SOCIAL STORIES

ACCORDING to one story frequently told about the genesis of Uncle Tom's Cabin, the first scene Harriet Beecher Stowe imagined and wrote was Uncle Tom's death. As the introduction to the 1879 edition of the novel explains, the scene "presented itself almost as a tangible vision to her mind" while she attended church in Brunswick, Maine. Though the vision of Tom's death was clearly a private experience for Stowe, the circumstances of this inspiration and Stowe's subsequent reactions to it suggest that from the moment of its conception this novel belonged not solely to Stowe, but to and in a community. The vision, after all, reportedly occurred at the church's "communion-table," and Stowe responded to the image of Tom's death by rushing home, writing the scene, and immediately seeking out an audience. Because her husband was away, Stowe supposedly read the scene to her two sons, ages ten and twelve, who "broke out into convulsions of weeping."

Though subsequent scholars have questioned the accuracy of this account, the story serves, at the very least, as a compelling metaphor of the rich communal texture of the novel. But while Stowe's novel first began within a relatively local community of her church and her immediate family, the novel itself is marked by a much larger social context. In the same way that Stowe addressed her readers directly within the novel itself and the way that she wrote the story in virtual dialogue with so many other texts—from the Bible, to popular woman's fiction, to published slave narratives—Stowe called her audience to engage in a national conversation.
and debate about slavery. Thus, from the moment of inspiration at the communion table, Stowe envisioned *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a novel about community that simultaneously reached out to an audience and challenged that readership to respond—in word and deed.

And respond it did. From the time the novel's first installment appeared in the antislavery paper the *National Era* on 5 June 1851, readers (and even sometimes nonreaders) have joined Stowe's national conversation. Though obviously they did not all agree with her, the novel inspired responses as passionate as those of her young sons. While Stowe was still writing the novel, subscribers to the *Era* wrote to the publisher, urging Stowe on with her story; and countless other periodicals reported on the novel as well. Nor did the interest in the novel abate after it appeared in book form in March 1852. Indeed, as each response to the novel appeared—from Stowe's own *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to the *Uncle Tom Plays*, to the many so-called anti-Tom novels, and even to Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*—the novel continues its existence as a social phenomenon.  

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is in many ways atypical of the novels examined in this book. It is, after all, more properly considered a "newspaper" rather than a "magazine" novel, and it certainly elicited a response far more powerful than any other novel considered here. Nonetheless, I offer *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a paradigm of the nineteenth-century American magazine novel precisely because its composition, content, and reception highlight social relations. However diverse nineteenth-century American magazine novels were—and they were a highly eclectic group, ranging from sensational works by now forgotten authors to the philosophically and psychologically complex works of Henry James—these novels were all produced and read within a community not just of editors, publishers, and writers, but also of readers, who came together each month or each week to feast on the latest installment. Part product of this community and part creator of it, the magazine novels are themselves, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, often marked by the social contexts in which they appear.

Recovering these textual communities of readers is far from easy and is especially complicated by both the passage of time and the relatively ephemeral nature of magazine fiction. Like other scholars working on nineteenth-century periodicals, I have struggled to account for participants in this story who are long since dead and who left little, if any, records of their involvement. I have found, I confess, no elaborate diaries detailing the thrill of receiving a new installment in the mail or the agony—and pleasure—of waiting for the next.

Even without such personal testimonies, however, we have convincing evidence that magazine readers viewed their reading as a pleasurable communal experience. Like more recent readers, who often identify companionship as an important motivation for reading periodicals, nineteenth-century readers frequently described magazine reading in communal terms. Editors and readers alike, for instance, described their periodicals as "visitors," and the periodicals were themselves depicted as parlor literature, read in the company of family members and friends. Moreover, illustrations of periodical readers frequently depicted social settings (see figs. 2.3, and 4).

Readers' demands for magazine novels, which both depended upon and contributed to the fantastic growth of periodicals during this time period, further support the idea that reading magazine novels was a largely pleasurable experience. Frank Luther Mott has estimated that twelve periodicals other than newspapers were published in the United States in 1800; by 1850 that number had risen to six hundred, and by 1885, to more than three thousand. Though not a feature of all such publications, the serialized novel clearly held a special place in nineteenth-century American periodicals. Magazines like the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Monthly*, *Petersen's Ladies' National Magazine*, the *Southern Literary Messenger*, and *Godey's Lady's Book* all featured serialized novels, with some magazines and story papers like the *New York Ledger* regularly publishing two and three novels at once. According to one editorial essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1879, some story papers were offering as many as eight different serial novels at a time (September 1879, 386). Demand for serial fiction was so high that in the opening installment of *My Wife and I* in 1870, Harriet Beecher Stowe reported that the world was "running mad for stories."
“It is understood now,” Snowe explained, “that no paper is complete without its serial story” (Christian Union, 12 November 1870, 294).

A similar sense of the pleasures and popularity of magazine novels is suggested by nineteenth-century editors and critics, who repeatedly compared reading magazine novels to enjoying a carefully orchestrated feast. Writing in the Century in 1885, Charlotte Porter insisted that the “flavor of the component parts of the novel is more distinctly appreciated when it is served up in a series of judiciously related courses.” As she explained, the “hungry curiosity to follow the events, discover the plot, and swallow the book whole, which belonged to the world’s younger days and long nights of novel-reading, is turned into the discriminating attention of a patient public” (September 1885, 812). Similarly, in 1885 Harper’s explained: “Readers who complain of serials have not learned the first wish of an epicure—a long, long throat. It is the serial which lengthens the throat so that the feast lasts a year or two years. You taste it all the way down” (December 1885, 129).
As these two passages suggest, the pacing of the magazine novel was a primary source of pleasure. In his "Driftwood" essays, written under the pseudonym "Philip Quillibet," George E. Pond made this claim directly. Bemoaning the fact that some newspapers were printing "detestable summaries" of the latest installments of magazine novels, Pond cried:

Can anything be more annoying to the writer, more exasperating to the reader? . . . In briefest space Messrs. Quill and Quillibet give the month's crowning tableau or catastrophe, so that the unlucky reader who sees that fragment, finds his curiosity gone. Gone? it is tricked away; it is robbed. To pique and then satisfy that interest was the novelist's right; to have his curiosity aroused and then leisurely spoiled was the reader's due; but the knight of pen and quill poisons that month's prospect of everybody, because no conceivable reader of a serial novel can wish it served up to him in that shape (Galaxy, December 1876, 444-45).

With "the edge" of "curiosity taken off," Pond explained, the reader is left with nothing to do but "mope on . . . to the disclosed catastrophe." Pond's dismay about these "premature disclosures" and Porter's attention to the "patient public" highlight the unique features of reading serialized novels. Most novels, of course, are read over a period of time with interruptions, but the nature of those interruptions is fundamentally different in serialized fiction. Unlike the reader of a novel in book form, who decides when to stop and when to resume a story, readers of serial fiction have their interruptions chosen for them by writers or editors. The influence of these forced interruptions is underscored even by the terms used to describe novels. Serial readers, after all, cannot explain that they read the novel "cover to cover" or that they "couldn't put it down."12

One of the effects of having to put a serial novel "down" at a particular moment is that readers experience the text together. Best-selling novels in book form are often read in a sort of community, but readers are rarely at the same place in the text at the same moment. But that sense of community—that social experience—is precisely what happens with popular serial novels. Unlike novels in general, which have often been associated with promoting private and individualistic responses,13 magazine novels
inspire not just private experiences, but also the same kind of communal bonds scholars have long associated with periodicals, particularly newspapers. Noting that "nothing but a newspaper can drop the same thought into a thousand minds at the same moment," Alexis de Tocqueville argued that within a democratic society ties literally depend upon newspapers: "If there were no newspapers," he insisted, "there would be no common activity." More recently, Benedict Anderson has, like de Tocqueville, linked the communal aspects of newspaper reading with national identity. Although newspapers are often read privately, the act of reading the newspaper, Anderson asserts, functions as a "mass ceremony" that creates an imagined community. Though the identities of the members remain unknown, each reader is aware that the same "ceremony" he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident." 14

The coexistence of private and communal impulses associated with the magazine novel highlights one of the central ways that the magazine novel functions as a social story, and here I want to draw special attention to recent definitions—most notably by Karen V. Hansen—that challenge the long-standing dichotomy of public and private. Drawing on her analysis of the diaries, letters, and autobiographies of working men and women in antebellum New England, Hansen defines the social as activities such as visiting, churchgoing, and shopping that transcend the supposed public/private divide. For Hansen, the social "includes that range of behaviors that mediate public and private activities, linking households to neighbors and individuals to institutions." 15 Though Hansen does not include reading magazine novels within her list of social activities, the novels share many of the same features as those that are included: They are read privately but with an awareness of a larger periodical audience, who is presumably both reading the same installment at roughly the same time and not reading at the same time. That is, the magazine novel audience reads and then, because of the installment breaks, waits together. Like Hansen's social activities, then, magazine novels link the individual with this larger group, and thus they have the potential to participate in the process of national enculturation long associated with print culture, especially periodicals.

Unfortunately, the nature of this communal reading experience is not easily analyzed, primarily because most nineteenth-century readers of serial fiction did not leave behind evidence of their reading experience. While I do not want to minimize the important differences between visual and verbal texts, we can gain insight into the power of shared, forced interruptions by considering the experience of watching soap operas. Soap operas are, in many ways, the twentieth- and twenty-first-century equivalents of the nineteenth-century's magazine novels. Like serial novels, soap operas create a shared experience of both watching and waiting—that is, watching individual installments at a particular moment in time and waiting for the next installment to appear. According to C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Biely, soap opera fans increase the communal aspects of this experience by talking with other fans about the story's development. Ninety-six percent of the soap opera fans in Harrington and Biely's study talk with other fans, creating an oral culture centered on the soap opera. This oral culture is a real source of pleasure for the soap opera enthusiast. As one fan in Harrington and Biely's study describes, "Chatting with a friend about a soap has the satisfaction of gossip without the guilt because the people aren't real and can't be hurt or betrayed by what one says about them. The challenge of guessing which direction a plot or character will be taken can cause endless speculation and fun." 16

As is the case with soap opera viewing, the magazine readers' experiences of sharing and talking and waiting are greatly influenced by the installment structure. Given the enormous diversity of the magazine novel, it is hardly surprising that installments were structured in various ways. One technique used by novelists was what is now known as the cliffhanger ending, which forces readers to wait at moments of dramatic and unresolved tension. A typical example can be found in Pauline Hopkins's Hagar's Daughter, which appeared in 1901–1902 in the Colored American Magazine, which Hopkins edited. The second installment ends in the middle of the fifth chapter as Hagar, who has been living the life of a married,
A white woman, is confronted by a slave trader claiming to have purchased her fourteen years earlier. The final moment of the installment depicts Hagar’s “heartrending shriek” as she falls “screaming to her feet,” leaving the reader with no clear evidence as to the validity or long-term effect of the slave trader’s claim. Another, much earlier example suggests the extent to which magazine novelists sometimes experimented with the expectations of installment endings. The Man Who Was Too — written by Theodore S. Fay and published in the New York Mirror in 1855, playfully withheld information about the incomplete title, teasing readers to speculate with each installment.

Though the cliff-hanger installment has been associated with the nineteenth-century serial (and often disparagingly), the term “cliff-hanger” was originally inspired by serial films of the 1930s (particularly the films of Pearl White, who was left hanging from the Palisades above the Hudson River in some episodes). Unlike their later counterparts in film, magazine novelists frequently avoided such dramatic and unresolved endings. Though I have not completed any systematic analysis of the frequency of such installments, I have been struck with the number of dramatic moments that occur in the middle rather than at the end of installments. Consider two notable examples from Uncle Tom’s Cabin: Eliza’s dramatic escape over the icy Ohio River occurs in the middle of an installment that ends only after we learn that Eliza has survived her daring escape and that she is headed toward a safe house. Similarly, chapter 17, which dramatizes the action-filled escape of George and Eliza as they literally climb a cliff and jump over a rocky chasm — ends not with a literal cliff-hanger ending, but rather with some assurance of George and Eliza’s safety. Even Tom Loker, who has been shot and fallen thirty feet, is cared for at the end of the installment by the Quakers.

Nor is Stowe unique here. The dramatic chapter in E.D.E.N. Southworth’s The Hidden Hand in which Capitola scolds Black Donald down the trap door, presumably to his death, for instance, occurs mid-installment. Though Capitola waited until the next morning to learn that Black Donald was alive and well, readers learned of his good fortune immediately. Similarly, in Howells’s A Modern Instance neither Marcia and Bartley’s elopement nor Bartley’s realization that his money was stolen occurs at the end of installments. Thus, while many novelists occasionally used suspenseful installment structures and even relied on it, the cliff-hanger installment structure was not a prerequisite to the magazine novel, and many novelists favored more sheer suspense, but a balance between expectation and completion.

Surprisingly, even final installments of magazine novels (where one might imagine complete closure to be expected) show some signs of maintaining this balance between postponement and gratification. While the actual final installment of a magazine novel almost always provided an appropriate conclusion to the plot, editors manipulated the structure of the magazines themselves to entice readers to keep subscribing. One method, which was used most successflly with well-known authors, was simply to announce an upcoming novel as another one concluded. The editor of the New Yorker, for instance, followed the wildly popular Hidden Hand by noting, “We have in our drawer the manuscript of another beautiful tale by Mrs. Southworth, the publication of which we shall shortly commence.” (New Yorker, 9 July 1839, 7). A similar strategy was overlapping novels so that readers were always in the middle of at least one novel. While other editors timed their serial novels to coincide with new volume numbers of the magazine, editors relying on overlapping novels sought to avoid any end-of-volume cancellations—a strategy that was enforced by the placement of novels. New novels were typically featured in the opening pages of a magazine. When that novel was fully established, it was often moved to later pages to make room for the next featured novel. Though overlapping novels might have been frustrating to new subscribers—who inevitably found themselves in the middle of something—only rarely did editors offer back copies or summaries of previous installments. Whether readers attempted to begin novels in the middle or simply omit them is unclear. But those magazines that relied on overlapping novels gave the illusion at least of a consistent, never-ending community of readers. That community was sustained, then, by the novels, which functioned...
within the magazines as both entrées and appetizers, simultaneously satisfying and enticing one’s appetite for fiction.

However much readers found this balance acceptable and even pleasurable, editors did occasionally test readers’ willingness to delay gratification. Certainly the practically mandatory announcements explaining and apologizing for missed installments suggest the extent to which editors understood that readers were not always willing to defer gratification. Readers’ strong expectations that editors would eventually provide that gratification is suggested by the response to one of Robert Bonner’s efforts to boost circulation of his New York Ledger. Hoping to increase his readership by appealing to popular interest in serial novels, Bonner purchased space in other papers to print one or two installments of Ledger stories. For example, Bonner purchased space in the National Era in February 1859 for two installments of The Hidden Hand. At the end of these two installments, the Era announced it would no longer publish the story, and readers were instructed to buy the “great family paper,” the New York Ledger, available “at all the periodical stores where papers are sold.” Reminding readers to begin with the February 12 issue of the Ledger, the announcement promised that the “story grows more and more interesting as it progresses” (National Era, 17 February 1859, 28). Readers of the Era, who had read the novel’s first two installments but were offered no more, were evidently outraged by the deception. In a subsequent issue, the Era confessed that it “had been guilty of humbugging our readers” and apologized for having “sinned, grievously sinned” in publishing only part of the story (17 March 1859, 42).

As the example of the outraged Era subscribers suggests, readers of magazine novels were anything but simple passive consumers of the serial form, and collectively they could exert considerable control. No doubt Uncle Tom’s Cabin grew well beyond the three or four planned numbers—to the actual forty-one installments—at least in part because the subscribers of the National Era repeatedly expressed their hope that Stowe would, as one reader put it, “not be in a hurry to finish it.” Another wrote expressing the hope that Stowe “may keep it going all the winter” (27 November 1851, 190). This ability of readers to influence a magazine novel suggests that rather than being passive consumers, at times they functioned as collaborators in the creation of magazine novels.

If the collaborative power of readers was essentially collective in nature, that power was fueled by the illusion, at least, of an intimate relationship between the author and the individual reader. Significantly, magazine novelists used the novels themselves to create and sustain this sense of intimacy. Susan Bovasso Smith has studied the epilogue included in the serialized version of Uncle Tom’s Cabin but omitted from the book version. In this epilogue, the narrator bids farewell to “a wide circle of friends, whose faces she has never seen, but whose sympathies, coming to her from afar, have stimulated and cheered her work” (National Era, 1 April 1852, 58). This epilogue reveals, Smith explains, the “intimacy of serialized publication.”

Stowe’s imagining her audience as a group of “family” and “friends” is not unique. Like Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Southworth’s The Hidden Hand ends with an epilogue not included in the book versions of the novel, and it, too, highlights the intimate relation imagined between reader and author: “Now, dear reader, my pleasant task is ended. Day and night have I worked at it, cheered by your appreciation and by the goodness of the best publisher I have ever had. But my strength is not great nor my health good, and this week I go, with my two children, to recruit under the green shadows of old English homes. And in leaving my native shore I feel like begging from you all, a kind ‘God bless you’” (New York Ledger, 9 July 1859, 7).

As this passage suggests, this sense of intimacy between reader and writer contributes to the pleasure of reading (and writing) magazine novels. It also strengthens the individual reader’s commitment to the writer and the magazine. Reader of the New York Ledger, after all, bid Southworth goodbye, as she does them, with the expectation of her return to them and to the serial form. The individual novel ends, then, but not the desire for both another continuing story and an ongoing relationship with the writer.

One of the ironies of this intimacy between reader and writer is that the writers most able to sustain these relationships were in fact those with the largest audiences. Stowe and Southworth were able to speak directly to
their "dear readers" because they had already achieved a certain popularity and were familiar to readers. However, these two writers were not the only magazine novelists to achieve such acclaim, and the history of the magazine novel in America is intimately linked with the rise of two models of authorship not previously seen in the United States: celebrity authors and the so-called industrial hands, who were expected to reproduce already existing formulas under some fictional and often famous company name.\textsuperscript{14} George E. Pond's observation in 1869 that "serial-novel writing" had become a "distinct profession in itself—as much as law, or medicine, or divinity" attests to the business and professional aspects of writing magazine novels (Galaxy, January 1869, 122). Indeed, however much celebrity and industrial models of authorship differ (promoting the actual writer in one, and completely erasing the writer in the other), both are based on the power of a popular reputation and name, which proved to be extremely valuable commodities in the periodical industry.

Readers and authors did not have direct access with one another, however, and editors and publishers exerted considerable influence over the texts that writers offered readers. Certainly those editors and publishers with sufficient financial resources were able to recruit authors likely to appeal to a large audience. Recognizing the financial rewards of having celebrity authors, for instance, Robert Bonner offered Henry Ward Beecher thirty thousand dollars to write a serial novel for the New York Ledger.\textsuperscript{15} But editors and publishers had a more direct involvement with magazine novels, sometimes to the dismay of authors. Editors frequently included installment breaks in places likely considered by authors as unwise (sometimes mid-chapter or even mid-sentence), and when faced with space constraints, editors were sometimes forced to cut large sections of magazine novels. Ezra Greenway has noted how Charles Frederick Briggs, editor of Putnam's Monthly, applied "a heavy hand" to the work of Heyman Melville, James Russell Lowell, and Edmund Quincy. When a printer incorrectly estimated the length of an issue of the magazine, for example, Briggs cut a page and a half from the concluding installment of Quincy's Westley.\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, Mary Kelley has noted how E.DEN Southworth expressed frustration that her editor at the National Era cut "whole pages of [Retribution] which was written amid grief, and pain, and toil that he knew nothing of." Southworth's struggles with editors continued with the Saturday Evening Post, which openly criticized Southworth both for her style and for missed deadlines.\textsuperscript{17} Such author/editor struggles are not unique to magazine novels, of course, but the intense pacing of publication often meant that writers did not know of cuts or changes until after installments appeared, when they had no choice but to accept the editorial revisions.

Installment structures or editorial cuts were not the only textual matters that influenced readers' experiences with magazine novels. What magazines the novels appeared in, what other texts appeared alongside the novels, what illustrations, if any, were published—all these had the potential to influence a reader's experience with a particular novel. In this regard, it is useful to distinguish between magazine novels and novels published serially but independently "in parts." Though the "in parts" novels share with magazine novels the enforced, timed interruptions of the narrative, they are not nearly as inherently "inter textual" as magazine novels.

Critical to that aspect of nineteenth-century magazine novels was their frequent engagement with contemporary issues. Because magazine novels reached audiences much more quickly than those in book form, magazine novels encouraged a certain timeliness, and the magazines' other content often invited readers to consider the fiction in the context of contemporary events. Robert Grant's An Average Man, which was published serially in the Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine in 1883-1884, for example, deals primarily with the private lives of two lawyers in New York City, but in the fourth installment, the novel takes a fairly dramatic digression when one character, Woodbury Stoughton, decides to pursue a political career.\textsuperscript{18} Published in March 1884, in the months preceding the political conventions that eventually led to the race between James G. Blaine and Grover Cleveland, this installment provides considerable details—virtually all of them negative—about contemporary political life. Stoughton is at first overwhelmed and dismayed at the corruption of the powerful party
"machine" at a caucus, but he soon becomes a part of the corruption himself. Though Grant is not, as Frank Bergmann has noted, completely successful in integrating his political commentaries with the novel's main plot, he uses the fourth installment to raise issues such as civil service reform and political corruption, including politicians' hiring of friends and purchasing votes. Other items in the magazine in that same issue would have likely reinforced Grant's political commentary. A long essay titled "The Next Presidency" and a shorter piece on "The Independent Voter in the Next Campaign" both discussed the upcoming conventions directly (Century, March 1884).

Another, more successful example of using contemporary events within the serial novel comes from Uncle Tom's Cabin, and like the example of An Average Man, the overall effect of the contemporary references are supported by the other contents in the periodical. As Susan Balloco Smith has suggested, subscribers of the National Era would have read Uncle Tom's Cabin in the context of the Hungarian Revolution, at least in part because the National Era itself published numerous articles on the impending arrival of Hungarian rebel Louis Kossuth to the United States. As Smith suggests, such a context would have been particularly meaningful in the chapter titled "The Freeman's Defense," in which Stowe asks readers to compare the "applause and welcome" that greets "Hungarian fugitives" with the public's reaction to fugitives within the United States of "African descent" (National Era, 2 October 1851, 158). As Smith explains, the Hungarian Revolution served "as a convenient analogy to the situation in the United States" for both Stowe and her readers.19

Realizing that the magazine novel afforded interventions in contemporary life, many magazine novelists came to associate the form with social reform. Stowe makes use of this association directly in the opening installment of My Wife and I, when Harry Henderson, Stowe's first-person narrator, complains about the strong link between the serial story and social reform: "It is now understood that whoever wishes to gain the public ear, and to propound a new theory, must do it in a serial story. Has any one in our day, as in St. Paul's, a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation—forthwith he wraps it up in a serial story, and presents it to the public. We have prison discipline, free-trade, labor and capital, women's rights, the temperance question, in serial stories." Concluding, Henderson insists that in "our modern days...it is not so much the story, as the things it gives the author a chance to say" (Christian Union, 12 November 1870, 291). Though Stowe's narrator seems distressed by these "modern" developments with the serial story, Stowe was evidently less troubled about the links between magazine novels and social issues. In addition to using Uncle Tom's Cabin for obvious political purposes, Stowe used My Wife and I to advocate for women's occupational opportunities.

One more example—this time from William Dean Howells's novel A Hazard of New Fortunes—makes clear that as much as magazine novels may have engaged with contemporary events, and as much as the magazines themselves invited such connections, the effects of the periodical contexts on readers are difficult to predict or control. Howells's novel documents Basil March's arrival in New York and his role in the clash between German socialist Lindau and capitalist Dryfoos was initially published in 1889 in Harper's Weekly, a magazine well suited to Howells's novel. Howells's exploration of American capitalism and his use of recent events such as streetcar riots fit well within the pages of Harper's Weekly, which regularly featured politics and current events. In the weeks preceding the appearance of Hazard, Harper's Weekly had itself presented extensive coverage of both New York's streetcar riots and the inauguration of President Harrison, the latter of which was featured in elaborate engravings, including an enormous four-page (44 inches) foldout of the inaugural parade (16 March 1889). Throughout its serialization from 23 March 1889 until 15 November 1889, Hazard appeared amid political items ranging from essays on congressional and political party activities to engravings commemorating the centennial celebration of the U.S. Constitution.

Though the political nature of Harper's Weekly appears consistent with Howells's own political agenda in Hazard, the magazine's contents seem to undercut rather than support Howells's intentions. The magazine was both more critical of the strikers (especially union leaders) than was Howells.
and less sympathetic to the urban poor. While the magazine did recognize poverty as a contemporary problem, the poor were far more likely to appear in the magazine's cartoons than in serious features, and the magazine generally favored celebrating fashionable life, with engravings of such establishments as the New York Yacht Club, the New York Jockey Club, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. At times the contrast between the novel and the magazine's other contents was dramatic. For example, the installment in which March tells Dryfoos that Lindau is dead and Lindau then hosts the funeral from his home appears alongside—literally—a series celebrating "Men Who Control Millions." One of the men featured was a John Clafin, who is remembered as the "head of the largest mercantile house in the world," which had sold more than seventy-two million dollars of goods in a single year (Harper's Weekly, 26 October 1869, 458-59). While Howells's installment mourns a union activist who rejected capitalistic values, the magazine enthusiastically associates success with financial gain. How this incongruity affected readers is uncertain. Perhaps Howells's political message was muted by the capitalism fervor of the magazine, or perhaps Howells's position was made that much clearer, as in relief.

Much theoretical work has been done on the way that context and intertextuality influence meaning. 8 In searching for a theoretical model that accounts for the ways in which periodical contexts might support or undercut magazine novels, I have found particularly helpful Linda Hughes's work with serialization and chaos theory, an interdisciplinary study of how order and disorder exist simultaneously within a single system. As Hughes points out, "One of the benefits of chaos theory for periodical study...is its suggestion that we need to view both incoherence and coherence as essential and to develop frameworks that integrate both features into our investigations." 9

Hughes's suggestion is particularly helpful in thinking about the relationship between the magazine novel and various other texts that appear within the periodical—everything from editorials, poems, essays, other novels, book reviews, illustrations, and advertisements. At times, the seri-

alized novels may fully support the ideology of the magazine as a whole. For example, Uncle Tom's Cabin's antislavery message was consistent with the overall purpose of the National Era. But we should never expect such simple coherence within a periodical, because a periodical is composed of many different voices, many of which may be competing rather than complementing one another. And even the most controlling editor cannot—or may not want to—create a perfectly unified text. After all, magazines and newspapers routinely publish opposing arguments, and we have good reason to expect both coherence and dissonance—both planned and unintentional—when exploring the intertextual relationships between the magazine novel and the periodical in which it appears.

This balance or tension between coherence and dissonance is a feature not simply of periodicals, of course, but also of societies and nations. Both Alexis de Tocqueville's and Benedict Anderson's theories about the role of periodicals in creating a national identity insist that periodicals somehow create a shared identity where no such common identity previously existed, but no one assumes that those tensions between shared and individual identities are eliminated. Indeed, as Karen V. Hansen has argued, the social sphere is inevitably "rife with conflict as well as cooperation." 10 These tensions are similar to those that appear within the communities of magazine readers and texts. Stowe's readers, after all, included those who supported as well as those who opposed her views.

This balance or tension between coherence and dissonance—within the magazines themselves and among the readers—may well be why the magazine novel proved so ripe for social negotiation. Like virtually every other social activity, such as visiting with neighbors or attending church, reading magazine novels provided individuals with an opportunity to connect with a community of disparate members and, at the same time, to reshape the community itself. Thus, nineteenth-century magazine novels are social stories not simply because they were read within a community of readers, writers, and editors—all of whom exerted considerable influence on the text. Nor are they social stories simply because the magazine novels appear within a community of other texts that virtually insist upon
inter textual readings. Rather, magazine novels are social stories because these features provided novelists opportunities to explore what an American society or nation was (or would be) as well as how our own differences were reflected in that society and nation. If reading a magazine novel in the nineteenth century was comparable to enjoying a feast, as so many critics suggested, it must have been a very lively feast, marked not just by the slow pacing of many courses, but also by the spirited conversation and debate of the guests.