CHAPTER 5

"Every India Mail": *The Lamplighter* and the Prospect of U.S. Transoceanic (Postal) Empire, 1847–1854

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In November 1852, eighteen months before Maria S. Cummins published *The Lamplighter*, U.S. Senator Charles Sumner delivered a congressional speech seeking reduced postage for transoceanic mail to India and elsewhere. Five years earlier, the U.S. government had begun making treaties to establish symbiotic connections with European nations' postal infrastructures. Most notably, postal exchanges between the USA and India became regular after an 1848 British-American agreement. The U.S. government subsidized such routes by paying commercial companies to carry mail. To support this program's extension, the senator touted the post's power of sympathy. Increased transoceanic mail would "promot[e] the intercourse of family and friends, now separated by the ocean" and, so doing, "add to the sum of human happiness." In justifying this political policy as one of "promoted intercourse," Sumner aligned domestic attachments across the sea with national progress and economic development. Cheap ocean postage, Sumner claimed, "will be

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a new bond of peace among nations, and will extend good will among men." Amidst this sympathetic "bond" between persons and nations, U.S. imperial power would reign supreme. For U.S. commercial and military control of the seas to be "a peaceful supremacy," he argued, the government must "weave a golden tissue between the two hemispheres."[1] In other words, transoceanic sympathy required a "golden" capitalist infrastructure whose "tissue" was an imperial (postal) circuit. Sumner's sentimental call to policymakers, subsequently published in *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review*, would soon find its popular analog in Maria S. Cummins's domestic novel.[2]

If *The Lamplighter* is an attempt to "write about women's experience in a particularly contemporary setting," as Nina Baym first argued when she recovered Cummins's 1854 work, both the novel and its setting are steeped in the postal policies Sumner recounts.[3] Cummins not only shares narrative and historical affinities with Sumner but also appears to test Sumner's own sentimental fiction: she asks, can a U.S. state-backed post "weave a golden tissue" between Boston and Calcutta? Specifically, the plot of *The Lamplighter* revolves around letter exchanges (or non-exchanges) between Gertrude, a teenage orphan in Boston, and the eventual inhabitants of her ideal domestic space. These domestic agents include Willie, her love interest and a shipping clerk for a U.S. trading house in Calcutta; Emily Graham, Gertrude's saintly mentor and the daughter of a Boston shipping magnate with ties to Cuba; and Phillip Amory, Gertrude's father (and Emily's one-time lover) who presumably died in Rio de Janeiro long ago. Postal ties between these locations mark Gertrude's moral development. Willie's access to the India mail lessens his emotional separation from Gertrude, and his letters allow her to care for his family. The post also motivates her to reject an ill-conceived trip to Cuba and protect herself from sexual threats based in New Orleans. Ultimately, Gertrude faces her foremost crisis of sympathy when Willie stops using the India mail. Gertrude eventually reunites with Willie, as well as her father Philip Amory, after an old letter from Rio that declared Philip's death proves false. The novel concludes with two marriages that Cummins ascribes to Christian morality. And yet, as I will show, this domestic vision is predicated on the India mail.

The connections between Sumner and Cummins speak to the broader interconnected history of nineteenth-century sentimental narrations and transoceanic (postal) empires. As I argue in this essay, competing popular and political writers invoked sympathy to affirm the physical placement and ideological basis of hoped-for national or imperial postal circuits. Competitions centered on the post informed broader debates about the nation's shape, its seats of power, and its spread of slavery or indenture. In the most dominant group, Charles Sumner and others supported a postal infrastructure between New York, Calcutta, and San Francisco that weakened a southern slaveholding class even as it established new systems of Indo-Caribbean bondage. For other northern financiers and southern agents who opposed abolition, domestic postal policy pivoted to New Orleans, Cuba, and South America; this postal infrastructure would abet the unity of sentiments that drove Cuban annexation or other forms of American hemispheric southern expansion. Similar figures like oceanographer Matthew Maury advocated southern-based postal circuits that would both expand an American plantation economy southward and provide relief in the event of abolition or secession. For each group, the post's alignment with sympathy was a material and ideological tool: a postal route could subsidize and sanctify a national or imperial circuit. In each case, proponents argued that their chosen circuit was in fact the most expedient means of spreading moral virtue.

If postal policymakers had more political clout, Cummins' domestic and international bestseller performed more expansive cultural work.[4] Once tracked, the transoceanic mail in *The Lamplighter* marks Cummins's endorsement of a northern-based circuit and her rejection of southern ones. Put simply, her plot tests policymakers' competing sentimental fictions. Tellingly, Cummins affirms the material viability of each form of transoceanic post by allowing all letters to reach their destination. These letters' content, as well as the connections they produce or break, determines their value. Fictional letters derived from Rio and Cuba threaten hoped-for connections and contain harmful sentiments, thereby counteracting visions of hemispheric southern circuits predicated on the slave trade. On the other hand, Cummins's positive portrayal of letter exchanges in Calcutta and Boston verify extant mail systems and align the India mail with moral virtue and domestic connection across great distances. In the process, Cummins simultaneously disavows southern plantation slavery and accepts American imperial incursion in India and elsewhere. Her final model of white, middle-class New England domesticity is ostensibly free of imperial violence or foreign influence but remains forever indebted to the India mail.[5] The alignment of the India mail with Gertrude's moral development makes support for Sumner and others a necessary condition for proper domesticity. Sumner's promise of a "golden tissue," or a sentimental relation that overcomes the ocean's material and cultural bounds, finds its validation in Cummins's story of virtue earned in part through the India mail. So while Gertrude may never leave domestic space, she is an important node in a U.S. transoceanic (postal) empire.

For scholars, *The Lamplighter* further demonstrates domestic fiction's value to the field of oceanic studies. Heralded by Hester Blum, oceanic studies is defined by scholars' "oceanic turn," or their attempt to make the "material conditions and praxis of the maritime world" the basis for literary analysis.[6] In this case, one must consider the conditions required for a domestic letter to travel across the sea. Cummins does not expressly describe oceanic policies or labors, but she affirms their material effect on her domestic world by making transoceanic postal exchanges markers of domestic relations. In short, Cummins's domestic world is also an oceanic one. By extension, the novel reveals the transoceanic dimensions of what postal historian David Henkin calls the mid-nineteenth-century American "culture of the post," or the social, economic, and political currents that motivated and guided postal policy or exchange.[7] The transoceanic post's singular currents resulted from the challenges inherent in the extension of domestic policy and sentimental narration into oceanic space. The establishment of transoceanic mail routes required cooperation with other national governments, new domestic policies, and new forms of maritime labor.[8] In terms of domestic ideology, both popular and political writers were forced to consider whether transoceanic expansion was in conflict with the primacy of familial fellow feeling and nuclear attachment.[9] In response, Cummins fashions a story in which a nascent transoceanic postal circuit is not only functional but also produces new forms of domestic social relations in oceanic space.

In that way, Cummins's validation of select transoceanic postal exchanges speaks to women's engagement in the cultural and material processes through which postal infrastructure became imperial infrastructure. As I will discuss, policymakers recognized that a subsidized postal fleet was the basis for circuits of commercial and martial control between and within oceanic space. The post office, perhaps the most quotidian of all government arms, was a powerful imperial tool precisely *because* of its deep ties to sympathy and to domestic life. Or, to invoke Amy Kaplan, "empire [became] a way of life" through shared domestic practices or investments, in this case the exchange of transoceanic mail as well as belief in its social worth.[10] Each transoceanic letter materially and symbolically supported Sumner's political vision. Gendered assumptions about epistolary culture enhanced middle-class women's role in these postal debates. According to an 1856 *Merchants' Magazine* editorial, cheap postage was "a question that concerns the female sex as well as the lords of creation" because women were the primary writers and recipients of letters.[11] According to this logic, women's social and economic investment in the act of letter writing increased their political visibility and power. Women's access to the stamped letter, not their access to the stamped ballot, typified their political power in this case. That power should not be overlooked. As part of the India mail, Willie's letter contained the literal and symbolic stamps of both sympathy and empire. Tracking this fictional mail and its historical analog is therefore the first step toward reconstructing the U.S. transoceanic post and its guiding sentimental narrations.

"Genuine Calcutta; no Mistake!" Tracking the Indo-American (Postal) Empire

If "every India mail brought news from William Sullivan," as the narrator notes in the first volume of *The Lamplighter*,[12] how did it reach Gertrude in Boston? How much did it cost? Who paid for it? Lastly, why track a fictional letter? First, some answers. A letter from Willie in India, if real, would cost either forty-five or sixty-five cents and would be paid to British and American governments that subsidized private companies. To reach Gertrude, it would pass through no fewer than six foreign ports, including an overland camel route across Egypt, over the span of sixty-two days; the letter would have at least five front and two back postage markings in various colors that noted its route and cost.[13] Of course, discussion of letters as physical objects typically occurs in postal histories and philatelic studies that are more intricate than what literary scholars can present. But as Joseph Roach skillfully shows in *Cities of the Dead*, tracking objects uncovers their social history. Roach concludes after following the South American feather from an indigenous body to the London stage, "As a material object, the feather marks an act of violence: what it cost to produce was the original wearer's life, and what it served to dramatize was the prediction of overarching symbol systems on the material basis of waste."[14] Willie Sullivan's letter, though originating from a dominant (fictional) subject, also names historic acts of violence: what it cost to produce was letter writers' complicity with acts of empire building, and what it served to naturalize was the prediction of overarching transoceanic postal systems on the material basis of sympathy. Failing to consider the physical letter, therefore, obscures empire's material history and trivializes the letter's direct connection to forms of imperial violence. In this spirit, I must reintroduce the sentimental fictions that grounded Indo-American postal policies prior to analyzing the post's power in Cummins's novel.

Just as a sentimental vision of Indo-American exchange comes to ground Cummins's drama of New England domesticity, political claims to fellow feeling grounded U.S. engagements with Britain's (postal) empire. In reality, the union was fragile. As postal historian Wayne Fuller notes, the British government began subsidizing mail steamships in the early 1840s to "wrest control of the Atlantic carrying trade from the Americans" and to provide a ready navy.[15] Britain also refused American mail or levied prohibitive or impractical costs after a letter entered the British mail circuit. As the 1840s wore on, members of the U.S. Congress recognized that England's routes posed a commercial and military threat.[16] In reference to the 1845 act authorizing government subsidies for steamship companies, the Postmaster General stated, "The object of Congress … *seems to have been to build a naval steam marine which might temporarily be employed for commercial purposes*."[17] Though this "naval steam marine" was based on a commercial subsidy, the distinction is slight when one considers why the marine would be effective. Mail boats were war boats, and imperial competition lurked below the surface of commercial enterprises. Tellingly, the first transoceanic American postal treaty was not with England but with the German state of Bremen: the Postmaster General celebrated the 1847 treaty as proof that all of Europe was "intimately connected with us in commercial and social relations." The practical benefit of this "intimate" European sphere of sympathy, the postmaster confirmed, was that American shipping should not be "entirely at [Britain's] mercy in time of peace, and … cut off in case of war."[18]

Despite the ongoing economic proxy war with Great Britain, a U.S.-backed transoceanic post required economic and social ties to imperial India.[19] The eventual postal agreement's purported basis in citizens' sympathy belied an uneasy alliance that joined Britain's strained imperial infrastructure and America's burgeoning power.[20] In lieu of admitting political motives, the writers of the December 1848 postal convention with Great Britain narrated a sentimental domestic fiction across nations. In the treaty's opening, U.S. Minister to Britain George Bancroft and British Secretary of State Lord Palmerston framed themselves as "desirous to promote the friendly relations existing between their respective citizens and subjects."[21] In other words, sympathetic attachments between individual national subjects necessitated a treaty between the nations themselves. Furthermore, the language of "friendly *relations*" declared a familial attachment between competing British and U.S. nations. In this frame, imperial circuits made natural sympathy material. Of course, despite the claim to "friendly relations" as the treaty's universal result, the mail did not have the same effect on "citizens" as it did "subjects." For the former, the treaty provided the economic opportunity to take part in transnational exchanges of sentiment; for the latter, the treaty empowered colonial forces to create more imperial infrastructure to be used in times of peace and war. In the end, the post and its sentimental power subsidized *multiple* imperial circuits.

The India mail was a major priority in U.S. policy since it anchored both an existing and a hoped-for transoceanic circuit. That is, the India mail would facilitate infrastructure joining Calcutta, New York, and San Francisco via a transcontinental railroad or a South American canal. For example, the November 1853 issue of *Merchants' Magazine* included a congressional report that suggested that mail be carried overland via a transcontinental railroad and to Asia by steamer. The editor considered the report "worthy of consideration … for all who are interested in the welfare of our country," thereby connecting American independence and commercial exchange with an imagined unity of sentiment. Not coincidentally, the goals of empire and sympathy turned out to be the same.[22] The report supported authorizing new mail lines "in our provisions for rapid travel and safe and easy means of communication with the great commercial emporiums of the several nations of the earth."[23] The policy presupposed a transcontinental railroad, a technology that required the further appropriation of Native lands and immense foreign labor. Therefore, any "domestic" letter had an expansive material history in national and transnational space.[24] The justification for violent expansion was that "from Calcutta to New York the [delivery] time would be twenty-seven days … being a saving of twenty-three days."[25] In a policy based on "a golden tissue" of economic ties, an efficient imperial circuit stood as the highest moral good.

Since the subsidy program operated at a loss, narrations of sympathy were necessary to support the transoceanic post's social value. In 1854, for example, the U.S. federal government paid two million dollars in postal subsidies and received less than one-quarter of a million dollars in postage revenue, or one-eighth the cost.[26] Charles Sumner and others justified this shortfall by promising future economic rewards and by aligning the subsidized post with moral virtue. Others argued that alternative circuits would lead to true economic and social rewards. In these conditions, a sentimental fiction that staged and affirmed the transoceanic post would be exceedingly valuable. It could, as I will discuss, normalize policy and spur further postal exchanges. According to these terms, an author hoping to promote a distinctly contemporary model of sympathy would do well to include the India mail.

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Like the policymakers I have discussed, Cummins invites readers to align the India mail's transoceanic travel with its sentimental power. As in other domestic fiction, sentimental virtue in *The Lamplighter* is synonymous with access to and control over commodities.[27] In this case, her model New England heroine is invested in an imperial postal circuit. In the novel's first section, for example, readers find Gertrude "one Sabbath afternoon … with an open letter in her hand, the numerous postmarks upon the outside of which proclaimed from whence it came."[28] By naming these "numerous postmarks" and the material history they "proclaim," Cummins signals that the letter has traveled the postal empire but is now a domestic commodity. The letter and the post are proof of Willie's sympathy and therefore must be incorporated into Gertrude's domestic space. Likewise, in the novel's second section, a friend brings Gertrude an "evidently foreign document, the envelope literally covered with various colored post-office stamps" and tells her, "See here, Gerty, genuine Calcutta; no mistake!" The domestic incorporation of this "evidently foreign document" materializes Willie's ability to join "genuine Calcutta" with U.S. domestic space.[29] In other words, he has successfully maintained the "friendly relations" promised in the British and American treaty via his control of an Indo-American economy.

As a merchant who facilitates Indo-American empire, Willie provides a direct parallel to the sentimental figure presented by politicians such as Charles Sumner. As Amy Kaplan notes, Willie is an analog for the many "junior partners—younger brothers and sons" that populate American merchant houses in India.[30] Yet the products of a transoceanic mail make Willie an American domestic subject. To assert this identity, Willie presupposes that the transoceanic post will perform the task Charles Sumner had promised. For Willie, the "idea of any such changes, after all … is what troubles me most in going away";[31] in short, he doesn't want to lose his familial attachments while in India. In response, Willie tells Gertrude upon his departure, "I shall be always hearing from you, and we can talk about it by letters, and arrange everything."[32] Willie's ability to pay postage rates makes the transnational commercial trading house part of the New England home. The India mail is thereby an extension of Willie's character, or one of the "personal possessions … endowed with characterological import" found in texts where middle-class consumption is an act of moral virtue.[33] If successful, Willie would be the emblematic figure for the transoceanic post's power of sympathy.

As Gertrude maintains a domestic connection across the sea, Willie's continued correspondence validates the Boston-to-Calcutta imperial circuit and introduces the southern empire as an alternative space of sympathy. After Willie leaves for Calcutta, Gertrude tends to his mother and grandfather while also spending time with Emily Graham and her father, a wealthy shipping merchant. Gertrude is happy with the Grahams due to their generosity but rejects the Grahams' invitation to join them on a "journey to the south" and an extended stay in Havana.[34] According to Nina Baym, Gertrude's conflict with Mr. Graham is "by far the most important test" of Gertrude's growing commitment to sympathy.[35] In practice, Cummins invokes the India mail as Gertrude's justification and support. Despite Mr. Graham's clear displeasure, Gertrude tells him that duty requires her to stay with Willie's family. In his attempt to chide Gertrude, Mr. Graham states:

> Just because you used to live in the same house with them, and that boy out in Calcutta has sent you home a camel's-hair scarf, and a cage full of miserable little birds, and written you a great package of letters, you think you must forfeit your own interests to take care of his sick relations! I can't say that I see how their claim compares with mine.[36]

According to this merchant, domestic ties are competing "claims" determined by economic "interests." Mr. Graham names Gertrude's initial attachment with Willie's family "in the same house," but he does not see the ongoing viability of that "claim" since Willie no longer exists in domestic space. Mr. Graham bases his own “claim” on the money he has spent on Gertrude’s education, thereby claiming ownership over his ward. Ultimately, however, Graham models an utterly incorrect view of the India mail and its power of sympathy. After all, the narrator considers Graham a man of “prejudiced and narrow sentiments.”[37]

Indeed, Mr. Graham’s claim is self-evidently false due to his rejection of the India mail’s value; the political implication, though implied, is central since Cummins shares Sumner’s belief in the India mail’s power of sympathy. Though Mr. Graham overlooks the material and sympathetic cost of letters and packages, his view is anathema to both Sumner’s domestic fiction and to the middle-class consumer culture presented by Lori Merish in *Sentimental Materialism*. As Merish confirms, “spatial distance is surmounted by the power of sympathy; familial bonds are marked and sustained through the exchange of letters and, especially, gifts.”[38] In this case, “familial bonds” are based on prior sympathetic attachments and are neither limited to domestic boundaries nor invalidated by transoceanic separation. The “great package of letters” justifies Gertrude’s decision and must be considered a link to her previous connections with Willie. This link is bound in Willie’s economic access as an imperial agent. Only those with ready capital could consistently pay for letters that, accounting for inflation and purchasing power, cost the modern equivalent of fourteen or twenty-three dollars.[39] Gertrude is active in these exchanges since, given postage policy did not allow total prepayment, one is to imagine that Gertrude paid either half or the entire fee.[40] Although readers are not told, it would be fitting if the would-be lovers mirrored their exchange of perfect sympathy by splitting the cost of postage. In either case, British and U.S. empires relied on persons such as Gertrude and Willie to materially and discursively subsidize empire’s shared infrastructure.

Moreover, Cummins introduces shipped goods beyond the common mail to further endorse Willie’s sympathetic attachment and the power of imperial circuits. In addition to the valuable letters, Gertrude’s “camel’s-hair scarf” and “cage full of miserable birds” are doubly esteemed since, as Merish notes, nineteenth-century gifts “[exemplify] the Protestant emphasis on the role of possessions in imparting and conveying personal feelings and sentimental commitments.”[41] And as the reference to “camel’s hair” confirms, the foreign gifts’ travel across the sea and along a camel route increases their value. Readers are not told how the scarf and birds were transported, but they did not travel as official imperial mail since the 1848 treaty covered letters, newspapers, and periodicals, but made no provisions for other goods.[42] Yet, any good traveling between Calcutta and Boston would follow an imperial route since companies carried official mail, passengers, and their cargo. Therefore, cargo would be carried through an individual contract or agreement. With this in mind, the scarf is a greater and more explicit act of sympathetic power since it required a personal network of exchange; furthermore, in addition to paying what could only have been an exorbitant price, readers are to imagine that Willie convinced someone to foster his sympathy and feed the birds that stand as the symbolic and material mark of his connection to Gertrude's domestic space. In that way, Cummins establishes a sympathetic tie between Calcutta and Boston that she will come to test against an alternative southern circuit.

"Beneath an Indian Sun": Replacing the Southern (Postal) Empire

As I have shown, Gertrude and Willie's postal exchanges allow them to maintain the individual attachments and imperial circuits promised by Charles Sumner and the 1848 postal treaty. Nonetheless, Cummins does not treat all postal exchanges equally: Mr. Graham's Cuban destination and Willie's status as a "boy in Calcutta" create a distinction between southern and eastern expansion as well as the feelings they produce. A tie to Cuba promises something other than golden fellow feeling. Notably, a friend supports Gertrude's decision to reject the Cuba trip by citing Mr. Graham's "dictatorial way of acting, as if he were the Grand Mogul of Cochin China."[43] The connection between Boston and Cuba is not the product of a domestic agent's moral virtue, one may assume, but results from a foreign agent's unsanctioned power. Mr. Graham is thereby aligned with the loathsome hemispheric South and an ill-defined Far East. The "Grand Mogul" is a European-made title for rulers in the Indian subcontinent, but "Cochin China" refers to either a port city in south India or a region in current-day Vietnam. This disavowal of historical or geographic particularity for the sake of disparaging a clear southern threat parallels the policies I will introduce in this section. The period's postal policy, as an extension of state policy, led to the incomplete rejection of black enslavement in the American south and the acceptance of indentured Chinese or Indian laborers in the Caribbean. While Cummins remains silent on these questions of nonwhite bondage in the Caribbean, she clearly rejects the claims to sympathy on which a southern-based post was founded. In the end, however, her vision of white middle-class virtue rests on the ongoing existence of an Indo-American post and its attendant forms of imperial incursion.

As before, competing sentimental narrations guide postal policy and set the terms for Cummins's domestic fiction. Whether postal circuits and the nation they grounded would be uniformly American or uniquely southern remained an unresolved question following the 1847 subsidy program's initiation. According to Wayne Fuller, "Southerners … had tried as hard as Northerners to get what [mail steamship routes] they could, and they had, in fact, obtained much. But they had not received the prize."[44] They had obtained active ports in the larger transoceanic circuit, but the "prize" was a series of subsidized ocean routes based in New Orleans and other southern cities, including Havana. From 1849 to 1852, seven ships serviced Cuba twice per month. Two more ships were added in 1854.[45] Cuba and New Orleans undoubtedly facilitated state-backed trade and were tempting additions to an expanded southern American circuit. Indeed, President Franklin Pierce used Spain's 1854 seizure of the U.S. mail ship *Black Warrior* in Cuba as a pretext for overtaking or purchasing the island.[46] U.S. senator and eventual presidential candidate Stephen Douglas considered George Law, the owner of the U.S. Mail Steamship Company and its subsidized routes, to be a major ally with respect to his policy of Cuban annexation.[47] Law was also a major supporter of filibusters who sought to take southern territory by force.[48] These martial missions received support from popular sentimental narrations: for example, many Cuban exiles publishing in the American popular press attempted to apply "sentido común," or the unity of sentiments introduced in Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, to the annexation of Cuba.[49]

If the post aided or aligned with select figures' quest for American expansion, others considered the mail's secessionist potential. As Kristen Silva Gruesz states, southern agents envisioned a "near in-empire, analogous to the British in India" and defined by slaveholding interests in Cuba and South America; like its British counterpart, this southern "near in-empire" would be built on transoceanic postal infrastructure.[50] Famed oceanographer and eventual Confederate naval officer Matthew Maury most clearly outlined this policy. For Maury, the mail could concretize the natural correspondence between oceanographic currents and slaveholding sympathy. According to Walter Johnson, "Maury's vision of economic space was global and mercantile, defined by connections and flows: the riverine and maritime geography that defined the Mississippi Valley and the cotton kingdom was projected globally as empire."[51] In practice, the mail grounded this vision's material and discursive terms as well as its latent secessionist character. In an 1851 speech given to the Virginia Mercantile Convention and published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, Maury called for a transoceanic *postal* empire reaching the Amazon River and the Atlantic shore of Europe. As Maury recognized, the mail subsidy was a strategic asset in constructing empire since it validated and paid for an imperial infrastructure. Since New York interests had created mail routes through which "the federal government committed to the tune of many millions for her steam ship enterprise," the hoped-for southern empire would follow that subsidy program.[52] As Maury stated, "The contract for carrying the mails would protect those who may be first to embark in this field, from competition for a few years, which, while the company is getting a foothold, is no small consideration"[53] (696). Therefore, the mail would foster conditions for building southern economic and social ties throughout the Americas.

In other words, Maury's sentimental narration reoriented the vision of "peaceful supremacy" supported by Sumner toward slaveholding interests. After a postal circuit was set, a southern transoceanic empire would result since "the whole of Europe must pass by our very doors on the great highway to the markets both of the East and the West Indies." Maury naturalized this unity by stating that the southern cities near the Gulf and its stream were "destined by Nature to be the greatest commercial receptacles in the world."[54] In other words, Sumner's "golden tissue" would be replaced by Maury's "great highway." This independent infrastructure would be expedient in the case of southern secession since "it is well to have the ability to go or to send [ourselves and our slaves further south]."[55] According to a *Southern Literary Messenger* editor, Maury's speech "commends itself to the attention of every man who has at heart the commercial independence of the South."[56] The post was therefore part of broader competitions regarding southern economic and social power. Indeed, Maury repeated his plan throughout the period,[57] which was serious enough to compel an 1854 gathering of northern congressmen.[58] Maury's plan failed, as did various southern commercial groups' similar attempts to leverage the subsidized mail system.[59]

Though federal policymakers largely countered these southern slaveholding visions, state agents assumed that subjects in China and the

Indian subcontinent would serve as both consumers and laborers in an expansive southern economy. Again, U.S. government agents aligned imperial circuits with moral sympathy. For example, the 1853 government report seeking to connect New York to Calcutta and San Francisco noted, “To the Christian and philanthropist this enterprise appeals with irresistible force. The influence which such a regular and extensive communication must have with the spiritual conditions of the Asiatic races is incalculable.”[60] State agents upheld a postal empire since the philanthropist, whose “communication” could be both commercial and sympathetic, served a purpose higher than empire. The editor of *Merchants' Magazine* mocked the government report's narrative terms while affirming its ideological ones. He stated:

> I recommend the introduction of two or three hundred million baby-jumpers in order to mitigate the sufferings, and straighten the bow legs, of the children now slung on their anxious mothers' backs; this alone would support one steam line if Uncle Sam will pay part of the expense, and it would so far improve the breed, that the emigration of Coolies to Cuba would be much more valuable than at present.[61]

In short, the editor named the incongruity between this “philanthropic impulse,” a narration of disinterested sympathy, and the creation of new consumer markets and access to cheap labor. Subsidy of empire was not charity, but an investment in colonization. A sarcastic domestic fiction based on “anxious mothers” has a material outcome since it “would support one steam line if Uncle Sam will pay part of the expense.” In fact, this “charity” did violence to the object of sympathy: the “value” of these children of “the breed” referred to their capacity for future labor. Of course, the reference to “emigration” of Chinese laborers to Cuba implied a voluntary movement that belied the forceful nature of indentured servitude and the brutal conditions of the indenture trade.[62] Despite the editor's rejection of domestic fiction, however, he supported imperial circuits. The editor stated that the “present unsettled state” of China meant that empire would be built “once the rebels have done quarreling with the imperialists and with each other.”[63] The reference to the Taiping Rebellion signaled that imperial circuits were a product of military violence rather than natural domestic attachment. The imagined transoceanic empire would be distinct from the African slavery that marked the southern empire, but it would forward its own forms of racial violence.

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If Maury and others framed the post as a natural extension of southern sympathy, Cummins rejects their material and narrative terms by presenting unsentimental postal exchanges. Cummins does not mention slavery but still counteracts a southern vision by representing New Orleans and Cuba as an improper circuit of sympathy whose economic and social spread would be disastrous. It is unclear why Mr. Graham goes to Cuba and separates from his family while there. Perhaps this successful Boston merchant owned a plantation or joined American Atlantic-seaboard companies' attempts to "modernize Cuban sugar production."[64] At any rate, Cummins frames Cuba as less fit for domestic incorporation than Calcutta. Cummins probes the India mail's sentimental limits to affirm Gertrude's moral purity, but the author's antisouthern yet pro-imperial vision presumes white, middle-class subjects' access to the sentimental and economic spoils of a U.S. (postal) empire.

The form and content of Emily Graham's letter from Cuba, which "contained little that was satisfactory," reveal Cummins's strategic rejection of southern sympathy.[65] Gertrude receives only one letter from Cuba. The letter, written in a Havana boarding house "kept by an American lady, and crowded with visitors from Boston, New York, and other northern cities," presents a domestic space devoid of proper sympathy and capable of breeding false sentiment. Although Emily does not complain, she "feels kind of strange here" because it is a "dreadful uncomfortable sort of place." A lack of domestic comfort codes as moral failing: in addition to lacking carpets and fireplaces, the "windows have no glass about them but are grated just like a prison."[66] The number of northerners speaks to Cuba's increased popularity, but the narrator critiques any person, northerner or southerner, who attempts to incorporate Cuba into their domestic space. Moreover, Cummins signals that northerners should be wary of Cuba since its U.S. inhabitants could foster improper domestic relations. Of particular note is a "flaunting kind of woman" and "loud-talking woman" who will come to marry the equally sentiment-deprived Mr. Graham.[67] Gertrude is told via letter that Mr. Graham had "thought better of it" when the woman courted him in Havana, but she "carried her point, and married him" when they arrived in New Orleans.[68] That this ill-conceived attachment began in Cuba but was confirmed in New Orleans signals the power of false sentiment when linked to U.S. domestic space.

After the Grahams return to Boston, Cummins juxtaposes the India letter's power in eliciting sympathetic and sexual feeling with the sexual violence of Mr. Bruce, a rake associated with New Orleans. Mr. Bruce meets the Grahams in New Orleans, becomes a favorite of Emily's vapid stepsisters, and joins them at a dinner party. Though Mr. Bruce is not born a southerner, he is aligned with the South since "amid the gayety and dissipation of southern cities [he] contrived to waste his time with tolerable satisfaction."[69] This "gayety and dissipation" is code for sexual indiscretion and reflects the sexual threat facing those in contact with southern sentiments. As Gertrude receives a letter from Willie during a dinner party, Mr. Bruce "kept his eyes upon her, and half expected to see her change color and look disconcerted, on the letter being handed to her in the presence of so many witnesses." His response signals the intimate and sexual event of letter exchanges. Indeed, they require exchanging fluid, breaking seals, wielding pens, and opening previously closed envelopes. Gertrude attempts to enact this ritual in its appropriate setting, her private bedroom, but Mr. Bruce "noticed the movement, and now entered … in time to arrest her steps."[70] He forces himself between Gertrude and the stairs. A hoped-for private exchange of sentiment exists alongside a public act of sexual and psychic violence.

If the letter from Cuba indicates that false sentiment prevails in a southern circuit, Mr. Bruce's rakishness signals that the spread of that sympathy north is a sexual and political threat. As Elizabeth Barnes notes, "In American fiction … seduction and sympathy take on decidedly political connotations."[71] The imagined southern conquest of northern virtue reveals itself as a danger, albeit one that can be overcome. Gertrude appears to enact her desire as she escapes Bruce and reads the letter "devoted to fervent and earnest expression of gratitude." Willie's letter is a response to his mother's death and reasserts the transoceanic post's sympathetic power to maintain domesticity. Gertrude spends an hour "lost in meditation" and is fulfilled by thoughts of Willie. However, the southern threat does not abate. Gertrude hears Mr. Bruce beneath her window and recalls the "professions of admiration he had contrived to whisper in her ear." Remembrance of the violation overcomes her exchange with Willie, and she is "wounded by the confident and assured manner in which Mr. Bruce made his advances."[72] She rejects Mr. Bruce, but the rake overcomes Willie's limited protective authority. Though this scene can be read as a critique of the domestic separation fostered by imperialism, Cummins mainly censures a southern threat. In the end, Gertrude relies on her own virtue and distances herself from this unwanted suitor. She successfully avoids Mr. Bruce and waits patiently for Willie's future letters and eventual return.

Despite her rejection of Cuba, Cummins signals the potential limits of sympathy across *any* imperial circuit, thereby distinguishing between perfect domestic sentiments and mediated transoceanic ones. Even as Cummins announces "Every India mail brought news from William Sullivan," she indicates that the sympathy maintained across postal empires may strain domestic relations. The passage continues, "who, prosperous in business, and rendered happy, even in his exile, by the belief that the friends he loved best were in the enjoyment of the fruits of his exertions, wrote always in his accustomed strain of cheerfulness."[73] The contrast between "the belief" and "his exile" indicates that imperial agents perhaps maintain false domestic attachments. The family welcomes the money Willie gains in the transnational merchant trade, or the "fruits of his exertions," but Cummins signals that the material benefits of trade may not outweigh the domestic costs. For example, Gertrude does not tell Willie about the death of his grandfather, at his mother's request. Of course, Willie is not to be blamed for his optimism, since Gertrude's letter had "nothing mentioned which would be likely to alarm him on my account."[74] Nonetheless, letters are synonymous with both true sympathetic connection and the inherent threat to sympathy across imperial circuits.

Using these terms, Cummins narrates a dream sequence that protects Willie and similar imperial agents from judgment while privileging a universal sympathy that is itself reliant on imperial power. During Mrs. Sullivan's final months before her death, Willie's presence in India appears to preclude sympathetic attachments and, by extension, demonstrate the domestic cost of imperial expansion. In response, Mrs. Sullivan dreams she is visiting Willie in India. While I agree with Etsuko Taketani that this scene is "complicated and negotiated by histories of British rule in South Asia,"[75] I do not conclude that it is a "feminized version of U.S. imperialism."[76] As Sumner's narrative made clear, political policies relied on sentimental tropes that trouble absolute gender distinctions. Indeed, Mrs. Sullivan's dream, which "could not have been more vivid, if it had all been reality,"[77] may be read as a response to a contemporary *Merchants' Magazine* writer who claimed that imperial agents would be safe due to letter writers' ability to "surround them with a continual presence of home, with all its blessed restraints and genial influences."[78] Mrs. Sullivan stages Willie's need for restraint by imagining that he has gambled away his money and is about to be ensnared by a "cold-hearted and worldly" woman.[79] Despite the material limits of empire and its potential vices, however, Cummins reasserts domestic control over transoceanic space. Mrs. Sullivan reaches Willie in India and tells Gertrude, “The motion was so gentle that I did not grow weary, though in my journey I travelled over land and sea.”[80] Since her journey does not weary her, imperial circuits’ material and symbolic costs disappears. To believe in sympathy’s ultimate power is to share Mrs. Sullivan’s faith and, by extension, to assert that transoceanic breaks from domesticity need not prevent imperial agents’ ongoing domestication of foreign space.

Nonetheless, Cummins introduces Willie’s eventual failure to send letters via the India mail to present Gertrude’s final crisis of sympathy. In the process, Cummins validates Sumner’s alignment of transoceanic empire with sympathy even as she hints that Christian virtue, rather than imperial circuits, are the only guarantors of moral attachment. When Willie returns, seemingly betrothed to another, Gertrude attempts to invoke his status as an imperial agent as proof of his sympathy. She states, “Had he not in his early youth forsaken all that he held most dear, to toil and labor beneath an Indian sun to provide comforts and luxuries for those whose support he eagerly took upon himself?”[81] Willie’s break from domestic space is recast as the ultimate sympathetic act; Willie’s current faults are drawn against his “toil and labor” in a foreign climate. The need for imperial infrastructure, framed as support for domestic “comforts and luxuries,” can make up for seeming lapses in sympathy. And yet, Gertrude continues to seek proof of Willie attachment. The deciding question is a test of Sumner’s domestic fiction that imperial circuits are guarantors of sympathy. The narrator asks:

> During their long and regular correspondence, no letter had come from Willie that did not breathe the same spirit of devoted affection for Gertrude … The bold declaration on Willie’s part, conveyed in a letter received soon after his mother’s death, that his hopes, his prayers, his labors, were now all for her, was that not a more convincing proof of the tender light in which he regarded her than all their previous intercourse had been?[82]

If one believes that sympathy is necessarily maintained via the transoceanic post, letters containing the “same spirit of devoted affection” should be self-evident proof. In other words, one’s negative response to Willie directly leads to a dismissal of policies that align the transoceanic post with sympathy. If Willie lied and “his hopes, his prayers, his labors” were based on his own vice, one could critique him as one would Sumner.

In both cases, sympathy was falsely narrated to justify economic and sexual transgressions. Ultimately, Gertrude validates both sympathy and imperial circuits: "their long and regular correspondence" demonstrates that Willie's feeling is true. The letters, as the final and most convincing "evidence of his worth," also validate the worth of a "golden thread" between Calcutta and Boston. Of course, Gertrude, not the postal system, is Cummins's model of sympathy. At the novel's climax, Gertrude risks her life saving Willie's alleged fiancé from drowning; Gertrude proves her moral perfection by saving a woman with whom Gertrude "had so little sympathy or congeniality."[83] Tellingly, however, Gertrude's first words to Willie after their reunion are "you did not write."[84] Willie, not the imperial post, had proven lacking.

Indeed, the novel's resolution relies on imperial agents' ability to navigate (postal) empires and on the expected success of American mercantile efforts in India. If southern expansion to Cuba or Rio breaks familial bonds and promises sickness and death, its broken circuit of sympathy must be rebuilt on a new circuit based in New York and extending to India. Gertrude's father, Phillip, was thought dead because his employer wrote a letter to Miss Emily, Philip's would-be lover and Gertrude's best friend, saying the man had succumbed to the "infection prevailing in the low and unhealthy region" of Rio's interior.[85] Instead, Phillip survives Rio and travels across the American West to Asia; his prior failure in the southern circuit leads to increased economic and sympathetic power in a northern-backed one. Amazingly, Willie saves Phillip during a fight with an "Arab traitor … and his rascally army of Bedouin rogues."[86] Cummins uses colonized figures as foils for sympathetic connections made on the India mail route. The "Bedouin rogue" is the only non-European figure in the novel, and Willie's "heroism" parallels the installment of imperial infrastructures via acts of colonial violence. If Willie's act of selflessness establishes his own capacity for sympathy, it also reasserts his status as an imperial agent. This meeting also leads to the novel's final domestic arrangement wherein Willie marries Gertrude and Phillip marries Miss Emily.

By the novel's close, Cummins replaces a transoceanic postal infrastructure with domestic landed attachments. As Elizabeth Barnes argues, Cummins "weds capitalist and religious values" in her ending since domesticity corresponds with the ability to buy a home and its related commodities.[87] But while Cummins appears to reclaim an insular domesticity by bringing Willie home, the products of Indo-American relations remain. Readers are not told if Gertrude keeps Willie's letters in their home, but she had kept them during his absence. In any case, she has no reason to dispose of the scarf or the birds that also validate sympathy and empire. To purge these commodities would weaken domestic sympathy and, perhaps indirectly, deny empire's necessary role in maintaining true sentiment. That neither Gertrude nor Willie consider larger policy debates, question which empires their letters fund, or name Willie's complicity in imperial violence shows how the India mail has become just another part of middle class sympathy. The novel's model marriage joins domestic and transoceanic space; by extension, Cummins supports the "peaceful supremacy" promised by Charles Sumner.

The Prospect of U.S. (Postal) Empire

In his 1852 speech, Charles Sumner argued that sympathy's "natural" growth validated empire's advance. Since "with every faculty of correspondence, there is naturally a new expansion of human intercourse," transoceanic postal circuits would lead to expanded sympathy.[88] As proof, he noted that current postal circuits were much larger than those created seven years prior. In this frame, circuits of sympathy and empire would always be wed. Of course, one could share Sumner's domestic fiction and still question the subsidy of (postal) empire. For example, congressional Representative R.E. Fenton argued in an 1854 speech that imperial expansion should not outpace the current "interchange of sentiment" in which "friendly greetings are exchanged. *Parental, filial, and fraternal sentiments* are fostered and kept fresh in the hearts of separated friends."[89] In a similar mode, a *Merchants' Magazine* editor in 1856 rejected current prices since the transoceanic post carried "the business and affections of the great universal public, more than all the [other government departments] combined."[90] Yet both authors questioned *when* imperial circuits should spread rather than *if* they were compatible with fellow feeling. Notwithstanding claims on the imperial post's moral basis, its spread aligned with trends in U.S. domestic culture. The number of letters exchanged between the U.S. and Europe in 1844 (1.5 million) compared to 1860 (6 million) signaled an exponential growth in shared business and sentiments.[91] The U.S. government relied on these letters' material and cultural value to justify imperial circuits.

Within this system, *The Lamplighter* is a powerful reminder that Indo-American relations and the culture of the transoceanic post proved vital to the prospect of U.S. empire in 1848. This date, if not the 1848 British-American treaty, is now recognized as a historical flashpoint for

U.S. imperial ambition. A turn to 1848, as Shelley Streeby notes, forces the "re-examination of a longer history of empire in the Americas" based on "global and internal dynamics of empire building" that existed prior to the Spanish–American War.[92] Streeby focuses on the U.S.–Mexico War and the 1848 European revolutions; yet the "boost to U.S. power in world systems" she discusses was also materially enacted in the 1848 postal treaty and related narrations. As I have shown, the postal debates informed "battles for influence in and control of the Americas," particularly debates regarding an imagined southern empire, as well as incursions into India.[93] The post was vital in imagining and enacting empires that came (or did not come) to follow. Moreover, Cummins's authentication of the India mail ties Indo-American relations to domestic forms of imperialism. The imperial circuit promised by India mail included the use of immigrant labor to build transcontinental rail, the further encroachment of Native American lands, and the default on land grants under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.[94] In that way, the material and fictional transoceanic letter exchanges I have recounted provide another example of what Ann Laura Stoler calls the "familiar, strange, and unarticulated ways in which empire has appeared and disappeared from the intimate and public spaces of the United States."[95] Though Gertrude is a fictional subject, she may stand for the white, middle-class letter writers who not only constituted their domestic identities through sentimental epistolary exchanges [96] but also affirmed their stake in nineteenth-century imperial circuits. Gertrude assumes her right to the India mail and, with it, affirms Sumner's claim to a "golden tissue between the two hemispheres." If every India mail brought news from Willie Sullivan, it also posted a new imperial age.

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NOTES

1. Charles Sumner, "Cheap Ocean Postage: Speech of the Hon. Charles Sumner," *Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* 26, no. 5 (1852): 648.
2. According to *Merchants'* editor Freeman Hunt, his magazine's aim was to show how the true merchant "learns to look upon all nations as knit together by the ties of mutual dependence, to regard all men as kindred.

The call to “ties of mutual dependence” and “kindred” men affirms a distinctly sentimental vision of economic union. Freeman Hunt, “The Editor to His Friends and Patrons,” *The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review* 21, no. 1 (1849): 143.

3. Nina Baym, introduction to *The Lamplighter* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), xix. Scholars following Baym have added specific examples of this premise that I will not address here, including the novel’s ties to adoption policy (Weinstein 2004), its relation to middle-class capitalist anxiety (Pazicky 1998, 147–177), its formal unity with other domestic fictions (Bauermeister 1991), its relation to nineteenth-century attitudes toward childhood (Singley 2011), and Cummins’s false equation of economic and spiritual sympathy (Lang 1992).
4. As Susan Williams (2006, 78) notes, the novel’s popularity is matched only by Susan Warner’s *The Wide Wide World* (1850) and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852); it reportedly sold forty thousand copies in its first month and seventy-three thousand copies in its first year. Moreover, as Williams (1996, 180) discusses elsewhere, the novel’s multiple British and American editions, in addition to French, German, Danish, Italian, Dutch, and Czech translations, allowed Cummins to “perform and extend its cultural work” across lines of age, class, gender, and nation.
5. While I agree that the period’s narratives “construct domestic locations in complex negotiations with the foreign,” as Amy Kaplan argues (2002, 1), the material history I will present problematizes Kaplan’s claim that sentiment in *The Lamplighter* supports the “work of [female characters] purging both themselves and their homes of foreignness” (2002, 43). Cummins does not purge the India mail but makes its materials central to the heroine’s domestic identity.
6. Hester Blum, “The Prospect of Oceanic Studies,” *PMLA* 125, no. 3 (2010): 670, 671. For a recent overview of the field, see Michelle Burnham (2016).
7. David Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 7. Henkin briefly mentions the transoceanic post in his epilogue, but his is decidedly a study of domestic culture. Scholars in this domestic mode have studied the mail and nineteenth-century morality (Fuller 2003), the post’s effect on U.S. political and public life (John, *Spreading,* 1995), and the post’s spread alongside the spread of mass communication and government infrastructure (Kielbowicz 1989).
8. Peter Shulman (2015) provides a more sustained historical analysis of the policies that led to the treaty and subsidy program.
9. Melissa Gniadek (2015) similarly joins the domestic and the oceanic in her reading of Caroline Kirkland’s frontier narrative *A New Home, Who’ll*

Follow? or, Glimpses of Western Life (1839) as a mediation on the nature of home in a maritime world. Brian Sinche (2012, 64) has also theorized sympathy's transoceanic expansion of the period and focuses on the "[oceanic] limits of sentimentalism as a literary mode and an imaginative force" as expressed in Lydia Sigourney's nineteenth-century poetry. If sailors' sentimental ties to home remain impossibly rent in oceanic space, as Sigourney appears to admit, writers like Sumner and Cummins believe in sympathy's ability to cross oceanic space.

10. Amy Kaplan, "Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 14.
11. "The Post-Office As It Has Been, Is, and Should Be: As A Means of Modern Civilization," in *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review*. 35, no. 6 (1856): 697.
12. Maria Cummins, *The Lamplighter* (1854) reprint (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 167.
13. Based on scholarly accounts of the India mail system (Sidebottom 1948), there are multiple possible routes. A likely string of ports would be Calcutta, Madras, Point de Galle, Aden, Suez, Malta, Southampton, New York, Boston. Given the typical markings as outlined by scholars (Winter 2006), the letter could foreseeably contain one red and one black circular datestamp in front, two black circular datestamps in back, two red straight-line postmarks in front, a black "debit number" marking showing the amount due to the British for services, and a black number indicating the total postage due. These markings would depend on the ports of entry and the kinds of payments applied.
14. Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 131.
15. Wayne Fuller, *The American Mail: Enlarger of the Common Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 195.
16. Matthew Karp (2011) has outlined Naval Committee Chairman Thomas Butler King's campaign for more ships in response to fears of British imperialism.
17. Quoted in "The Post-Office As It Has Been, Is, and Should Be: As A Means of Modern Civilization," *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* 35, no. 6 (1856): 692.
18. Quoted in "American Ocean Steam Navigation: Or the First American Steamship to Bremen," *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* 17, no. 4 (1847): 357.
19. Jane Moubray and Michael Moubray (1992) provide a more complete account of the British postal empire, complete with maps.
20. Howard Fuller (2013) has outlined the challenges facing British maritime imperialism in the period.

21. George Bancroft, "Postal Convention with Great Britain. Dec 13, 1848," *The Statutes at Large and Treaties of the United States of America from December 1, 1845 to March 3, 1851*, 9.29 (1862): 965.
22. R B F, "Art. II.—Of the Establishment of a Line of Mail Steamers," *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review.* 29, no. 5 (1853): 549.
23. Quoted in R.B.F., 550.
24. Here I risk confirming Jodi Byrd's (2011, 6) appropriate lament that "indigenous peoples, especially in lands now occupied by the United States, continue to serve as signposts and grave markers along the roads of empire." A deeper account of indigenous communities' relation to postal history and its violence merits discussion.
25. Ibid., 550.
26. "The Post-Office As It Has Been," 692. For the official subsidy levels in 1854, see "Appropriations for Transporting the U.S. Mail by Steamers," *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* 29, no. 1 (1853): 121. Wayne Fuller (2003, 204) notes that costs of the subsidies "convinced many members of Congress in the early 1850s that the subsidization program had been a mistake."
27. Here I echo Lori Merish (2000, 2–3), who affirms that nineteenth-century domestic novels came to "[reinvent] capitalist economic and commodity structures as forms of interiority proper to 'private,' domestic life." As I discuss, the capitalist structure that makes the India mail possible also grounds Gertrude's moral domestic space. Lori Merish, *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).
28. Cummins, *Lamplighter*, 167.
29. Ibid., 199.
30. Kaplan, *Anarchy*, 284. James Fichter (2010) provides an extensive historical overview of early American trade in India, as do some of the essays in this collection.
31. Cummins, *Lamplighter*, 106.
32. Ibid.
33. Merish, *Sentimental*, 2.
34. Ibid., 147.
35. Baym, "Introduction," xxiii.
36. Cummins, *Lamplighter*, 140.
37. Ibid.
38. Merish, *Sentimental*, 133.
39. I used the calculations produced by Lawrence Offer at *MeasuringWorth* (2013) to approximate the relative worth of forty-five cents in 1853.
40. Many thanks to John Barwis, President of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, for revealing the issue of prepayment.

41. Merish, *Sentimental*, 133.
42. Carl H. Scheele, *A Short History of the Mail Service* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1970), 70.
43. Cummins, *Lamplighter*, 155.
44. *American Mail*, 208.
45. Robert Stone, *A Caribbean Neptune: The Maritime Postal Communications of the Greater and Lesser Antilles in the 19th Century* (New York: Philatelic Foundation, 1993), 276.
46. Robert May, *Slavery, Race and Conquest in the Tropics: Lincoln, Douglas, and the Future of Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 115.
47. Ibid., 70.
48. Robert May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 174.
49. Rodrigo Lazo, *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 4.
50. Kirsten Silva Gruesz, "The Gulf of Mexico System and the 'Latinness' of New Orleans," *American Literary History* 18, no. 3 (2006): 485. Gruesz does not focus on postal history but discusses attempts to establish a New Orleans–based Tehuantepec route via an 1854 survey.
51. Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 299. Johnson also notes Maury's call for an "exclusive right to send U.S. mail to Oregon from the Mississippi Valley" (297) and alludes to the "New York monopoly over the mail service" (258). Yet one can easily miss this mail within Johnson's expansive study. Similar analyses of Maury's southern vision (Guterl 2008; Maddox 2007; Horne 2007) do not consider the mail.
52. Matthew Maury, "The Commercial Prospects of the South," *Southern Literary Messenger* 17, no. 10 (1851): 687.
53. Ibid., 696.
54. Ibid., 692.
55. Ibid., 698.
56. Ibid., 688.
57. Maury's other publications of his plan include the following: "Direct Foreign Trade of the South," *Debow's Review* 12, no. 2 (1852): 126–148; "On Extending the Commerce of the South and West by Sea," *Debow's Review* 12, no. 4 (1852): 381–399; "Shall the Valleys of the Amazon and Mississippi Reciprocate Trade?" *Debow's Review* 14, no. 2 (1853): 136–145; "Valley of the Amazon," *Debow's Review* 14, no. 5 (1853): 449–60; "Valley of the Amazon, No. II," *Debow's Review* 14, no. 6 (1853): 556–567.

58. As Robert May (2013, 111) notes, Whig Senator Solomon Foot and other northern congressman aligned with the free soil movement argued that once Cuba, the Dominican, and Haiti were annexed, "the government would seek a Brazilian alliance giving U.S. slavery entrée into the Amazon River Valley."
59. Examples include: "Connections of the Atlantic with the Gulf- Interests of Alabama," *Debow's Review* 14, no. 6 (1853): 567–572; "Florida- Its Positions, Resources, and Destiny," *Debow's Review* 14, no. 4 (1853): 312–336; "The Baltimore Southern Commercial Convention," *Debow's Review* 14, no. 4 (1853): 373–379.
60. Quoted in R B F, "Art. II.—Of the Establishment of a Line of Mail Steamers," *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review.* 29, no. 5 (1853): 558.
61. Ibid., 559.
62. While I only refer to the so-called "coolie trade," Moon-Ho Jung (2006) provides a more comprehensive history of this Indo-Caribbean system of indenture between 1830 and 1880. Lisa Yun (2008) analyzes of 1874 testimonials from Chinese laborers, who often suffered great violence at the hands of traders and overseers.
63. Ibid., 559.
64. Matthew Pratt Guterl, "An American Mediterranean: Haiti, Cuba, and the Antebellum South," in *Hemispheric American Studies*, 96–115 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 100.
65. Cummins, *Lamplighter*, 167.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., 181.
69. Ibid., 202.
70. Ibid., 200.
71. Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), x.
72. Cummins, *Lamplighter*, 201.
73. Ibid., 167.
74. Ibid., 168.
75. Etsuko Taketani, *U.S. Women Writers and the Discourses of Colonialism, 1825–1861* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 90.
76. Ibid., 87.
77. Cummins, *Lamplighter*, 170.
78. "The Moral and Social Benefits of Cheap Postage," *Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* 21, no. 6 (1849): 606
79. Cummins, *Lamplighter*, 172.
80. Ibid., 170.

81. Ibid., 308.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid., 300.
84. Ibid, 366.
85. Ibid., 400. Though Philip's business in Rio's interior is inevitably intertwined with a slave economy, Cummins makes no direct mention of slavery. Cummins's failure to actively critique Philip for his connection with slavery fits with a version of northern liberalism that rejects a southern empire without actively naming the horrors of slavery or northern investments in the trade.
86. Ibid., 341.
87. Barnes, *States*, 90.
88. Sumner, "Cheap," 648.
89. Fenton, R.E, "The Postal System. Speech of Hon. R.E. Fenton, of New York, in the House of Representatives, June 1854," *Congressional Globe* 33, no. 1 (1854): 1017.
90. "The Post-Office As It Has Been," 693.
91. Fuller, *American Mail*, 209.
92. Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 77.
93. Ibid., 8.
94. For example, a postal agent began to establish offices in the land taken in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; the first mail steamship left New York for Panama by year's end, ushering in a dramatic increase in colonizers.
95. Ann Laura Stoler, "Intimidations of Empire: Predicaments of the Tactile and Unseen," in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 1.
96. Scholars (Dierks 2009; Strouth Gaul and Harris 2009) continue to consider nineteenth-century American epistolary culture and its connection to imperial violence as well as white, middle class identity. Tracking the mail provides a more expansive material base for this field.

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