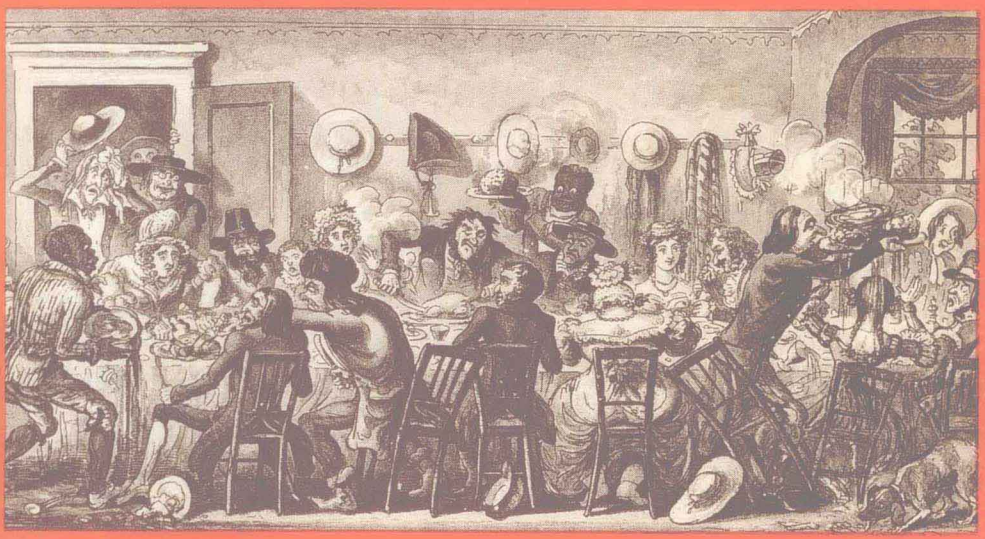
DOMESTIC MANNERS OF THE AMERICANS

By

FRANCES TROLLOPE



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INTRODUCTION

to the Abridged Edition of Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* by John Lauritz Larson

In 1832 Frances Trollope published a two-volume narrative of life in the United States entitled *Domestic Manners of the Americans*. This work placed her among a host of scribbling European travelers who visited the new American republic, took in all that they could see, and tried to interpret for Old World audiences the peculiar character, conditions, and pretensions that gradually were shaping American culture. Neither the first, nor the most important, nor the best prepared tourist to witness the emergence of a distinctly American society, Mrs. Trollope stood out as one of the most sharp-eyed observers of domestic details, which she reported in frank and stinging anecdotes that instantly offended her American readers and thereby helped confirm her notoriety.

Dozens of travelers had published before Mrs. Trollope: French aristocrat F. J. Marquis de Chastellux (1786), naturalist F. A. Michaux (1806), frontier prairie developer Morris Birkbeck (1818), English political radical William Cobbett (1818), and many more—each pursuing a personal interest, connection, or promotion. Later in the century, as the genre grew more popular, established writers tried their hands at this lucrative field—Charles Dickens (1842), Frances Trollope's son Anthony (1862), and Rudyard Kipling (1891) to name just three. Mrs. Trollope's work appeared during an explosion of interest fueled by the narratives of Frances (Fanny) Wright, Basil Hall, Harriet Marti-

neau, Frances (Fanny) Kemble, Richard Cobden, Francis Lieber, Robert D. Owen, and—most famous of all—Alexis de Tocqueville. By 1835, when the first volume of Tocqueville's magisterial *Democracy in America* appeared, the American character as a subject for speculation clearly had captured the interest and imagination of readers in the Old World and the New.[1]

What attracted most tourists to America and stimulated their literary efforts was America's experiment in liberty and equality. With their triumphant Revolution, Americans claimed to have established a "new order for the ages," and by the 1830s people everywhere wished to know if it was true. Through the miracle of political self-creation, the former British colonists had brought into being the modern world's first revolutionary republic. In the Declaration of Independence, their explanation of themselves to a "candid world," American founders had proclaimed the unalienable right of all people to tear down traditional regimes and raise up new ones legitimated by nothing more than the consent of the people to be governed. The radicalism of that notion is hard to recognize two hundred years later, now that much of the world has come to embrace the principles of civil liberty and political legitimacy first tested in the American Revolution. In 1776, however, and for two generations thereafter, the passion of the Americans for equality, self-government, and personal liberty was perceived in the United States and across Europe as a great experiment the outcome of which remained uncertain.[2]

By the time of Frances Trollope's arrival in 1828, white Americans had become more literally free and equal than any of the founders could have predicted. Rising economic prosperity, fueled by war in Europe and by America's rich stock of natural resources, created a fine field for personal success in the new United States. The opening of a vast frontier region west of the

[1]For samples of this literature see Henry Steel Commager, ed., *America In Perspective: The United States through Foreign Eyes* (New York, 1947); and Oscar Handlin, ed., *This Was America: True Accounts of People and Places, Manners and Customs, as Recorded by European Travelers to the Western Shore in the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass., 1949).

[2]For the issue of radicalism see Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1992); an excellent introduction to the grand claims of the revolutionary generation is Michael Lienesch, *New Order for the Ages: Time, the Constitution, and the Making of Modern American Political Thought* (Princeton, 1988).

Appalachian Mountains brought millions of acres of cheap land to market and stimulated both internal migration and immigration from abroad. The promise of the Revolution's rhetoric, to establish equality, liberty, and self-government, fostered an ever-more democratic style of politics in which ordinary farmers and tradesmen—and eventually all adult white males—participated with increasing enthusiasm. The unfolding of these many kinds of opportunities under the banner of republican democracy also tore down habits of deference and structures of social class hierarchy and replaced them with a popular commitment to equality of opportunity if not of station. All this was taking shape at a frightening pace in the early decades of the nineteenth century. By the 1820s Americans themselves were beginning to feel a little confidence and pride in their emerging democratic culture, and Europeans were becoming more curious than ever about the fate of this experimental nation.[3]

What had driven these American to declare such extreme, untested ideas about liberty, equality, and human rights to be "self-evident truths"? And what was becoming of their country—of society, culture, and politics—when guided over time by such abstract and novel principles? These were the questions that drew foreign tourists to American shores. Some came predisposed to praise the experiment, having drunk from the same cup of Enlightenment radicalism in the salons of Europe. Some came equally determined to find chaos and anarchy, which traditional ideas about authority and government predicted must result from American liberation. Many Europeans were scandalized by the reckless individualism, raw ambition, greed, and instability they thought characterized American society. Others saw the same behavior and were captivated by it completely. Some foreign authors seemed motivated by little more than curiosity, while others proved shamelessly driven by their own pursuit of the main chance. Never so simple or innocent as their narrative voices pretended to be, these wandering critics nevertheless crafted extraordinary word portraits of an experimental

[3]For surveys of this rapid development see John Mayfield, *The New Nation, 1800–1845*, rev. ed. (New York, 1982); Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics*, rev. ed. (Homewood, Ill., 1978); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Opening of American Society, from the Adoption of the Constitution to the Eve of Disunion* (New York, 1984).

people-in-the-making, without which later historians would find it hard to gain perspective on the accomplishments of these very self-conscious early Americans.

* * * * *

Frances Trollope was not yet a writer by profession when she began her adventure in the United States. She was an English "lady," one of that class of leisured Europeans who did not work for a living but instead pursued amusement, comfort, and the society of "refined" persons. The wife of a not-too-successful barrister, Thomas Anthony Trollope, Frances presided until 1828 over a lively country estate in Harrow, England, where her husband wrecked the fortune he possessed as a gentleman farmer and where Frances herself associated with glittering personalities, entertained friends with amateur theatricals, and annually spent more than the family took in. Such profligate habits worried nobody, for Mr. Trollope stood to inherit a comfortable estate from a childless uncle. The family's prospects sank, however, when Trollope's uncle abruptly married and sired an heir, leaving Thomas dependent on his own inadequate income. The family slipped steadily toward bankruptcy.[4]

Just as the crisis approached, an old family friend, the free-thinking English radical Fanny Wright, appeared at the Trollope's house in Harrow, recently returned from her second visit to America, full of tales of rich opportunities, and especially consumed with her experimental free-love anti-slavery commune, Nashoba. According to the traditional story, based on daughter-in-law Frances Eleanor Trollope's 1895 biography of Frances, the Trollopes were not quite tempted by the scandalous promise of Fanny's frontier paradise but decided instead to mend the family fortune by a commercial venture in the booming frontier economy of the American West. More recent scholarship suggests that Nashoba was indeed Mrs. Trollope's intended destination and that her commercial investments in Cincinnati, which failed utterly and colored much of her experi-

[4]The best sketch of Mrs. Trollope's personal adventures is Donald Smalley, "Introduction: Mrs. Trollope in America," in *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, ed. Donald Smalley (1949, rpt. Gloucester, Mass., 1974), especially viii–xix (hereafter cited as Smalley, "Introduction").

ence in America, were expedients born of her stunning disappointment with Nashoba.[5]

Nashoba was the latest of Fanny Wright's wild, idealistic experiments. On her recent trip to America, she had purchased near Memphis, Tennessee, a model plantation on which she hoped to establish a white communitarian society dedicated to free thinking (and free love). While this enlightened community perfected right relations among people and property they intended gradually to educate and emancipate their black slave labor force—thereby performing two good works simultaneously![6] It was to this romantic center of philanthropy and freedom, urged on by Fanny's irrepressible descriptions, that Frances Trollope determined to relocate with her son, Henry, and two daughters, Cecilia and Emily, to escape the poverty that awaited them in the English countryside. In high hopes the little party—comprising four Trollopes, a French painter named August Hervieu (who had attached himself to Mrs. Trollope's household), Fanny Wright, and a few others—sailed from London November 4, 1827, arriving at New Orleans (where the narrative begins) on Christmas Day and continuing by steamboat to Memphis on the first day of the New Year.

The reality of Nashoba proved "infinitely more dreadful" than anything Mrs. Trollope had imagined. Virtually nothing had been prepared. No assembly of happy communitarians greeted Fanny's return. The only white couple in residence (Fanny's sister and her husband) looked "like spectres from fever and ague." There was no beauty, no philanthropy, only bad air, bad water, no wholesome food, and no future there for Mrs. Trollope and her children. "I almost immediately decided upon not suffering my children to breathe the pestilential atmosphere more than a day or two," she confided to a friend; "it is impossible to give you an idea of their miserable and melancholy mode of life while I was there."[7]

[5]See Helen L. Heineman, " 'Starving in that Land of Plenty': New Backgrounds to Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans*," *American Quarterly* 24 (Dec. 1972), 643–60; see also Heineman, *Mrs. Trollope: The Triumphant Feminine in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens, Ohio, 1979).

[6]See Celia Morris Eckhardt, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), 108–40; A. J. G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, *Frances Wright: Free Enquirer* (New York, 1939), 182–204.

[7]Frances Trollope to Harriet Garnett, 7 Dec. 1828, quoted in Heineman, " 'Starving,' " 650.

Mrs. Trollope's revulsion at the sight of Nashoba overturned her entire plan. Out of travel money, yet determined to escape the deathly scene, she borrowed $300 from Nashoba's trustees, returned to Memphis, shipped son Henry off to a utopian community at New Harmony, Indiana, and booked passage for herself and daughters and the faithful Hervieu on the first steamboat to Cincinnati—rumored to be the most bustling "metropolis" on the western rivers. Thus the venue for her most impressive observations about life in the United States owed more to improvisation under extreme duress than to commercial premeditation. Mrs. Trollope probably entered Cincinnati badly shaken—much relieved to have eluded a disastrous end yet profoundly unsure how to proceed and what to do next.

Cincinnati in 1828 was indeed a bustling commercial port at the center of a fast-growing frontier region. Founded in 1788 on the Ohio River's north shore, opposite the Licking River of Kentucky, Cincinnati quickly became the "grand depot" for the farm produce of the newly organized Northwest Territory. By 1795, when Indian titles to land north of the Ohio River finally were extinguished by the Treaty of Greenville, some five hundred residents occupied the little village of Cincinnati, eager to serve the interests of the coming pioneers. Population grew almost exponentially, to 2,500 in 1810, six thousand in 1816, and nearly 20,000 in 1828, when Mrs. Trollope arrived.[8]

Before the advent of steamboat navigation, Cincinnatians made their living organizing the downstream export of grain, wool, livestock, and whiskey. These surplus products, hauled or driven into town by hundreds of pioneer farmers and country storekeepers, were loaded onto flatboats and rafted down the Ohio to New Orleans and the markets of the world. What this country trade needed in return was common manufactures—crockery, cooking pots, tools of iron and steel, nails, guns, powder, and ball, textiles, shoes, salt, coffee, and window glass. Most of these goods traveled laboriously from the East, overland to Pittsburgh and down the Ohio River to Cincinnati, at an expense that was only exceeded by the grueling keelboat trip

[8]On early Cincinnati, see Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790–1830* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), especially 22–27, 53–59; R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815–1840*, 2 vols. (Bloomington, Ind., 1950), *passim.*; Smalley, "Introduction," xix–xx.

from New Orleans, nearly fifteen hundred miles upstream against the current. For twenty-five years the town's merchants struggled to attract skilled artisans and investment capital to offset with local manufacturing the high costs of delivering merchandise to the heart of the western forests.

Steamboat navigation, which began in Cincinnati in 1815, drastically reduced the costs of importing manufactured goods and stimulated an extraordinary burst of growth in commercial towns throughout the western river system. First demonstrated in 1807 on Atlantic coastal waters, steamboats soon acquired a special western design—shallow drafts, flat bottoms, stern-mounted paddlewheels, and ever-more-towering superstructures above the deck—that perfectly suited them to the twisting, snag-ridden, and unpredictable waters of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Encouraged by better transportation, brisk markets, and more affordable household consumables, settlers poured into Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana, carved out pioneer farms, and swelled Cincinnati's country trade proportionately. By the time of Mrs. Trollope's sojourn there, the "Queen City" (as Cincinnati's boosters loved to call their town) had found its economic balance as a center of country commerce, steamboat construction, milling, manufacturing, and especially pork packing. So notorious was the butchering business that the "Queen City" earned another nickname more reflective of its leading industry: "Porkopolis."[9]

In addition to the normal accoutrements of business, Cincinnati by 1828 boasted certain evidences of urban refinement—a boast Mrs. Trollope would demolish. Dr. Daniel Drake, for a generation Cincinnati's leading citizen and indefatigable booster, had established a medical college and hospital. Residents (and visitors such as Mrs. Trollope) might worship in a wide variety of churches, attend various schools, read all kinds of local publications (religious periodicals, medical journals, nine newspapers), educate themselves at circulating libraries and reading rooms, take their leisure at the theater, and culti-

[9]On steamboating see Louis C. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers: An Economic and Technological History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1949); Erik F. Haites, James Mak, and Gary M. Walton, *Western River Transportation: The Era of Early Internal Development, 1810–1860* (Baltimore, 1975). The nickname "Porkopolis" is quoted in Buley, *The Old Northwest*, I, 533.

vate their tastes at the Academy of Fine Arts or the Western Museum. Booming good fortune also produced in Cincinnati some familiar urban problems that would only grow worse for a generation: water and sanitary systems failed to meet the need; streets mostly were unpaved, filthy, and dark (private haphazard street lights appeared in 1810 but probably contributed more to the danger of fire than to the illumination of the city); police and fire protection faltered; housing fell short of demand. In sum, Cincinnati was precisely the booming frontier marketplace Mrs. Trollope had been told to expect, but she would discover that her English expectations did not square with what western Americans in the age of Jackson liked to call, among themselves, progress.

Frances Trollope proved to be a keen observer of others but a pretty poor judge of her own situation and best interests. Her two years' residence in Cincinnati was marked by extraordinary misadventures that ruined her family's fortunes, astonished and bewildered her American neighbors, and embittered the poor woman irrevocably. About the only enduring fruits of her misery were the notebooks filled with stories that made up the text of *Domestic Manners*. She had arrived practically penniless and lived for some time off the savings of August Hervieu (whose patronness she still perceived herself to be!). Groomed exclusively for the ornamental life of the English leisured class, Mrs. Trollope had little to offer an American frontier city-on-the-make, although her own inappropriateness seemed only to verify her sense that Cincinnati lacked culture most grievously. Her son, Henry, who had collapsed under the regimen of labor at New Harmony, rejoined the family and tried to turn a dollar teaching Latin in a city of tradesmen, with predictable results. Hervieu the artist quickly found a faculty position at the Academy of Fine Arts and just as quickly bolted to establish his own school. It was Hervieu's brushes, guided by Frances Trollope's flair for public spectacle and amusement, that finally brought this band of exiles into a successful connection with the Western Museum.[10]

Cincinnati's Western Museum was a failed center for natu-

[10]My account of Mrs. Trollope's Cincinnati adventures condenses material found in Smalley, "Introduction," xx–li, and Heineman, "'Starving,'" 652–56.

ral history and archaeology that by 1828 had drifted toward bizarre and spectacular exhibits in a desperate effort to drum up business. By April 1828, animal monstrosities (a two-headed pig, for instance), back-lit transparent paintings, and wax figures already had brought the institution well into the entertainment business when Mrs. Trollope introduced "The Invisible Girl," a multi-media charade featuring a special chamber decorated with mysterious transparencies by Hervieu, in which an audience of twelve posed questions to an "Invisible Girl" (Henry Trollope), who delighted them with learned and obtuse pronouncements. Joseph Dorfeuille, proprietor of the Western Museum, enjoying his greatest success in years, warmly embraced Mrs. Trollope's next extravagant show, the "Infernal Regions" exhibit that became a trademark of the institution for generations. Groans, shrieks, and moanings accompanied vivid wax figures by Hiram Powers, set before Hervieu's back-lit transparencies, all depicting scenes from Dante's *Inferno*. For Mrs. Trollope, the success of Dorfeuille's "Infernal Regions" may have been her undoing, for it seems to have convinced her that Cincinnatians required her services as an arbiter of culture and that they would flock to whatever she prepared for them. Guided by these two smug and disastrous assumptions, she took up the project that would ruin her: the Bazaar.

Had the Bazaar been Frances Trollope's original reason for coming to America, the story of its weird conception and reckless execution would stand as a monument to commercial incompetence. Seen as another improvisation, however, conceived on the fly by an irrepressibly creative but headstrong individual, flush with her own sense of cultural superiority and eager to combine quick profits with extravagant display, the enterprise becomes brave in its failure. Mrs. Trollope designed a hideously gaudy building that was to house the finest merchandise for sale in the West as well as cultural exhibits, meeting rooms, a stock market-coffee house, a ballroom, and a rotunda with fifteen hundred feet of panoramic painting. Thomas A. Trollope, who had joined his wife and children for a few months in the winter of 1828–29, returned to England to buy the goods that were to astound Cincinnati buyers and set new standards of consumer taste. Workmen raised the incredible building in the spring and summer of 1829, but the money ran short, malaria

threatened Mrs. Trollope's life (she lay in bed, by her own account, eleven weeks!), Mr. Trollope's $10,000 worth of merchandise proved unsalable (less appealing even than that already on the market in town), and it was seized almost immediately to satisfy the claims of unpaid contractors. With her capital exhausted, Frances Trollope could not finish or restock the Bazaar, and despite heroic efforts to raise money with artistic exhibits and theatricals, she failed. Before she could leave town, the sheriff seized the last of her household property; by March 1830 her welcome in Cincinnati had expired.

For the duration of her stay in America, Frances Trollope lived more as a refugee than as a tourist, dependent on the kindness of others yet determined to keep up appearances. Finding poverty in America more endurable and less embarrassing than it would have been in England, and lacking ready cash for an Atlantic voyage, she fled Cincinnati for the Atlantic seaboard with her children and August Hervieu. Her trip eastward by steamboat and stage generated yet another collection of keen images and anecdotes that would find their way into *Domestic Manners*. Arriving in Washington, D.C. via Wheeling and Baltimore, she took refuge with a relative of close English friends, living outside the city in Stonington, Maryland, whose own poverty required Mrs. Trollope to pay board which she borrowed from her *artiste*-for-hire, Hervieu. Thus situated, she began arranging her many notebooks with the recent, serious intention of writing a book to make money. Still subsidized by Hervieu's paintings and exhibitions, Mrs. Trollope structured the balance of her time in America according to the needs of her travel narrative. Struck down again by malaria in September 1831, she moved to Alexandria, Virginia, which offered a better physician—and a season's close observations of American slavery. The following spring, an extended tour of New York, including Niagara Falls, completed the writer's itinerary. With her material all collected and Hervieu's resources somewhat restored, the entire party set sail for England in late June, arriving back home on August 5, 1831. In March 1832, exactly two years after her ignominious departure from Cincinnati, Frances Trollope published *Domestic Manners of the Americans* to instant critical and popular acclaim. From the ashes of a

brutal adventure she had raked a bit of fame and fortune after all.[11]

* * * * *

What, exactly, did Frances Trollope observe about the manners of the Americans that made her two volume narrative so popular in Europe and notorious in the United States? In a word, she found their manners to be bad. In anecdote after scorching anecdote, she portrayed the Americans as crude, rough, slovenly, greedy, vain, ignorant, untutored, silly, provincial, proud, and self-satisfied, lacking all evidence of grace, honor, or refinement. Mrs. Trollope's indictment blamed America's social and cultural shortcomings on the young republic's proudest achievements: equality and liberation. She made none of the allowances for the newness of the country or the untamed environment with which European critics customarily softened their dismay. Not simply disappointed with a culture that was not yet mature, Mrs. Trollope accused the Americans of embracing vice and calling it virtue, of marching boldly in the wrong direction and daring anyone (especially Frances Trollope) to find fault with the results. American society was a disgrace growing worse, she concluded; freedom and equality were the cause. To Americans who were just taking tentative pride in the "progress" of their democratic culture, Mrs. Trollope offered no encouragement.

Social equality bothered Mrs. Trollope inordinately. Time and again she reported encounters with Americans who refused to yield to her pretensions of gentility. She correctly observed that the elaborate rules that governed class relations in England had disappeared completely in the American West. Servants would not defer to their masters but displayed instead the smug indifference of independent contractors whose services the employer scarcely could do without. (As often was the case, Mrs. Trollope's resentment here cut unwittingly close to the truth: she *was* dependent on hired hands to do things that her own culture said a "lady" must not do herself!) The status she enjoyed in England despite her precarious financial situation meant

[11]See Smalley, "Introduction," li–lxi; Heineman, " 'Starving,' " 656–60.

nothing on an American steamboat, and it deteriorated exactly as her fortune disappeared. To be judged without reference to breeding and background, to be ranked crudely by the contents of her purse, seemed to Mrs. Trollope to contradict all that separated civilization from the savage condition.

Equality was quite disturbing in itself. The American preoccupation with equality had fostered a set of manners that Frances Trollope found aggressively offensive. Men (whether gentlemen or tradesmen) ate like animals at table, stuffing their mouths with food, hardly bothering to chew, pausing not to converse but only to wash down their crude repast with vile corn whiskey. Everywhere men chewed tobacco; and wherever they chewed, they spat. No single observation recurs in Mrs. Trollope's narrative so regularly as her revulsion at the public expectoration of tobacco juice. After dinner at hotels, in steamboat salons, at the theater, at court—in virtually any public place—American men slouched, leaning back in their seats, heels above their heads, exposing their posteriors to view in the most scandalous fashion. Pretending to have examined the cause of these barbarous displays, Mrs. Trollope invariably traced it to claims of individual liberty under the American Constitution, that guaranteed each citizen the right to sit, spit, and eat as he saw fit! That such revolting habits repulsed many Americans she did not notice, while the possibility that her undisguised horror might have encouraged teasing or brought out the worst in her companions seems never to have occurred to her.

The entrepreneurial character of American society struck Mrs. Trollope as rather more grasping and competitive than ought to be necessary in a civilized country. The privileged English classes always engaged in commerce at a safe and sanitized distance because tradition dictated that gentlemen did not work. Americans had abandoned their pretensions to genteel leisure around the time of the Revolution (they had long since lost the reality of leisure to the rough conditions of colonial and frontier life), and so Americans embraced both labor and competition with a frank and violent enthusiasm. Mrs. Trollope, who blamed so many unpleasant American habits on this preoccupation with getting ahead, was herself exactly so preoccupied throughout her residence in the United States. It was, moreover,

the capitalism of the English civilization so precious to Mrs. Trollope which had given birth to the enterprising colonies that became the United States, and English capitalism in 1830 still led the world in economic "progress." What she found so terribly wanting in the material ambitions of the Americans was that ritual disclaimer by which the better class of English merchants and landlords disguised their reliance on market transactions—a pose Americans did not bother to assume.

The place of women in American society struck Frances Trollope as peculiarly retrograde and disappointing. Men and women, she complained, seldom mingled in public. Men and women dined separately at parties, withdrew into segregated clusters at receptions, and seemed to honor a code of gender discrimination that supposedly protected female delicacy but merely, in Mrs. Trollope's view, perpetuated female exclusion. An exaggerated prudery and almost comic discomfort came over American women and girls when confronted with men in public, which Mrs. Trollope shrewdly attributed not to genuine piety and decorum but to a learned defense against the male determination to indulge vulgar passions (such as spitting) without reproach. In their own homes, American women did the work of domestic servants without the benefit of "help"—another hollow victory for social equality! Outside the home, women's primary sphere of influence lay in religion, toward which practically all female emotional and intellectual energies seemed to be directed.

What stood out in Mrs. Trollope's study of religion in America was its overwhelmingly feminine orientation. As American men had claimed the marketplace for their domain, so American women seemed attached to sanctuaries of the spirit. Mrs. Trollope attended the services of a variety of different sects and denominations, visited a frontier revival, a protracted camp meeting, and several large urban churches in Baltimore, Washington, and New York. Preferring the well-ordered rituals of the English church, she found enthusiastic frontier Protestantism somewhat alarming, especially the disorderly emotional tempests of the camp meeting that placed spiritually distraught young women almost completely in the power of male preachers of unknown integrity. Although she never ventured a thorough analysis of American religion and its oddly

sexual distortions, Mrs. Trollope registered a certain distrust of American piety that proved significantly insightful.

American slavery, of course, held a central place in the eyes of all European visitors, in part because by 1830 Europe's powers were in the process of abolishing slavery while Americans seemed eager to extend their own slave empire. Most English tourists, including Frances Trollope, harbored strong antislavery sentiments, and they approached the American South as a relic of some former civilization. Of course European abolitionists, whose slaves inhabited distant colonies, could freely indulge liberal plans of emancipation without contemplating the dependence of their own society on exploitation of workers at home and abroad. Until her final year in and around Washington, D.C., Mrs. Trollope had experienced only a fleeting glimpse of bondsmen at Nashoba and occasional encounters with free blacks in Cincinnati. Once confronted with Virginia-style slavery, she reported with typical dismay its ill effects on the sensibilities of *white* people, and in one story she featured herself cradling a slave girl who had taken a poison while other whites recoiled in horror—a scene almost too romantic to be believed. Mrs. Trollope's sympathy for the Africans in bondage was both sensitive and sincere and her descriptive observations of slavery as acute as any, but her contact with American free blacks, slaves, and slaveholders was too superficial to yield quite the penetrating insights she developed about such things as religion, women's lives, or the habit of chewing tobacco.

The careful reader of *Domestic Manners of the Americans* will detect a significant change in the tone and character of Mrs. Trollope's observations after her departure from Cincinnati. Both textual clues and supporting evidence suggest that her notebooks up through the Cincinnati period recorded impressions without premeditated purpose while those collected afterward in the East filled out a conscious writer's design for a marketable travel narrative.[12] It is therefore the Cincinnati material that contains the most extraordinary sparks of recognition about minute details of ordinary life. Mrs. Trollope's later trips through Baltimore, Washington, D.C., New York, and Niagara yielded very conventional notices of monuments,

[12]See Helen Heineman, "Frances Trollope in the New World: *Domestic Manners of the Americans*," *American Quarterly* 21 (Fall 1969), 544–59.