographed was never so frequently expressed as in the 1850s, the years when portrait photography gave the first example of how cameras could create instant fashions and durable industries” (165). However, it is not the mere fact of being photographed that is at issue for Melville, but the dissemination of authorial images in popular magazines. While daguerreotypy democratized portraiture in that it made it affordable to the poor and middle classes, Melville’s concern is only with those daguerreotypes that were published in an attempt to garner celebrity. Kevin Hayes adds to Sontag’s binary opposition between painting and daguerreotypy a third tier, that of the engraving process that allowed daguerreotypes to be printed and disseminated. “With the easy publication and dissemination of portraiture” argues Hayes, “an author’s merit would soon be determined not by his work but by his face.” He continues:

The invention of the daguerreotype, combined with the possibilities it created for engraved portraiture, had initiated an era that continues today, when the visual image of a person often plays a significant part in determining popular and professional reputation... A fairly private man, Melville balked at the new demands the image-hungry public was starting to make. Though his integrity is admirable in retrospect, his reluctance to publicize himself greatly hindered the sale of his novels in his own time, and may have prevented many of the day’s readers from becoming interested in his work. (482)

Hayes is correct in considering engraving, in addition to daguerreotypy proper, as a factor for
Melville’s investment in celebrity. Daguerreotypy gave both common citizens and celebrities a fast, cheap way to obtain portraits, but only daguerreotypes of celebrities were then engraved and distributed. However, Hayes’ reading of Melville’s negotiation of the marketplace of images misjudges his interest in attracting a popular readership. If we are to read his letter to Bentley in conjunction with his letter to Duyckinck and its subsequent dramatization in the character of Pierre, Melville was by no means “reluctan[t] to publicize himself.” If he “balked at the new demands the image-hungry public was starting to make,” it was not out of a concern for privacy, as in the case of Hawthorne. Rather, he abstained from participating in a culture of image-based celebrity he saw as quickly losing its effectiveness through excessive proliferation.

Daguerreotypy, then, takes on the opposite role than it did in *The House of the Seven Gables*: whereas the “true character” that the daguerreotype reveals threatens to uncover Judge Pyncheon’s history, here the daguerreotype merely de-individualizes its subject. Instead, the chair-portrait of the senior Pierre Glendinning is the portrait that threatens to reveal his secret through its public circulation and attendant legibility through phrenology. In Melville’s domestic novel, the rural, aristocratic form of portraiture in oil painting is the means by which history is communicated; the urban, democratic form of portraiture in daguerreotypy erases the individuality that makes such communication possible.

Pierre’s constant refusal to provide tangible evidence of his person through autographs, public appearances, oil paintings, or daguerreotypes, along with his wish to publish anonymously, all have their analogs in the letters that Melville wrote to Hawthorne, Bentley and Duyckinck leading up to and directly after the writing of *Pierre*, and in fact can be considered
an outline of an approach to the “celebrity of absence.” The content of the novel, markedly
different from those directly preceding it, has been a particularly productive source of
conjecture for critics. By assuming that Melville was reluctant to publicize himself, a stylistic
strategy designed to court a popular audience is most easily read as a veiled antagonism to his
audience meant only to be discerned by “eagle-eyed readers.” However, if we consider this
approach not as a negative reaction to all publicity but as a way to avoid modes of publicity
that are overly associated with image and reputation, we can read the “Young America in
Literature” chapter as a necessary remark on Melville’s strategies toward a popular audience
in the preceding sections. Melville wants neither to be “oblivionated” by the daguerreotype or
pigeonholed as the famous author of *Typee*; rather, he wishes to absent himself and let his
books gain popularity of their own merit.
Conclusion

The rhetoric surrounding the daguerreotype in the two decades following its introduction to America treated it as an index of reality, a truth-telling device whose practice was revelatory and whose mechanisms were near-magical. In a letter to his wife in 1839, directly after the daguerreotype was announced in the press, Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote that he wished there were “something in the intellectual world analogous to the Daguerrotype [sic]... something which should print off our deepest and subtlest, and delicatest thoughts and feelings, as minutely and accurately as the above-mentioned instrument paints the various aspects of Nature” (CE, 15:384). Edgar Allan Poe, in a short article on the invention, wrote that “If we examine a work of ordinary art, by means of a powerful microscope, all traces of resemblance to nature will disappear--but the closest scrutiny of the photogenic drawing discloses only a more absolute truth, a more perfect identity of aspect with the thing represented” (qtd in Trachtenberg, Classic Essays 38). However, as the 19th century wore on, the role of photography in the popular imagination shifted; by the turn of the 20th century, photographs were read with greater skepticism. Advances in technology like the introduction of commercially available snapshot cameras in 1888 demystified the medium and allowed for greater critical distance. In 1899, M.A. DeWolfe Howe, in reviewing a compilation of authorial biographies titled American Bookmen that included profiles of both Hawthorne and Poe, wrote that “many of the portraits reproduced from antiquated daguerreotypes exhibit the

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stiffness and rigidity of that style of likeness” (44).

Still, immediately following its invention, daguerreotypy represented the best possible visual evidence for a community of readers deeply invested in the appearances of literary celebrities. In the years between 1839-1860, a readership expanding in both size and geographical distribution cut across regional literary boundaries previously restricted by the relatively small output of presses and a lack of transportation to outlying cities. This mass readership created the conditions for literary celebrity to emerge in America, and daguerreotypy largely mediated the resulting relationships between authors and their audiences. The resulting complications for antebellum authors have been traced in this thesis. In negotiating a literary marketplace dependent on readers interested in realistic visual reproductions, Hawthorne, Poe, and Herman Melville reacted with anxiety, manipulation, and reluctance. These reactions affected both how they wrote for their imagined audience and how their reputations have since been constructed.

In charting the effect of the daguerreotype on the careers of Hawthorne, Poe, and Melville, I intend to present a representative account of the ways in which a consideration of daguerreotypy can intervene in ongoing discussions of canonized authors. However, daguerreotypy was a prevalent influence on the public construction of authors that have more recently entered the critical discourse. The popularity and public reception of antebellum women writers such as E.D.E.N. Southworth, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mary Jane Holmes, Sara Parton, and Susan Warner has been extensively researched in Mary Kelley’s 1984 *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* and
in subsequent studies. Though each of these authors sat for a daguerreotype that was subsequently distributed in print, there has yet to be a dedicated study of their various responses to photography and its impact on their contemporary reception.

African American writers also manipulated or shied away from the camera in an attempt to control their reputation for personal and political reasons. Frederick Douglass’s manipulations of his photographic image have only recently come under critical scrutiny. As the historian Joshua Brown remarks, “Douglass carefully supervised the presentation of his own public face. For that crucial purpose, he turned to the photograph, beginning with the daguerreotype, as the only reliable medium that could capture the ‘true pictures’ necessary to challenge effectively the subversion of somatic racial signs... Yet the importance Douglass ascribed to the photographic portrait has been ignored by his biographers, not to mention by historians of abolitionism in general” (9). For literary scholars concerned with abolitionist writings and slave narratives, such self-conscious public representations can provide a valuable insight into the texts of writers such as Douglass and the political impact of their circulation.

Nathaniel Parker Willis, who until recently has only been mentioned “as a footnote to someone else’s story” (Baker 4), is one of the most prominent literary celebrities of the antebellum period. Thomas N. Baker’s investigation of his celebrity has done much to bring him back into the critical conversation. However, his daguerreotypes, many of them featuring unique compositions and striking poses, have also been critically neglected. A study of his attitudes toward his photographic representation would do much to enhance our understanding of antebellum celebrity and its role in the public sphere.
These are only a selection of the areas concerning celebrity in which daguerreotypy is under-discussed. Work with literary celebrities like David Haven Blake’s *Walt Whitman and the Culture of American Celebrity*, which treats of Whitman’s dedication to photography throughout his career, demonstrates the potential for such interventions in studies of the era. The necessary negotiation of the newly mediated author-reader relationship that daguerreotypy in part created had an impact on the writing of authors both famous and infamous, celebrated and maligned. This practice has shaped even the contemporary reputation of Hawthorne, Poe, and Melville, and an understanding of daguerreotypy as a mechanism of their critical reception is crucial to evaluating their position in literary history.
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