

Late in the 1856 presidential campaign, several Republican newspapers reported an endorsement more surprising in its details than in its occurrence. Like many other Northern literary figures, Nathaniel Parker Willis offered his support for the Republican standard-bearer, John Fremont. The public had grown used to writers long or recently identified with the antislavery movement—Lowell, Bryant, Read, Whittier, Stowe, Curtis—championing the new party. Willis, however, was mostly associated with religious poetry and with gossip about fashionable society at home and abroad. In keeping with this difference, Willis’s endorsement evades the central issue of the campaign: his letter is one of the few pieces of campaign literature not to refer explicitly to the slavery controversy at all. Instead, Willis zeroes in on a matter that while certainly not untouched in other panegyrics to Fremont is nowhere given such unadulterated emphasis: the candidate’s manners. In Willis’s letter, Fremont the hero gives way to Fremont the true gentleman. After a series of stock phrases derived from the cliché of steering the ship of state, Willis brings his description of the candidate to a close by crediting him with being “both fearlessly independent and modestly deferential.”¹

Willis’s somewhat idiosyncratic emphasis could be put down either to his own hobbyhorses or to his personal loyalties were it not for the significance of the year 1856 in his career. Having completed in that year the serialization of his first novel in the *Home Journal*, Willis was preparing for its publication in book form in late November, a couple of weeks after the election.² *Paul Fane* was thus conceived, written, serialized, and finally released in the pivotal years for the Republican party, 1854 to 1856, when its diagnosis of the nation’s problems became

the dominant view in the North. Like Willis's letter of endorsement, his novel makes no mention of slavery. And, indeed, what the new party needed from the literature of the period was not condemnations of the extension of slavery—most Northerners opposed such extension at least in principle—but a dramatization of the fate awaiting the North should it allow the voices that called for accommodating slavery once more to triumph. Republicans insisted that one more compromise with the Slave Power would represent a turning point for the North that had not just political but also cultural, and even personal, implications. It is therefore fitting that Willis's novel deals with the same issues evoked by his description of the paradoxically independent yet deferential Republican candidate. The concurrence of these two developments in Willis's career suggests that the novel casts the concerns of Republican discourse in the language of the society novel.

Another passage in Willis's letter offers a clue about which ideological strains of the period can mediate between Republicanism and *Paul Fane*. Here Willis explains his previous indifference to the republic's political contests:

I have hitherto (to account for my apparent want of patriotism) thought the country under a headway which made almost any steering safe enough. It seemed to me of very little consequence (to anybody but office-seekers) whether a Whig or a Democrat was at the helm—public opinion, besides, being too wide-awake, in so educated a country, for either a blunder or a sin of pilotage to be more than *approached*. So complete was this confidence in America's adolescent vigor and correctiveness of "constitution" that (would you believe it?) I never voted in my life.

This cheery confession takes on more sinister implications in light of the Republican challenge to American complacency about the nation's destiny. The North's faith that history would take care of itself exposed a tendency within the republican character to betray its principles, or at least to falter in their application, out of some deep-seated, and at times unrecognized, insecurity about its own validity. The fear of this weakness can be seen in the double-edged sword of Willis's phrase "adolescent vigor," implying as it does both limitless energy and unformed identity. And such a critique of America's immaturity had long contributed to an aspect of U.S. culture that Willis's novel explicitly taps: the relationship between a fledgling America and an

established Europe. The first step, then, in tracing the links between Willis's novel and the new party is to examine U.S. political and cultural discourse in the first half of the nineteenth century for how Europe had represented a paradoxically internal threat to American integrity. For *Paul Fane* marches into this rhetorical territory at the same moment that the new party Willis supported was remapping it.

The function of a partly mythical Europe in U.S. political discourse cannot, of course, be separated from alarm at the danger the development of aristocracy posed to the new nation. As various historians have examined in detail, the rhetoric of both the first (Federalist/Republican) and the second (Whig/Democratic) party systems at once fed upon and developed the American fear that a quasi-European aristocratic system was slowly creeping into and would finally overwhelm republicanism.³ This critique was not only socioeconomic and narrowly political; it also had a sociopsychological component. A republic with citizens holding the proper regard both for the specificity of their institutions and for the integrity of their own role within them could resist any onslaught from combinations of economic or political interests. At the root of any problem, then, were the residual forces within the people that could weaken that regard. This diagnosis came out in such places as James Fenimore Cooper's critique of the American leisure class for passively accepting from Europe inherently debasing aristocratic social standards.⁴ The fear was so deeply entrenched that its rhetoric could reenter the most mundane of political arguments; even practical opposition to political opponents could be transcoded into a warning against a long-standing and irrepressible American attraction to European systems. In one typical example, a Democratic editor in 1838, even in the context of an issue as dry as federal funding for internal improvements, adopted this familiar perspective to condemn the new Whig party as merely the latest expression of a long, sinister tradition: "Ever since the dawn of the Republic, we have had among us a party clinging with a fond tenacity to the gaudy splendours of monarchy; a party, fascinated with the glittering pomp of royalty, have with unceasing assiduity labored to introduce the unequal distinctions of royal power with its aristocratic trappings among us."⁵ This free exchange between narrowly political and more broadly cultural rhetoric illustrates how impossible it is to separate the two in Willis's own period. Built into the party system was the potential for representing the political structure of the nation as an

institutional expression of the dangers posed by conscious and unconscious longings for historical retrogression.

In this cultural and political context, Europe became not simply a model to be avoided but also an attraction to be resisted. Certain kinds of admiration for Europe signaled an internal weakness and insecurity that represented republicanism's greatest threat. With the stakes thus raised, one particular social type bore the burden of demonstrating that education needn't lapse into imitation: the American traveler in Europe. When the adventures of individual wealthy Americans in Europe came to be of interest to the culture, this small group, at least according to typical reports on the subject, failed the test miserably:

The reverence which these addle-pated travelers exhibit for rank; the sanctity with which they toady to My Lord This and My Lord That; and the absurd extravagance by which they seek to dazzle royalty and aristocracy into admiration of them, is a secret jest to the old world and an open disgrace to the new. It is a common saying in Europe, that the Americans worship titles more than any people on the globe. Thus the despicable servility of the few becomes the cause of a foul misrepresentation of the many; and the proud freemen of the United States, who recognize no man as their superior, are jeered at, in consequence, as sycophants to rank.⁶

Here is described the deadliest threat to the deep independence Americans were called on to assert: a kind of residual superstition in connection with the very class whose absence most Americans invoked to define their nation, and a kind of practical reverence that led to fawning efforts to receive personal sanction from that class. As long as that class is given unquestionably the right to judgment and reward for the cultured American, a democratic sense of self cannot reflect back to itself the kind of recognition needed to establish it permanently. In the process, Americans become, in Margaret Fuller's phrase, "willing serfs."⁷ This cultural critique, with its jointly playful and prophetic tone, became entirely serious when it reentered the political realm under new circumstances, as "the proud freemen of the United States" faced a more dangerous foe within their own borders.

The American cultural anxiety in relationship to Europe, although distinct from it, has strong affiliations with the Northern insecurity about its position in relation to the slaveholding class; indeed, those affiliations are the key to placing *Paul Fane* in a Republican context,

and so must be considered in detail. Critics of slavery in America had, of course, long identified the institution as a European transplant. By the mid-nineteenth century, this association of slavery with Europe began to rest more and more on the designation of slaveholders as, in Henry Ward Beecher's words, "differ[ing] in nothing from outright European Aristocracy."⁸ By drawing this parallel, Republicans challenged the North to recognize historical patterns of republican decline in what might otherwise seem a situation peculiar to the New World. Thus, even when party advocates emphasized differences between the two classes, the ultimate purpose was to reinforce the sense that the underlying parallel was producing a nightmarish system in which America contributed a new kind of decadence to traditional instruments of power and privilege, guaranteeing that republican forms would be put to the ultimate purpose of outdoing European modes of despotism.⁹

Political antislavery figures were less interested in plumbing the master-slave relationship for its aristocratic underpinnings than in extending a reading of that socioeconomic hierarchy, by analogy, to the relationship between slaveholders and Northern freemen. Because they are "absolute lords" on the plantation, the slaveholders wish to be lords over the nation and over the North.¹⁰ To strengthen the analogy, Republicans directly borrowed the rhetoric by which European aristocratic attitudes toward America had been condemned to describe the internal American relationship. Descriptions of "the proud, the haughty, the insolent" Europeans became overnight (for those not long affiliated with the political antislavery movement) part of the rhetoric of resistance to the Slave Power, as if to drive home at the level of language the deeper parallel.¹¹ In this rhetorical context, the slaveholders' haughtiness could be seen as descending from English aristocratic ancestors: "[Slaveholders] have inherited the lofty bearing, the imposing self-importance, the pleasing courtly manners of that class of men."¹² This emphasis on manners when so much more weighty issues were at stake exposes the cultural anxiety that at once underlay Republicanism and gave it a convenient strategy for appealing to the pride of the North. Since manners cement consensual relations of power between two parties, however, this emphasis also indicates that the ultimate purpose of the representations of the slaveholding class as aristocratic was to point to a vulnerable point in the typical Northerner.

When Republicans looked for the deepest explanation of the Slave Power's accumulating victories, they turned not so much to the encroachments of aristocracy as to the Northern failure to prevent them. That analysis had several components, but one related directly to the long-standing critique of American truckling, taking the political subserviency to slavery as a natural outgrowth of a social subserviency that betrays the same deep republican insecurity cultural critics saw in the stance of Americans toward Europe. This link certainly did not begin with the Republican party; long before that party formed, it had contributed to the critique of the relations between North and South. Antislavery figures such as Cassius Clay had often condemned "the cold, snake-like fawning upon aristocracy" that allowed for Northern conciliation of the slaveholders.¹³ At the root of this fawning was often found a deep-seated "propensity" for "aristocratic distinction" that had given the North's elites a "reverence for the lordly slavemaster" that "does violence" to republican principles and inevitably encourages aristocratic "arrogance."¹⁴ The line, then, is direct between secretly, or even unconsciously, favoring the hierarchical standards of aristocracy and bringing on the Slave Power's aggressions. A true republicanism was defeated in advance, before the South was emboldened, by the secret longing of the North.

Under the pressure of events as the decade progressed, the parallels between political compliance and deference based on a residual sense of inferiority tended to become more precise. On his way to embracing Republicanism, for instance, George Templeton Strong responded to the caning of Republican senator Charles Sumner by the Southern congressman Preston Brooks with a play on words emphasizing the different kinds of power the aristocrat wields: "A rich Southern aristocrat . . . strikes us (not as Brooks struck Sumner but) as something different from ourselves, more ornamental, and in some respects better."¹⁵ The pun on "strikes us" underlines the affinity between overt aristocratic brutality and more insidiously disabling aristocratic superiority. Violence is merely the natural corollary to a more fundamental mastery derived from a class position. This link helps to explain the astonishing number of Republican responses to the violence against Sumner that placed the ultimate blame for the outrage on that acceptance of aristocratic hospitality that had led Northerners to "forget their principles and lose themselves."¹⁶ If Northerners lose themselves figuratively, they also, according to Strong, do so quite lit-

erally as aristocratic seduction negates their republican identity. Violence is the legitimate fruit of any departure from this self-abasement. The popular literature of the Republican campaign played on this representation of the North as the nexus between slaveholders' polish and the slave interest's violence, discovering a natural instinct to admire and thus grovel behind even the most brutal of the concessions to the South, the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law:

We have cried "Union!" and made haste to catch their fleeing
slaves;
Have sent them chained and shackled back; back to find bloody
graves;
And low before the "Cotton King" have bent a supple knee,
And bowed before them, and admired their pluck and chivalry.¹⁷

Here the involuntary lowering of the fugitive into slavery and then into death parallels the voluntary abasement of the Northerner whose admiration breeds compliance and self-degradation. Whereas the fugitives have resisted the fate that overtakes them, their kidnapers have been defeated in advance by the instinct to defer. The Northern landscape, turned into a venue for slave catching, has been prepared for this desecration by the earth-crouching Northerner; geopolitical encroachment merely expresses an internal weakness.

A prominent Republican and another literary figure, Richard Henry Dana, wove the strands of this critique into the realm of existence most important to Willis's novel: social life. To Dana, political deference grows out of the dynamics of that world:

[The Southern aristocracy] is powerful in the ordinary elements of power which oligarchies possess. The aristocratic training gives great personal elements of control, the bearing, the habit of command, the assertion of superiority. To weak minds there is a fascination in aristocracy. In social life this is especially felt, at Washington, in the society of our citizens. Every man who feels doubtful of his own gentility, bows to the established aristocracy of slavery.¹⁸

Although related to the boilerplate condemnations of Northern servility that one finds in the majority of Republican sources, Dana's analysis looks behind such servility, which was propelling history backward, to discover a sociological, even an individual, sense of inferiority that cannot be simply overcome or superseded by either

context-driven defiance or a vague faith in progress. The doubt of his own gentility is at the root of the Northerner's compliance. Moreover, Dana sees nothing specific in the Southern power to overawe, considering it merely the "ordinary element of power" possessed by all oligarchies, and "oligarchies have governed the world. All Europe is governed by oligarchies." Dana's tone here, suggesting the retelling of a tiresomely old story ("Nothing new is under the sun"), reflects the pessimistic side of Republican rhetoric, the side that saw the people reverting to old patterns built into human nature and thereby dooming the republican project—hence the importance of the European model he invokes. Dana's historical parallel helps one to feel the political charge of Willis's novel, whose plot revolves around the attempt of the titular character to unearth the secrets of that aristocratic superiority and find his true position in relationship to it. Willis's novel taps the Republican fear that Northerners, both as individuals and as a class, depended on an internal aristocratic sanction in a way that made collective resistance to the slaveocracy's imperial ambitions unlikely.

Willis praised Fremont as "fiercely independent and modestly deferential," but he starts his fictional hero off without any sense of the need for such qualities or even of what such qualities could mean in the context of his natural, and naturally recognized, superiority in America. Paul simply assumes that both the inner- and outer-directed social qualities he possesses in abundance mark him to all of humanity as distinguished. That is, Paul does not begin the narrative so much affirming republican principles as taking for granted that those principles fairly express the common standard of the world, and that his own place in such a world is therefore secure. In this way, the typical innocence of a *bildungsroman's* hero, when starting out, gives a narrative energy to the novel's ideological concerns.

The construct from which Paul's naive views spring is that of nature's nobleman, as Christof Wegelin, the only critic to have examined the novel in detail, has explained.¹⁹ This Jeffersonian formula reconciled political opposition to artificial hierarchies with the belief in some innate superiority among political equals. Invoking this reasonably unthreatening construct became common at most levels of the culture by the time Willis wrote his novel. Indeed, it informs Willis's description of the independent but modest Fremont.²⁰ Although this tradition was by no means restricted to this group, antislavery activists took particular advantage of it, both to strengthen the condem-

nation of the falsely aristocratic slaveowner and to defend the North against the common charge of being merely moneygrubbing and vulgarly democratic. Henry Ward Beecher and Theodore Parker are two examples. In Beecher's words, "Artificial aristocracy stands looking down upon the mass of men. . . . Natural aristocracy is the eminence of men over their fellows, in real mind and soul."²¹ Paul has embraced this view instinctively by the time the novel opens, and the equally instinctive challenge to it pulls him up short and propels him on his journey to Europe.

For the parallel to the Republican vision of the North's development to do its work, Paul's initial disillusionment must only strengthen the bonds of mystification. Paul's shock, therefore, does not dislodge the construct of nature's aristocracy from his belief system. The event that fuels the entire narrative leads Paul not to recognize how irrelevant the construct is in older societies but, rather, to discover a new means by which to determine his own standing in relationship to others. The snub he receives from a visiting Englishwoman, Mildred Ashly, represents an opportunity as much as a blow to his pride:

[T]hat cold gray eye had passed over his face *with no recognition of him as an equal*. It was the first human look . . . in which that indefinable acknowledgment—that vague something as habitually expected as heat with sunshine, and as unthought of separately till held back—had been ever wanting. . . . Was he of coarser clay than some other human beings? Were there classes on this planet between whom and himself, by better blood or by long-accumulating culture and refinements, there had gradually widened a chasm, now, even by instinct impassable? . . . It was by these questions that he felt he was now possessed. The thirst to know his relative rank of nature—to gauge his comparative human claim to respect and affection—to measure himself by his own jealous standard, with those whom he should find first in the world's most established appreciation—was now like a fever in his blood. (19–20)

Neither Paul's disillusionment nor the intensity of his established quest diminishes his naïveté. Europe's class system, in this passage, is reduced to a mere testing ground and to a convenient source of evaluation from those capable of showing him his true place within the natural order of things. Indeed, at every level he assumes that the response to him, unjust as it seems and different as he hopes it will

eventually prove to be, derives from nature, though a nature bound up (as the recurring phrase “coarser clay” reveals) with culture and with art: the recognition in America he had taken to be as inevitable as heat with sun; the acquired authority of aristocrats he attributes to, if not “blood,” then naturally accumulated culture; his mission to place himself is like a fever; and his goal itself is almost zoological, seeking his own “rank of nature.” Paul begins his quest in Europe applying the terms of “nature’s aristocracy” to a system in which they explain little. The narrative of his years in Europe works out the logical implications of this mistake.

The belief that some will rise simply by force of nature in an organically evolving republic cannot be separated from what Republicans considered the North’s blind faith in a history unfolding spontaneously according to republican standards, a history in which active resistance to the forces undermining republicanism could be avoided. Paul’s holding fast to the ideal that the very impetus of his trip had thrown into doubt implies just such a blind faith expressed in a refusal to take into account the full implications of Mildred Ashly’s judgment. Once he is settled in Florence, socializing mostly with the English, a conversation Paul has with his friends reveals how he, even as he seeks a foreign standard, carries the American standard with him into Europe. This scene involves one of those friendly sociological debates that are so common in nineteenth-century U.S. society novels; in this case, Paul is shedding light for his friends on social aristocracy in America. While dispelling many illusions his friends have on the matter, Paul eventually settles on the proposition that in America “the rise or fall of social consequence has a certain naturalness of play” because there are no “definite or arbitrary crusts of gentility.” This “naturalness of play” (63) then gravitates toward “Nature’s mark,” that is, the physical signs of superiority that distinguish those individuals with the requisite gentility to benefit from that advantage. Paul no sooner makes this formulation than he finds the most perfect expression of it in the world before him. He proclaims not so much in flattery as in awe that the standard in America is “just what I have the happiness to see before me—Nature’s mark and mould of superiority” (64). The object of his tribute is the Palefords, the genteel family living in reduced circumstances whose undiminished worth expresses itself in their daughter Sibyl, eventually Paul’s ambiguous love interest. The Palefords’ “natural air of superiority” would seem to chart a simple course

for Paul. Having found the source of the American ideal fueling the natural perpetuation of aristocracy in Europe, Paul can turn to their willingness to meet him as an equal for the sanction he needs to nullify the slight from that other Englishwoman, Mildred Ashly. That such a simple solution is inadequate to the complexities of European aristocracy comes out at this stage not in any conscious reflections from Paul but in the reemergence of what the narrative begins to present more and more as a Gothic secret “re-haunt[ing]” Paul and preventing his social advancement: “the deeply-buried curiosity” to know the significance of Mildred Ashly’s slight and the resultant failure of his success with the Palefords to let him forget the initial spur to his quest: “How was Miss Ashly not forgotten?” (171). Paul himself does not know the answer to this question, but its persistence rules out the evasion of his quest in simply winning the favor of Europe’s natural aristocracy.

This quest is at once independent from any other goals and bound up closely with Paul’s two other tests: of love and art. Paul comes to Europe intending to train himself as a painter and finds himself involved in various romantic entanglements. He becomes increasingly frustrated as the “haunting specter” of his deepest need threatens to become entangled with these two other pursuits (190). Since his point of view governs throughout, the result is a narrative alienated from itself, in which the progress of events is experienced by its hero almost as a distraction. A conflict develops between the unfolding of the plot—which seems perfectly designed to lead to the kind of revelation of Paul’s aristocratic nature worthy of a pastoral romance—and the consistent pressure of Paul’s “life-sting to his pride” (370), which keeps him unsatisfied with and detached from the various pragmatic victories that seem to fall into his lap.

The true engine of the narrative is Paul’s unsuccessful attempts to retreat from his growing involvement in the life of English visitors to Florence in order to disentangle the question he brought with him to Europe from any narrative complications. This dynamic expresses itself most vividly when he first meets the brother of the Englishwoman who had snubbed him in America, Arthur Ashly. By coincidence, that man’s impression of Paul had been poisoned by a baronet who holds a grudge against the American and whose incivility leads Paul to challenge him to a duel. So irrelevant are such developments to Paul in his quest that his consciousness scarcely records the subsequent events, including the challenge, that remove this impediment.

All that matters to Paul is that Arthur have a chance to judge him with uncontaminated eyes. To answer to Paul's obsessive need, this judgment must be "wholly uninfluenced and instinctive" (179); it must, as Paul explains to his friend Tetherly, be unrelated to any "trial of comparative strength" or question of rank (181). Here again are the symptoms of Paul's tendency early on to apply the American standard of nature's nobility to his goal in Europe.

Although the recognition he seeks must be based on a collective class standard, he wishes to somehow dislodge it from that unavoidable context and discover his "natural texture" based only on the "fair natural impression" of the man he has more or less conceded to be an authority and hence a superior (182, 180). The history that has produced Ashly's power of the eye must in the process disappear like the residue of a chemical reaction. Paul's naïveté on this score anticipates his ultimate failure to separate the tests of love and art from his deeper "monomania" (180). The decontextualized judgment Paul seeks is unavailable in a Europe that first will call upon his own participation as lover and artist to reveal its true secrets.

If the novel indeed explores indirectly the internal American relationship between slaveholders and the North, then art is perhaps the central mediating term between Paul's experience and the North's enthrallment. That is because art had long been seen in America as an expression of an aristocracy's productive capacity, its ability to turn its own usurped power into a cultural expression that both contributes to other classes and solidifies those classes' acquiescence in their unnecessary subordination. Thanks to this association, a leading Republican, David Wilmot, could ironically express his preference for a genuine European aristocracy over the slaveocracy, which produces its power in a pure, and ugly, form: "For his part, if he had . . . to be oppressed, let it be by an Aristocracy dating back for thousands of years . . . one that, though it oppressed him, was liberal in its patronage of arts, that embodied the beautiful and sublime, and called forth from the land of genius impersonations of the perfect and the beautiful."²² Wilmot's point is clear: the North has chosen debasement without any of these cultural benefits, and without the antecedents that would make that debasement just one more, perhaps necessary, fruit of historical reproduction. There is all the more reason, then, to find the origins of a relatively spontaneous, ahistorical version of this same dynamic of subordination in America. Willis's novel does its part by

emphasizing not the slaveholding aristocracy itself, or even a genuine European aristocracy (the Ashlys, though they have an ancient name, are not technically noble), but the processes that implicate cultural participation in self-abasement. The role of Paul's art in this process by the end becomes clear to Paul himself and is the trigger for his eventual disillusionment. Before it becomes the door blocking his way, however, art promises to be his key into the shrine of exclusivity. Paul, therefore, must begin by searching for an aristocratic model in which art stands alone and uncontaminated by the spell cast over him. Like Wilmot, he holds out the ideal of an aristocracy that gives as much as it takes, and his experience does not disappoint him.

In fact, that ideal whereby art can retain its value despite its complicity in class superiority converges with a model for the disentangling of both aristocracy and art from their contaminating contexts; it is a model, however, that remains visible but frustratingly unavailable to Paul. As the model of natural superiority centers on Sibyl Paleford, this new countermodel emerges from a single character, the princess who befriends Paul as a fellow artist. The novel deceptively introduces Princess C — as a potential melodramatic villain, an aristocratic temptress threatening Paul's success with the virtuous Palefords, as when she drags Paul away from Sibyl with the "quiet authority of one accustomed to have her way" (92). The princess's unmasking as an artist coincides with the narrative revelation that she is the most disinterested character to deal with Paul, the one who wants only to bring him into the palace of art. And certainly such a retreat would seem to be a way for Paul to displace his obsession with "Nature's finest and purest clay" (87) into a realm in which he becomes an agent, not just the object of others' judgment. Indeed, the scene in which Paul drinks in the living image of Sibyl suggests that through his active and creative looking he could turn his otherwise paralyzing obsession to good account: "a morbid secret of his own heart gave him the key to read, in all its force and meaning, that poem of breathing beauty" (88). The channeling of his deepest quest into the realm of art would represent a movement inward and a translation of secret knowledge into occult performance. In this capacity, it stands opposed to Paul's very public, almost communal, appreciation of Sibyl that the Palefords, in the scene of Sibyl's social display, mistake as the betrayal of a passion for their daughter, a passion that could well culminate in an entirely pragmatic tribute to Paul's innate qualities, that is, acceptance of him as Sibyl's

suitor. That the princess sees this complication as a threat to Paul's artistic mission is hinted when she playfully, but intrusively, asks, "Does Mr. Fane ever expect to get his eyes back from that charming vision?" (92), thereby breaking the network of looks that was binding Paul to Sibyl and her father in a pivotal moment of communication among the three. In breaking this spell, the princess anticipates her introduction of Paul into her studio, where she can offer him a path both to the shedding of these complications and, perhaps, a liberation from the need to depend upon the eyes of others.

Art is only the means by which Princess C—— expresses something more immediately relevant to Paul's frenzied quest: an aristocratic independence that promises not only to liberate its owner from the bonds of affection but also to release him or her from the pride that makes the judgment of others a constant threat and an unsatisfiable need. The princess explicitly presents her views as antirepublican, and they indeed seem to emphasize the most rigorous feature of aristocracy, the "argument for exclusiveness": "I insist . . . that the profaning many are to be fled from" (142–43). Despite this restriction, her views deny other divisions between unities—between the genders, between principle and performance, and, most important for Paul, between aristocratic essence and aristocratic appearance. Paul discovers this unity when inspecting her sculpture of Hermione, whose "indifference to love" reflects an aristocratic self-sufficiency that differs from both the Ashlys' repelling haughtiness and the Palefords' attracting charm. Despite the "prostration of all movement of pride or grace" in the sculpture, Hermione has the unmistakable "look of high birth." To Paul this presents a mystery: "Now wherein lay this rank which nothing could unclot?" (147). This achievement of unmediated aristocratic effect derives from the princess herself, whose radical integrity shuns the kind of involvements that weave Paul's life into that of the English. So at one is Princess C—— with her own performances that her sculpture becomes indistinguishable from herself: "your own undeniable presence breathes through the complete whole" (147). The failure of Paul to match the princess's "unconscious reproduction of herself"—either in his art or in his attempts to learn his true rank in nature—means he also cannot remove himself from the narrative complications, mostly sexual, that signal not only his own involvement in the world but the failure of the aristocratic principle to cut itself off, in actual practice, from a self-dividing reproduction very different

from the princess's closed circuit of being and performance. Paul, in other words, must turn from David Wilmot's ideal productive European aristocracy to one closer in its strategies of survival to Wilmot's slaveholders, appropriating the energies of the very republicanism that they undermine.

In giving so much explanatory power to the deferential response of Northerners to slaveholding presumption, Republicans implicitly charged their fellow citizens with confusing effect and essence. Paul is drawn toward those who seem to forge the ideal relationship between these two categories before he comes to recognize their collapse into each other later in the narrative. Different in other respects, both the Palefords and Princess C — promise an absolute continuity between the inner and the outer, the opposition that begins to dominate the novel and has its roots in both political and literary representations of the aristocratic principle. Sibyl's inner grace is expressed in "nature's finest clay" that shapes her presence and sparks, in turn, the tribute from the outside world that Paul experiences as the perfect supplement to her innate qualities, fusing with those to "blend into an enchantment" for him (82). Such a "priceless corroboration" (87), though coming not from the world, also enters into the princess's simultaneous expression in her sculpture of her aesthetic power and her own innate aristocratic presence. In both cases, an economy of expression takes the inner and leaves it uncorrupted on the surface through a wholly natural performance, and the unblocked movement seems to promise to Paul a working of his art that will duplicate that process.

This ideal helps to put into the context the uncanny fear that overtakes Paul whenever he receives "the dreaded look of an Ashly," for that look, with its message of "indescribable superiority," seems to freeze Paul in place (221, 222), bypassing the interchange between his inner worth and his outer appearance in an absolute ideological recognition of his essence and leaving ambiguous whether its casual glance represents some more deeply rooted instinctual judgment. Indeed, it is the inaccessibility of the Ashly demeanor that makes the judgment so piercing: imperturbable and cold, the Ashly look at once identifies Paul and denies him access to its secrets. It threatens, therefore, to "pals[y]" Paul's artistic power "as by a spell" (222). On the other hand, Paul's art offers him the opportunity to turn the tables, to momentarily extinguish the "Ashly eye" as both siblings

offer themselves up (though the brother only in imagination) as the object of his painterly inspection. This “unlimited privilege” promises to reverse the relationship that so unhinges Paul by giving him access to what lies beneath the two faces that paralyze him and by allowing him to represent to the world what he discovers there. The privilege indeed accomplishes both these things, but with consequences that ultimately reveal to Paul his own complicity in the Gothic terror of the Ashlys’ judgment, the “doom to which he had so strangely and unresistingly assented” (195).

According to the Republican critique, the North, in effect, represents a lordly class back to itself by fueling the cycle of recognitions operating below the conscious level that are essential to the reproduction of the system; Willis’s novel thus shifts from Paul as the victim of a curse to Paul as the producer of it. Whether the agent is the North or Paul, such participation installs the victim into those recurrent historical patterns that make the individual act of debasement inevitable if not recognized as a threat from the past to be actively resisted. Thus, in painting both Ashly siblings’ portraits, Paul begins to turn in his apprehension from European aristocracy as a fixed fact toward the historical patterns of reproduction that sustain it. This development is anticipated by the convergence of interests that produce the portraits: Paul is intent on giving his rival, Arthur Ashly, a fair chance at winning Sibyl, partly for selfless reasons but also to detach the “secret experiment of his life” (294) from any victory achieved directly from what the novel defines as Paul’s magnetism, that is, his personal appeal and charisma. At the same time, he hopes to advance in his relationship with his judge from America, Mildred Ashly, not in his secret identity as an artist but as a gentleman. Mildred, for her part, rather implausibly places her brother’s cause in Paul’s hands, having gained confidence in his personal abilities from his success with her aunt, itself a result of the power of penetration with which Paul’s humiliation has endowed him. In painting Winifred Ashly’s portrait, Paul has “spiritualized and ennobled” her pride so that “it seemed like a grace” (235). Although Mildred does not realize at this point that Paul was her aunt’s portrait painter as well as her friend, both Paul and Mildred conclude that Paul could best help her brother by presenting a portrait of Arthur to Sibyl that somehow revealed the inner “romantic sentiment” behind the family’s “habitual imperturbability” (305). Once again, a perfectly realized ideal (Paul’s successful

“unsealing” of Winifred’s “inner sanctuary” [237]) seems to provide Paul with a model for success in his broader project of reversing the initial Ashly judgment. Indeed, it seems that all of Paul’s goals neatly cooperate in his new task. His piercing, through art, of the same Ashly mask that had instinctively judged him to be inadequate grows naturally out of the flattering access they give him to their inner needs and weaknesses. Such rare access seems to combine perfectly the social entrée offered him by the Palefords and the introduction into occult knowledge and performance promised by the princess. Access, however, turns out to serve the interests of exclusion, as begins to come to light when Mildred, before she realizes that Paul is the artist she has commissioned, unwittingly exposes the parallel between her use of him as an artist and her class’s use of the Palefords.

Uniting the Ashly family with the Palefords accomplishes the same purpose on a historical scale that Paul’s portrait of Arthur accomplishes in his personal quest for Sibyl: both are meant to help the Ashlys reflect on the surface what the ideology of aristocracy claims comes from within. In this context, Mildred’s explanation to Paul coincides with Willis’s own reflections on the basis of British aristocracy in his essay of 1844, “Lecture on Fashion.” According to Willis, what is distinctive about the English fashionable world is its willingness to pay tribute to “beauty of person combined with assurance and a natural air of superiority.” Bringing nature’s nobility into the hereditary aristocracy, then, helps to ensure that “Nature’s mark of superiority” will present that class’s face to the world, as a consequence making its power appear natural and thus unassailable: “A revolution cannot put down such a class!”²³ Mildred admits to Paul that her family’s interest in joining her family with the beautiful Palefords is to keep the Ashly family “recognizable by their exterior—wherever seen, wearing the superiority which tells its rank unasserted” (302). If the mark of superiority from which Paul seeks a personal sanction is natural, as he had assumed, it is only so by dint of a historical reproductive manipulation; Paul’s role in that manipulation is to initiate the process by luring the source of aristocratic rejuvenation into the system. More fundamentally, Paul contributes to the Ashlys’ project the ideological equivalent to the natural grace Sibyl will bring into the family: the belief in nature’s aristocracy that informs his paintings. To win Sibyl and perpetuate the intimidation of their look, the Ashlys rely on Paul to make Arthur’s other inner strength recognizable; Paul is able to ful-

fill this mission only because of the morbid sensitivity to the Ashlys' "natural air of superiority," which, according to Willis's formulation, is the other side of the beauty that only proper interbreeding can ensure. Paul alone can show, as he had with Winifred, that Arthur "has a noble and deep character, hidden under a mask of pride and incommunicativeness" (350). The loop is thus closed through Paul's mediation: his power of penetration grows out of the rebuff whose mechanisms Paleford blood will strengthen, allowing the impression of rank to continue exerting its power of exclusion, as Mildred puts it, "unasserted." And in the wake of this mediation, the narrative begins to conflate outcomes so as to suggest that Paul has not only strengthened this power of exclusion but himself produced it at an earlier stage.

Republicans implicated the North in the slaveholders' assumption of a social authority by condemning the way that class's surface manner was treated as if it expressed a deeper superiority. Willis's novel aligns itself with this critique by debunking that continuity between inner and outer that works in actual practice only in the princess's art. Thus, when Arthur's portrait is completed, the events of the novel begin to rush toward converging lines of integration that collapse the distinction between the inner nobility Paul was meant to display and the surface haughtiness that had operated from the beginning. The revelation that Paul has integrated Arthur's "inner nature and countenance" coincides with Mildred's discovery that the two figures in her scheme (the attaché and the artist) are in fact one person, Paul himself, which leads her to retreat from the confiding relationship she had established with him. The "long hated line of difference" between them forms again as "her long-remembered and indescribable impenetrability of countenance" reasserts its power (322). This development, with its aura of romance's fateful necessity, sets a pattern that culminates when Paul later observes Arthur married to Sibyl and secure in his happiness: "The Ashly iciness of repose had come uppermost again" (377).

This accelerated outcome highlights the long-term purpose of his favor to the Ashlys. Paul was meant to make the inner and outer indistinguishable by strengthening the signs that breed deference to an inherent superiority and by making the Ashly pride, as he had with Winifred, appear a natural expression of a deeper aristocratic nature. Although it pretends to unseal Arthur's inner sentiment, the portrait in fact affirms superiority on the grounds of an integral, permeating

nobility. Whereas in the princess's sculpture of Hermione, nobility magically survives the death of pride, Paul's portrait gives pride a foundation. By definition, then, the "unasserted" signs of rank Paul will help to produce must, in the long run, reinstate the "indescribability of countenance" he fears; the immediate transformations in the Ashlys' demeanors merely prefigure this long-term historical result. That both of the Ashly siblings revert monstrously to type the moment their historical power seems guaranteed to be reflected on the surface shows that Paul has, in effect, reproduced in his art his own abasement by making appear natural, essential, and integrated what was in fact the result of a circuit of representation and exclusion. Thus is Princess C——'s ideal defeated: as the agent of her own representation, she would transfer her aristocratic essence into an "escutcheon of presence" (147) and thus, in effect, "reproduce herself" in an unmediated performance. The Ashlys can no more depend on this self-representation than they can maintain their own "escutcheon of presence" without the aid of Paleford blood: they rely historically on an intimidation of the eye that by definition must be mediated through others no less for its ongoing operation than for its visual source. This revelation throws a backward light on Paul's complicity in the original injury to his pride. The Ashly look had been from the beginning inactive and negative, feeding on "the torture" of Paul's response to give it force (325). Whether as its recipient or as its producer, Paul had always himself vivified the curse. Recognizing his intervention into the Ashlys' historical ambitions allows him at last to disentangle from one another his three separate quests in Europe and reject the various victories that depend upon his own mystification.

Republicans urged the North to recognize its own active production of the aristocratic mystique that then overawed them, and it is therefore fitting that Paul's demystification is triggered by the shock of confronting his purely internal responses operating outside of himself, of finding visible before him the external embodiment of his own work. Whereas the North must channel that recognition into political defiance, by the time Paul realizes what he has done, he has passed on the curse to Europe itself. By unveiling his portrait of Arthur to Sibyl, Paul in effect transfers the spell that had sent him on his quest in Europe to her. As a result, Sibyl becomes the victim of a Gothic power to which Paul had been subject only secretly, and he can therefore now see his own subjugation in the more traditional form of the bartered

maiden placed in her new husband's "lordly possession" (377). Partly for this reason, Paul is able to resist the temptation of assuming the equivalent of Sibyl's role with another Ashly. This opportunity arises when Mildred offers him not only her love but, more important, the Ashly look "for the first time, by the standards among which she had been brought up" (369). Once available to him, this long-sought prize produces an "aggravation" when Paul contrasts it with the judgment of her peers, based entirely on traditional class bias: "Why should she not see (Paul's pride insisted on asking), that there was insult and contemptuous injustice for him" in her relatives' manner (370). Paul can see this predictable collective judgment clearly because his own involvement with the Ashlys' interests has denaturalized that aristocratic superiority that he had once hoped would embrace him by instinctive reversal of an individual judgment.

The Ashly eye judging Nature's clay reenters the historical collectivities from which Paul had once detached it, and as a result the narrative mode shifts to what it had, thanks to Paul's secret obsession, never resembled up to that point: a novel of manners. Paul now realizes the futility of his quest. The fact that Mildred is "the proud woman who had given the first life-sting to his pride" (370) makes her about-face unsatisfying because it exposes the dependence of the initial misjudgment on an insuperable collective power to which Mildred herself, not Paul, is now blind. Those representing that collective power are now exposed as the princess's "profaning many" from which nature's aristocrat must withdraw. In this new light, his victory with Mildred, like his initial humiliation, rests on a voluntary self-abasement, and he rejects "the hell of such an atmosphere of relationship" (371). His only consolation is in a secret union of sentiment and belief with the new victim of the Ashly look: Sibyl. From a secret glance at her true inner nobility (376)—as if set in a world as private and secluded as the confines of Princess C——'s studio—he is able to devise a standard that reduces the Ashlys and their circle to the role of usurpers: "They were *her* inferiors—nay—thank God! they were even *his*" (377).

Paul's quest for aristocratic sanction is, as a result of this revelation, replaced with a formal, but private, moment of intuitive recognition between Paul and the doomed Sibyl (384–85). Like a Jamesian renunciation, this victory rests on defeat and closes down his quest. All that remains is for Paul to analyze more systematically the pattern of fictions and displacements that had made his enthrallment possible.

He does this in London, where he is exposed to what a Republican critic of Northern servility in America called “the imitative classes.”²⁴ This group’s mediated admiration resembles the mediation of vision through art that Paul had put to the aristocracy’s service in Florence. Disgusted, Paul must translate the princess’s ideal of independence into a kind of republican exclusivity by returning to America, becoming in his disillusionment a model for a North alerted to the mechanisms of its decline into European patterns.

The debunking of aristocratic power that Willis’s novel performs sheds light on why Republican discourse appropriated the traditional American fear of a reversion to pre-Revolutionary standards. In the end, the condemnation of a quasi-European class that kept the North in check was aimed less at affirming a specific historical parallel than at driving home to Northerners their contribution to a system that they had long seen as separate from their own sociopolitical responses. The condemnation of an antirepublican longing for archaic social structures provided a convenient rhetoric of demystification through which to place the cultural underpinnings of Northern complicity into a familiar discursive context. A traditional American critique of European aristocracy, expressed in greatest detail by Cooper, held that it rested on a fiction cutting other classes off from a true understanding of their own unnecessary degradation. So too Republicans asserted that the North was enthralled by a power that operated through a kind of trick of overawing: “[O]ur people have supposed [the slaveocracy’s] actual inherent force was powerful. This fictitious importance should be unmasked.”²⁵ That the North instinctively perpetuated this fiction exposed its secret respect for what it had long consciously dismissed as alien and exceptional: the slaveholder’s power within his own society and within his own section. The traditional charge that political opponents longed for archaic European sources of authority and prestige could thus be enlisted to level, as in the following Republican editorial, a more original critique of the North’s unacknowledged psychological participation in slavery’s own hierarchies:

Slavery is essentially an aristocratic institution. It overrides all feeling of sympathy for the distressed . . . and claims the highest seats wherever chivalry holds her tournaments or learning and eloquence claim world-accorded precedence. It does this, not by virtue of conceded excellencies of character, manner, or disposition, nor as a merited reward for great performances—but as a sort

of back-handed recognition of its power and influence manifested in the human suffering growing out of the system. Is it wrong to classify [a Northern political opponent] as a palliator of that false and frivolous system, which, under a respectable, a glittering exterior, hides that from which the independent mind recoils with dread and loathing?²⁶

What is remarkable here, but also consistent with a long rhetorical tradition, is that the North's complicity in an oppressive system is represented as somehow less shameful than its having fallen victim to the cultural illusions that foster such complicity. This emphasis makes clear how Willis's novel projects in narrative form the Republican critique. The editorial charts the same path that Paul finally recognizes he has traveled. The ideal of natural or achieved aristocratic merit functions only to create a chimera that enraptures by producing the external forms borrowed from that ideal but relying ultimately on a "back-handed recognition of [a class's] power and influence" from those who believe they are simply paying spontaneous tribute to natural superiority, in the process undermining their hereditary independence by leveraging it to an illusion that they in the process make real.

It is in this context of slavery's fictional power, created by those who are as much its accomplices as its political victims, that the novel's affiliation with the Republican project shines through. The fact that the novel deals not with slavery but with an archetypal relationship into which no American has, in actual fact, to enter makes it well suited to exposing the slaveocracy as simply the occasion for a Northern reversion to assumptions of inferiority. Indeed, the final step in the Republican project of demystification was to debunk the very traditional hierarchical relationship it worked so strenuously to affirm in most of its rhetoric. Those modern historians who challenge the view that the slaveholders were functionally aristocratic or distinct from a broader capitalist class were in fact anticipated by the new party,²⁷ who in some contexts reduced the cotton lords, as the former Democrat David Wilmot put it, to just one more expression of how the "unity of interests of a certain class" produces power. Such a class was aristocratic only in the sense that "Power . . . was all that created an Aristocracy."²⁸ Thanks to this broad Jacksonian definition of aristocracy, Republicans, as one recent historian has emphasized, could as easily condemn slaveholders as monopolists, and the new

party's project as the recurring struggle between capital and labor, as they could bemoan their oppression from an exceptional aristocratic other.²⁹ Indeed, the two strands of the critique tended to be mutually supporting.³⁰ But for historical and cultural reasons, the second was more effective in devising a narrative of liberation, for such a narrative rested on attributing the Slave Power's usurpations to the voluntary debasement of the North that began when the "superiority of this [slaveholding] class [was] tamely conceded."³¹

In this context, Willis presents his hero as under the spell of a judgment he comes to realize can only be sustained by his own republican contribution to it. Paul, like the North, produces the power that overawes him and then helps that power to do the work of historical reinforcement. In coming to terms with that participation, Paul reenacts in a different register that liberation from false consciousness that was the climactic event of the Republican romance narrative. The inherently weak slave system was somehow unnaturally gaining strength from the natural power of the North, and Republicans located the root of this perversion of historical development in Northern self-enthrallment:

Yes, Slavery, too long did your tyranny hold us,
In a vassalage vile, ere its weakness was known;
Till we learned that the links of the chains that controlled us,
Were forged by Northern doughfaces alone.
That spell is destroyed, and no longer availing.³²

As in allegorical romance, the North need only recognize that the source of its enthrallment is internal to put an end to the practices that arise from it.

While this narrative in some respects disguises the enmeshment of slavery in the broader U.S. economic and political system, it supports such mystification only to affirm, ultimately, a deeper infiltration of slavery into the Northern self that it presents at the figurative level merely as an external chain. To Republicans, that infiltration went beyond any particular convergence of class interests, any single instance of cowering cooperation, any given exercise of the North's obligation to protect the interests of a sister state. All of these specific vehicles by which the nation undergirded slavery's power grew out of a failure to define a republican subject carved out of resistance to the demands of existing power relations and to the pull of historically

recurrent patterns of subordination. Representing slavery's authority as at once fictional and created from within what Republicans called "the system of self-abasement"³³ allowed the party to frame Northern complicity in terms requiring a revolutionary break rather than some adjustment in the harmony of interests that may have been truer to the economic facts but was also the prescribed remedy of the party's Northern opponents. *Paul Fane* could contribute to this project because Europe had for so long been employed in U.S. political and cultural discourse as a kind of marker for the historical progress of the people as measured by their ability to resist those internally bred threats to republicanism that human nature will always foster. Europe became a figure for what the North needed not so much to battle against as to purge from within itself. The persistence of "Europe" came down to the North's failure to define itself, as it had in Revolutionary days, on the basis of resistance and reform. Thus, the very speech in which Henry Ward Beecher identified the slaveholders as an "outright European Aristocracy" ends by pointing the finger at the North, which had once "suckled American liberty [but] is now suckling wolves to devour it."³⁴

Paul Fane thus contributes to the Republican system of collapsing analogies where an entirely fictional oppression from Europeans alludes to a class-based oppression within the nation's politics that turns out itself to be in some senses an illusion, but remains a fit image for the internal weakness within the republican character that leads it to fall back onto historically persistent patterns of deference toward combinations of class interest. Just as Willis sends his hero back to America having discovered that Europe was a kind of projection of a delusion from which he has recovered, so too Republican discourse called for the slaveocracy to be first recognized in its power and then willed away by a historical recovery that would turn the assumption of slaveholding superiority into not just an inherited illusion but also a fiction of the past. In his novel, as in his endorsement of Fremont—the figure for a redeemed citizenry—Willis, by evading the slavery issue altogether, spoke all the more directly the language of a party that was changing the political debate so that it was no longer about the nation but about the North, no longer about the extension of slavery but about the survival of the Revolutionary heritage within the Northern subject. If the emergence of the Republican party in the mid-1850s can be seen as a cultural as much as a political revolution, then what

it needed from the literature of the period was not allegiance to a program, for a program could always be judged as expedient or imprudent as the facts of the moment seemed to suggest. Instead, this instinct to place the issue of slavery in a practical context had to be undermined by exposing the personal degradation attendant on the politics of compromise. The Republican rhetoric of self-abasement recast accommodation of Southern demands so that it ceased to appear a mere evasion and became instead a positive choice of capitulation to a slave-tainted future implicit in a present moment weighted down with unrecognized prerevolutionary freight. And this project found support in narratives that brought home just how ripe the present still was with that possibility, how the slavery spreading in the West was, in the final analysis, bred from the self-chosen slavery of the backsliding Northerner.

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Notes

- 1 "Letter from N. P. Willis about the Presidency," *New York Evening Post*, 4 October 1856, 2. Willis's letter was widely reprinted; see, for example, *Newark (N.J.) Advertiser*, 7 October 1856, 2; and *Worcester (Mass.) Spy*, 14 October 1856, 2.
- 2 The novel, *Paul Fane*, was serialized in the *Home Journal* from 5 January 1856 to 16 August 1856. It was then published as a book in late November of 1856, the 1857 copyright date notwithstanding; see *Paul Fane; Or, Parts of a Life Else Untold, A Novel* (New York: Scribner, 1857). All references to the novel will be to this first, and only, edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.
- 3 See, for instance, Daniel Feller, "Benjamin Tappan," in *The Pursuit of Public Power: Political Culture in Ohio, 1786–1861*, ed. Jeffrey P. Brown and Andrew R. L. Cayton (Kent, Ohio: Kent State Univ. Press, 1994), 80–81.
- 4 See James Fenimore Cooper, *Gleanings in Europe, England* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1982), 248, 245.
- 5 "The Issue," *The Penn-Yan (N.Y.) Democrat*, 21 August 1838, 2.
- 6 "Americans Abroad," *Huntingdon (Pa.) Journal*, 6 November 1851, 1.
- 7 Margaret Fuller, "New and Old World Democracy," in *"These Sad but Glorious Days": Dispatches from Europe, 1846–1850*, ed. Larry J. Reynolds and Susan Belasco Smith (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1991), 162.
- 8 Henry Ward Beecher, "The Aggressions of Slavery," *Coudersport (Pa.) People's Journal*, 25 January 1855, 2.
- 9 An article in the *Rochester (N.Y.) Daily Democrat*, for example, argues: "There is not an aristocracy anywhere in Europe, that possesses and

- wields the power possessed and wielded by the 350,000 Slaveholders in this free, democratic, representative Government”; see “The Slave Oligarchy,” 11 August 1856, 2.
- 10 “Aristocrats in England and in America,” *New York Evening Post*, 23 April 1856, 2. See also “Eloquent Appeal to Free Germans,” *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, 30 July 1856, 2.
 - 11 Compare, for instance, the article from which the quoted description is taken (“European Insolence,” *Huntingdon [Pa.] Journal*, 13 June 1855, 2) and “Our Platform,” *Huntingdon (Pa.) Journal*, 19 March 1856, 2. To be sure, this rhetorical crossover did not begin with the Republican party but was a long-standing tradition in the political antislavery movement. See, for instance, the condemnation of slaveholding “arrogance, imperiousness, and tyrannical bearing” in the 1848 Free Soil campaign (“A Practical Sermon,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, 8 June 1848, 2).
 - 12 “The North and the South,” *Erie (Pa.) Weekly Gazette*, 6 April 1854, 2.
 - 13 “Robert Walsh,” *The Writings of Cassius Marcellus Clay*, ed. Horace Greeley (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1848), 452.
 - 14 R. Maddock, “Our Country’s Crisis,” *Washington County (N.Y.) People’s Journal*, 25 September 1856, 1.
 - 15 *The Diary of George Templeton Strong: The Turbulent Fifties 1850–1859*, ed. Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1974), 275. In May 1856, two days after Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner’s speech “The Crime against Kansas,” Brooks struck Sumner repeatedly with a cane. The caning raised a firestorm of protest in the North and greatly strengthened the Republican party.
 - 16 See “United States Senate,” *Erie (Pa.) Weekly Gazette*, 5 June 1856, 2; “Poughkeepsie Aroused,” *Poughkeepsie (N.Y.) Eagle*, 7 June 1856, 2; and *Yarmouth (Ma.) Register*, 6 June 1856, 2.
 - 17 “The Cry of the Oppressed,” *Springfield (Mass.) Republican*, 31 May 1856, 2.
 - 18 Richard Henry Dana, “Remarks of Richard H. Dana, Jr. Esq., at the Sumner Meeting in Cambridge,” *Boston Daily Atlas*, 10 June 1856, 1.
 - 19 See Christof Wegelin, “Social Criticism of Europe in the Fiction of N. P. Willis,” *American Literature* 20 (November 1948): 314–19.
 - 20 For the stress on deferential modesty in nature’s nobleman, see the temperance fable “The Maiden, Wife, and Mother,” *Schenectady Cabinet*, 18 June 1850, 4; for the stress on an instinctive independence, see “Nature’s Nobility,” *Schenectady Cabinet*, 11 April 1848, 1.
 - 21 Henry Ward Beecher, “The Uses of the Beautiful,” *Detroit Weekly Tribune*, 7 November 1854, 1. See also Theodore Parker, “True and False Gentlemen,” *Detroit Weekly Tribune*, 18 May 1852, 1.
 - 22 “Hon. David Wilmot’s Speech,” *Coudersport (Pa.) People’s Journal*, 16 June 1854, 2.

- 23 Nathaniel Parker Willis, *Lecture on Fashion: Delivered before the New York Lyceum* (New York: Mirror Library, 1844), 5, 8, 6.
- 24 Edmund H. Sears, *Revolution or Reform: A Discourse Occasioned by the Present Crisis* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, 1856), 14.
- 25 “What Is ‘The South?’” *Portland (Me.) Advertiser*, 24 June 1856, 1.
- 26 “The Politics of the ‘American,’” *St. Lawrence (N.Y.) Republican*, 18 March 1856, 2.
- 27 For modern historians who challenge the dominant view that slaveholders were functionally aristocratic, see, for instance, Robert William Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York: Norton, 1989), 64–65. Some Marxist historians have disputed this view and returned to the widespread nineteenth-century belief that the slaveholders were in fact fundamentally aristocratic; see John Ashworth, *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 82–84.
- 28 “Hon. David Wilmot’s Speech,” 2.
- 29 See Jonathan H. Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery and the Politics of Free Soil, 1824–1854* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2004). For an example of the bond in Republican discourse between the Jacksonian battle against monopolies and a condemnation of aristocracy, see “The Empire on Territories,” *Dayton Daily Gazette*, 30 April 1856, 2.
- 30 “Th[e] overwhelming fear of a corrupting capitalist aristocracy—a hallmark of Jacksonian rhetoric in the 1830s—was easily transmuted . . . into suspicion about the privileges demanded and won by slaveholders” (Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery*, 131). On this point, see also Sean Wilentz, “Slavery, Anti-Slavery, and Jacksonian Democracy,” in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800–1880*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1996), 209–10.
- 31 George W. Smith, “Oration, Delivered at Fairfield, July 4, 1856,” *Herkimer County (N.Y.) Journal*, 7 August 1856, 1.
- 32 “Columbia Calls on Her Sons to Be Free,” *Songs for Freemen: A Collection of Campaign and Patriotic Songs* (Utica, N.Y.: H. H. Hawley, 1856), 8.
- 33 Dudley A. Tyng, “Our Country’s Troubles,” *Batavia (N.Y.) Republican Advocate*, 29 July 1856, 1. The article also appeared in the *Tioga (Pa.) Agitator*, 7 August 1856, 1.
- 34 Beecher, “The Aggressions of Slavery,” 2.