

Prospects

<http://journals.cambridge.org/PTS>

Additional services for **Prospects**:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)

On Forgetting: Thomas Nast, the Middle Class, and the Visual Culture of the Draft Riots

Ross Barrett

Prospects / Volume 29 / October 2005, pp 25 - 55

DOI: 10.1017/S036123330000168X, Published online: 30 July 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S036123330000168X

How to cite this article:

Ross Barrett (2005). On Forgetting: Thomas Nast, the Middle Class, and the Visual Culture of the Draft Riots. *Prospects*, 29, pp 25-55 doi:10.1017/S036123330000168X

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

On Forgetting: Thomas Nast, the Middle Class, and the Visual Culture of the Draft Riots

ROSS BARRETT

IN SEPTEMBER OF 1863, Thomas Nast produced a seemingly bucolic scene of children at play, *The Attack on the "Home Guard,"* for the lithographic firm of Currier and Ives (Figure 1).¹ Organized around a strange confrontation, in which a dog bites at the pant leg of a little boy in a military uniform as another, nonuniformed boy stabs at the dog with a bayonet-tipped rifle, the print diverges from sentimental 19th-century envisionings of middle-class domestic life by including an act of violence in the normally sanctified space of the home. Not surprisingly, the unusual content and ambiguous tone of *The Attack on the "Home Guard"* has puzzled historians of visual culture.² When read in the context of contemporaneous popular illustration, however, the elusive meaning of Nast's lithograph begins to take shape.

As Nast completed his design for *The Attack on the "Home Guard,"* Northern cartoonists and illustrators were hard at work reframing the troubling legacy of the New York draft riots, which held the city at bay for five days in July of 1863.³ At the core of the highly complex set of events that constituted the riots was a development that must have been particularly alarming to members of the Northern middle and upper classes: a violent, largely Irish working-class attack on the sociopolitical hierarchy of the city. Almost as soon as the riots had begun, this threatening component of the upheaval began to be reframed; by the end of the violence, and the beginning of autumn, reporters, editors, historians, poets, illustrators, and cartoonists had reworked the riots in a number of ways, all of which served to reassure and comfort their nervous audiences. *Attack on the "Home Guard"* and *Light Artillery* (Figure 2), another lithograph of 1863 that Nast likely completed around the same time (its exact date of completion is unknown), participate in this reframing, transferring the troubling spectacle of the riots to the safely sentimental sphere of genre representation. That is, Nast's prints worked to reestablish the dominance



Figure 1. Thomas Nast, *The Attack on the "Home Guard."* Published by Currier and Ives (1864). The Harry T. Peters Collection, Museum of the City of New York.

of the middle and upper classes after that dominance was violently threatened, but they did so in mediated, indirect fashion: in the safe and sentimental realm of childhood. In confronting the violent spectacle of the riots, then, Nast, and many of the journalists, illustrators, and cartoonists of the popular Northern (middle class) press, attempted to repress the stark realities of class conflict and present their audiences instead with fanciful, sentimental, and humorous demonstrations of the resilience of the social structure and the power relations contained therein. This journalistic and pictorial reframing of class conflict was, as we will see, not without precedent; a careful analysis of the responses of reporters and printmakers to the Astor Place riot of 1849 suggests a broader history of textual and imagistic reframing of violent social upheaval within 19th-century American journalism and visual culture.

The ideological work of *Attack on the "Home Guard"* and *Light Artillery* may not have been part of a consciously conceived and executed program; it does, however, seem to have sprung from the artist's personal experience. Nast was himself comfortably ensconced within the white-collar set



Figure 2. Thomas Nast, *Light Artillery*. Published by Currier and Ives (1863). The Harry T. Peters Collection, Museum of the City of New York.

by 1863, thanks to a profitable arrangement with *Harper's Weekly* and his marriage to Sarah Edwards, whose network of family and friends were, as historian Morton Keller noted, "of the genteel middle class."⁴ The successful artist, a resident of New York City, apparently witnessed the riots firsthand in July of 1863 and made sketches of various riotous incidents.⁵ Though Nast's subsequent pictorial reworking of the violent social challenge of the riots may have been an attempt to come to terms with his own direct experience, the character and trajectory of that attempt seem to have been dictated by his material conditions, his membership in the middle class. In tackling his own memories of the violent affair, Nast thus

seems, consciously or unconsciously, to have answered the needs of his audience.⁶

The draft riots began on Monday, July 13, 1863, after it became clear that the recent Conscription Act would indeed be enforced in New York, despite resistance from local Democrats and the Democrat-controlled state house. Two provisions of the act, which passed in March of 1863, ensured that the working class, and in New York this included the sizable Irish immigrant population, would bear the brunt of the conscription drive: those citizens who could find (and thus pay) a substitute or pay a three-hundred-dollar fee were exempted from service. At the same time, the stipulation that only *citizens* were eligible for the draft eliminated freed black populations from the draft pool. As historian Iver Bernstein has noted, these provisions aggravated immigrant resentment in New York against the elite classes and the black community. The former embodied the privilege and power unavailable to the immigrant population; the latter were considered a threat to the social, political, and economic position of the Irish working class.⁷ When violence broke out on July 13th, these groups became principal targets of the rioters' aggressions.

As historians have demonstrated, the draft upheaval was a particularly complex event whose participants pursued a number of divergent goals.⁸ Though initially a series of actions directed at stopping the draft process, the riots quickly assumed a different, and more violent, character.⁹ The rioters destroyed centers of production, burning the Union Steam Works to the ground on the 14th, and attacking the 28th Street Foundry on the 15th; shops and all manner of distribution sites were stormed and looted, including Brooks Brothers Clothiers on Catherine Street, which was ransacked on the 15th; government offices were destroyed, including the Eighth District Provost Marshall's Office, a site of draft administration that was razed on the 13th; the homes and offices of the local Republican network were attacked, including the home of the abolitionists James and Abby Gibbons (July 14th); federal troops and local police were besieged; and the black community was brutally attacked: black neighborhoods were ravaged, homes looted, and black men and women murdered in the streets. Rioters also burned the Colored Orphans' Asylum to the ground, a horrifying and widely publicized affair that would reappear frequently in Thomas Nast's later illustration work.¹⁰ Finally, the comfortable homes of the middle and elite classes were attacked across the city, as early as July 13th – that night, the town house of Abram Wakeman, a postmaster, was burned. In short, the rioters, rather than merely protesting the draft, began to attack the spaces, figures, and communities that appeared to them as the most visible components of a vast structure that ensured their social, political, and economic subordination.

As Eugene Leach has noted, the earliest journalistic observers of the riots confronted this challenge to the social structure with worried candor.¹¹ A contributor to the July 14th edition of the *New York Times* thus

found the signs of impending doom in the violent lawlessness of the riot's first twenty-four hours:

The law was not only defied but was successfully resisted. For the first time within the memory of this generation, it could not command means for its protection. It stood paralyzed, helpless, humbled . . . There is something portentous in this lawlessness at this juncture.¹²

Some even ascribed revolutionary potential to the actions of the riotous upheaval; a reporter for the July 14th edition of the *New York Tribune* argued that the first day was "not simply a riot but the commencement of a revolution, organized by the sympathizers in the North with the southern rebellion."¹³ The author of "The Spirit of the Mob and Its Promoters" in the July 17th edition of the *New York Times* scoured the distant past for an appropriate comparison:

The spirit we now see is the very spirit of the French Revolution surviving still – sent over the water from some fiend from the pit, to make freedom detestable, to exterminate the laws of God and of society, and to turn the triumphs of civilization into a state of things as insecure as savage existence, and as degraded as that of the vilest brutes.¹⁴

The American past was rarely consulted by those seeking suitable metaphors for the violence unfolding in July of 1863; observers sought no precedent for the riots in the country's history of class relations. A contributor to the July 25th edition of *Harper's Weekly*, for example, briefly considered an American prototype before ultimately dismissing it as unsuitable:

Large cities, too, have their peculiar requirements, and one of them is periodical riots. Every large city has them. In Paris they occur once every generation, and are called revolutions . . . Here they are a new thing. The Astor Place Riot is almost the only example on record; for the Dead Rabbit Riots were suppressed almost before they had broken out. The affair of Monday last bore a closer resemblance to a European riot than anything we have ever had here.¹⁵

This reluctance to consult the American past, or even, more locally, the history of New York City, for similar instances of civil unrest can be explained by the broader sensationalizing project of the wartime media – imbuing the draft riots with an aura of the *wholly new* or the *unheard of* would have helped to sell newspapers to readers increasingly bombarded with calamities, spectacles, and conflagrations. Certainly the scale of the

draft riots – no district of the city went unaffected – was unique in the history of American upheaval. And yet the impulse to construct the draft riots as a wholly autonomous affair, as an event without historical precedent, involves a specific mystification; that is, the treatment of the riots as unheard of on American soil overlooks a lengthy history of violent uprising, of which the draft riots were one unusually brutal and extensive instance. In fact, in the thirty years before the draft upheaval, New York City alone witnessed at least fifteen violent riots.¹⁶ The reluctance to consult this legacy of violence may have stemmed from it being *nowhere to be seen* – the violent past was, in other words, effectively repressed from the collective memory of the middle and upper classes. This was certainly the case with the Astor Place riot of 1849, to which the *Harper's* editor halfheartedly referred, and whose violent content was first explored, and then soothingly reframed, in period journalism and visual culture.

The Astor Place riot was a bloody affair, during which hundreds of rioters attacked the Astor Place Theater and then battled local and state forces up and down Broadway, a fight that ended with soldiers and police firing on the crowd and killing twenty-two.¹⁷ The occasion for the outbreak of violence was a performance of *Macbeth*, held at the Astor Place Theater and starring the English actor William Macready, on the night of May 10th, 1849. Though the riot that followed has been considered – by scholars and in popular memory – an expression of the fervor of theater fandom, Iver Bernstein has shown that the violence in fact sprang from deep-seated tensions within the social structure of 1840s New York.¹⁸ The often-noted rivalry between the English Macready and the American actor Edwin Forrest, at the heart of the Astor Place trouble, had significant class implications: Macready was the favorite of the city's Whig elites, whereas Edwin Forrest drew support from the working classes of the city.¹⁹ And the Whig proposal (to the mayor, Caleb Woodhull) to protect Macready with an armed contingent during his May 10th performance, a few days after the actor was driven from the Astor stage by a crowd of rowdies, was in turn an outgrowth of elite anxieties about the rough working-class culture that burgeoned in 1840s New York and threatened the cultural hegemony of the elites.²⁰ Even as the Whigs persuaded Woodhull to provide for the defense of Macready, handbills appeared around the city on the morning of the 10th that urged workers to “stand by their lawful rights” and make their opinions heard at the “English aristocratic theater” that night.²¹ If the latter excerpt is any indication, it was a mixture of sociopolitical frustration and patriotic spirit that drove thousands of workers to surround, and then attack, the Astor Place Theater, a particularly ostentatious emblem of the city's elite cultural network, where Macready was performing.

Early accounts of the riot contended directly with the violent conflict contained within the upheaval; the pages of the May 11th and 12th editions of the *New York Tribune*, *New York Herald*, and the *New York Morning Courier and Enquirer* are filled with narratives of the riot's proceed-

ings.²² The author of the “The Late Riot,” which appeared in the May 12th issue of the *New York Tribune*, saw the beginnings of social war within the affair:

Our City has been intensely agitated, a riot of most outrageous and disgraceful character has taken place, the military have been called out, property destroyed, blood shed, and for the last thirty-six hours, New York *has worn the aspect of a civil war*, all because two actors had quarreled!²³ [emphasis added]

Writing on the heels of the violent battle, the unnamed author of “The Late Riot” sketched the violent events of the riot with indignant meticulousness.

As time passed, however, the bloody, troubling vision of the Astor Place Riot was entirely reworked. By May 15th, the legacy of the riot, for the author of “The Moral of the Riot” in the *New York Tribune* of that day, was the triumph of law and order, rather than the bloodiness of its program:

The riot is over, order has been vindicated, the authorities sustained, and the vicious and ruffianly taught that they cannot with impunity attack the lives, property and personal rights of the citizens. We have seen that society in New York has power to protect itself not only against individual malefactors but against the threatening array of a multitude.²⁴

Confident in the return of social order, this anonymous author goes on to propose a double-pronged strategy for preventing any such disturbance in the future: the relocation of the immigrant working class to the open land of the West and the enforcement of temperance in the poorest of the city’s quarters.

Period printmaking followed the trajectory of journalistic responses to the Astor Place Riot, confronting and then reworking the violent vision of the event. In 1849, Nathaniel Currier’s firm published a hand-colored lithograph of the upheaval, *Great Riot at the Astor Place Opera House, New York* (Figure 3). Produced soon after the calamity so as to capitalize on its momentary infamy, the lithograph echoes the lurid rhetoric of the earliest accounts of the riot in its surging masses of rioters, the billowing, starkly white clouds of smoke surrounding the firing troops, and the bloodied dead and dying in the foreground. The class conflict at the heart of the riot is also quite clearly evoked in the foreground of the print, where top-hatted and cutaway-clad elites flee from the fighting, carrying off their wounded comrades, even as a blue-coated worker just left of the picture’s center (he wears a soft cloth cap) cocks his arm to throw a brickbat into the crowd.

One year later (1850), an anonymous lithographer produced *View of Astor Place Theater* (Figure 4) for *Henry Hoff’s Views of New York*, a collection of *vedute* of the city.²⁵ The later print replaces the terrifying tumult



Figure 3. *Great Riot at the Astor Place Opera House, New York on Thursday Evening May 10, 1849*. Published by Nathaniel Currier (1849). The Harry T. Peters Collection, Museum of the City of New York.

of Currier's sensationalizing print with a reassuring triumph of pictorial, and symbolic, order. Unlike the spatial confusion of the earlier view, *View of Astor Place Theater* is organized by a rigorous one-point perspective, in which buildings, ground lines, streetlights, and even human figures (the two women and a man, and the man and cart beyond at the left, for example) align along orthogonals leading to the left edge of the scene. The teeming mass of rioters of *Great Riot at the Astor Place Opera House, New York*, extensive enough to obscure the topography of the streets around the theater, has been replaced by a great, airy void: the square at the meeting of East Eighth Street and Astor Place, traversed by strolling couples, an omnibus, and horse-drawn carts. At the right edge of the square looms an imposing church tower that is cropped out in the earlier view (a corner of the church façade can be seen in the earlier print above the Oyster House sign at the right edge), a firm reinstatement of the bourgeois moral order in a space so recently marked by riotous upheaval. *View of Astor Place Theater* thus reframes the vision of a site of recent strife according to the needs of the middle and upper classes. In so doing, the lithograph imposes the (re)vision of the comfortable classes on the viewer of the print. The litho-



Figure 4. *View of Astor Place Theater*. From *Henry Hoff's Views of New York* (1850). Museum of the City of New York.

graph places the object of interest, the theater, at a remove, reproducing the leisurely detachment of the elite urbanite or flâneur, of the sort strolling in the square, for the picture's audience. This detachment contrasts with the implicating vision of Currier's earlier print, which places the viewer in the middle of the terrifying vision with the mass of the theater looming above. One year after the calamity, the Astor Place Theater, once the subject of worried speculation, has been reframed as object of leisurely contemplation. Direct engagement with violent social conflict has been replaced by soothing erasure and a pattern established in journalistic and artistic responses to upheaval that would reappear in the summer and early fall of 1863.²⁶

As already noted, the earliest newspaper accounts of the draft riots directly confronted the challenge to the social structure that was a part of the proceedings; so, too, did the artists of the illustrated weeklies. *Harp-er's Weekly* ran a sensationalizing two-page montage of ten violent vignettes, "The Riots at New York," in the center of its August 1st edition, accompanied by a textual narrative describing the events depicted.²⁷ The spread included, at its upper left, "Ruins of the Provost-Marshal's Office," a scene of two soldiers contemplating the charred ruins of an emblem of state power and site of draft administration, the Eighth District Provost Marshall's Office (previously discussed). Two large central scenes,

“Charge of the Police at the Tribune Office” and “Sacking Brooks’s Clothing Store,” depicted the fracas on the 13th at Horace Greeley’s *Tribune* offices, a hub for the local Republican community, and the looting of an elite clothier’s. “Sacking a Drug Store in Second Avenue,” in the lower right of the layout, depicted a mob of rioters frantically looting a modest drug store. Two scenes of the desecration of soldier’s bodies were included – “Dragging Colonel O’Brien’s Body through the Mud” and “The Dead Sergeant in Twenty-Second Street” – as were two pictures of violence done to the black community, “Hanging a Negro’s Body in Clarkson Street” and “Negro Quarters in Sullivan Street.” *Harper’s* first and only center montage of the riots clearly delineated the threat to the social structure posed by the rioters; in the spread, the administrative and military arms of the state, middle-class and upper-class merchants, and an important site of the local well-to-do Republican network fall victim to the upheaval.

The August 1st edition of *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* featured the riots on its cover (including a scene of the looting of Brooks Brothers), and centerfold montages on the riots appeared in the July 25th edition (Figure 5) and August 1st edition (Figure 6). Though both of these center layouts featured scenes of violence, there is subtle shift in character between the earlier and later montages, a shift that quietly reframes the action of the riots. The July 25th centerfold, “The Great Riot in New York – Scenes on the 13th and 14th of July,” crammed thirteen scenes of bloody violence into two pages, including four pictures of roiling infernos (one of which is a scene of the burning of the Provost Marshall’s Office), three scenes of violence done to African Americans, two street battles between federal troops and rioters, and a view of the attack on the *Tribune* offices. In all but two of these scenes, the rioters have the upper hand: in “The Fight on Tuesday at 28th Ave” (top center) and “Provost Guard attacking the Rioters” (center), neither rioters nor soldiers appear to have the advantage.

On the other hand, the centerfold of August 1st, “Draft Riots in New York: Exciting Scenes During the Reign of Terror,” includes three scenes of battle in which state authority prevails – though illustrated victory does not always correspond to the actual course of events. In the central and largest vignette, “Battle in Second Avenue and Twenty-Second Street, at the Union Steam Works,” a line of firing soldiers scatters a mass of rioters before the massive structure, which housed an arms-manufacturing operation during the Civil War. This function made the Steam Works an especially compelling target for the attacks of the rioters, and a pitched battle was fought for the building on July 13th and 14th. The incident depicted in the illustration, rather than any heroic action, merely saved state forces from total catastrophe – the rioters taking possession of the stores of weapons within the building. Only by firing massive salvos into the crowds of rioters were soldiers able to keep the crowd back long enough to seize the weapons. On Tuesday night, the rioters won control of the Steam Works and burned the abandoned building to the ground.²⁸ The Union

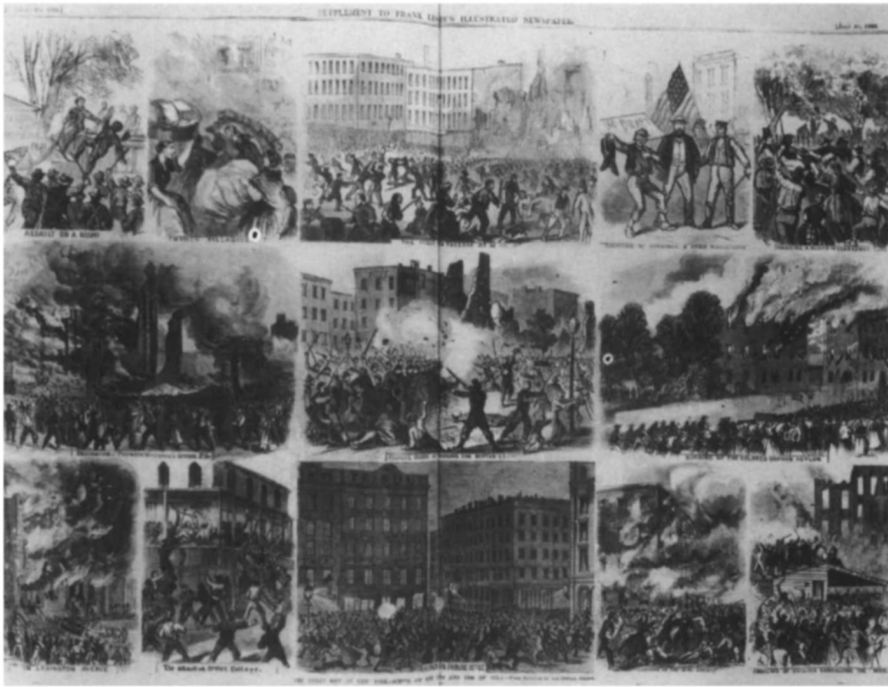


Figure 5. *The Great Riot in New York – Scenes on the 13th and 14th of July*. From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (July 25, 1863). Boston Athenaeum.

Steam Works confrontation is nevertheless figured, in the later centerfold illustration, as a decisive victory for law and order.

Order is also regained in “Scene in Thirty-Sixth Street, Between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, a Man Shot by Officers,” at the top of the center column, in which a handful of soldiers blast away at a group of rioters on a balcony while two other rioters flee below. And, in “Horner’s Battery and a Company of the 11th N.Y. Volunteers Scattering the Rioters at the Corner of 7th Avenue and 18th Street,” at the upper right of the montage, a line of soldiers and a howitzer clear rioters on two sides of an intersection. A fourth vignette, in the upper left-hand corner of the two-page layout, entitled “The Armory, Corner of Seventh Avenue and Thirteenth Street,” (Figure 7) reaffirms this shift in momentum, the move toward order. Unlike the Second Avenue Armory, which was razed during the upheaval, the Seventh Avenue Armory escaped the riot unharmed despite several attacks on its structure.²⁹ Solid, imposing, and well defended, the Seventh Avenue Armory visualizes the resilience of state power and the social structure. With soldiers casually milling about the open square in front of the building, and an American flag lazily rolling in a clear sky, the scene establishes a corner of timeless tranquillity in the layout of the picture, a soothing vision of what was and will surely be – an ordered, serene

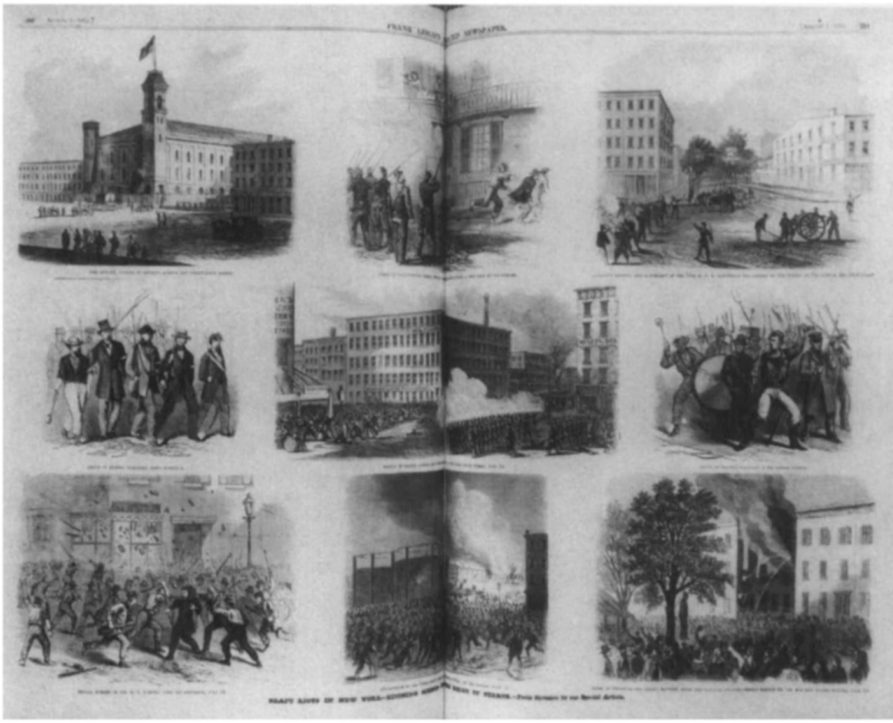


Figure 6. *Draft Riots in New York – Exciting Scenes During the Reign of Terror.* From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (August 1, 1863). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

world – after a moment of temporary madness. The presence of this scene in this later centerfold, along with several scenes of violent suppression of the riots, thus begins to reframe the legacy of the uprising, shifting attention away from the challenge of the rioters to social hierarchies and toward the final victory of state authority. The overall layout of the centerfold reinforces this move toward order. In the first spread, the editors crammed as many scenes as possible into the space available and, as a result, the thirteen vignettes run together visually, forming a teeming mass of violence. In the second and later layout, this mass has begun to disintegrate and is now atomized into nine scenes, each pictorial precinct separate and self-contained.

By the next issue of *Frank Leslie's*, the August 8th edition, the riots had disappeared altogether from the centerfold layout, which was devoted instead to the latest battles of the Civil War. *Harper's* center montage was similarly devoid of riot illustrations after the August 1st issue, as already noted. The riots would not disappear entirely from the visual discourse of the two weeklies, however, for some time. Indeed, the specter of the riots would linger on, albeit in drastically altered form, in the last-page



Figure 7. *The Armory, Corner of Seventh Avenue and Thirty Fifth Street.* From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (August 1, 1863). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

cartoons of both magazines for the rest of the summer and into early fall.³⁰ Of course, this shift from the center of the magazine to the comic margin was laden with meaning: the horrible vision of the riots was moved from the pictorial space of the relevant to that of the irreverent, the cartoon, where national events and figures were satirized and spoofed safely, and potentially troubling topics (war, slavery, and the like) were recast in pleasantly amusing fashion. The August 1st issue of *Harper's Weekly*, which had the only center layout on the riots that the magazine would publish, also included on its second page a small cartoon of a pug-nosed Irishman in stolen duds (top hat, gloves, and so on) holding up a lanky, bearded aristocrat (Figure 8). The joke of the cartoon is apparently the easy slippage between the immigrant's request for charity and his strong-arming of the aristocrat, but its tone is, in the end, ambiguous. The potential for violence, and thus the capacity of the cartoon to alarm rather than comfort, remains palpable as the barrel-chested, glowering Irishman (at right) threatens his reedy, helpless victim. Clearly, the troubling legacy of the riots was still being worked out as this untitled cartoon, one of the first of its kind in either *Harper's* or *Frank Leslie's*, was designed.³¹

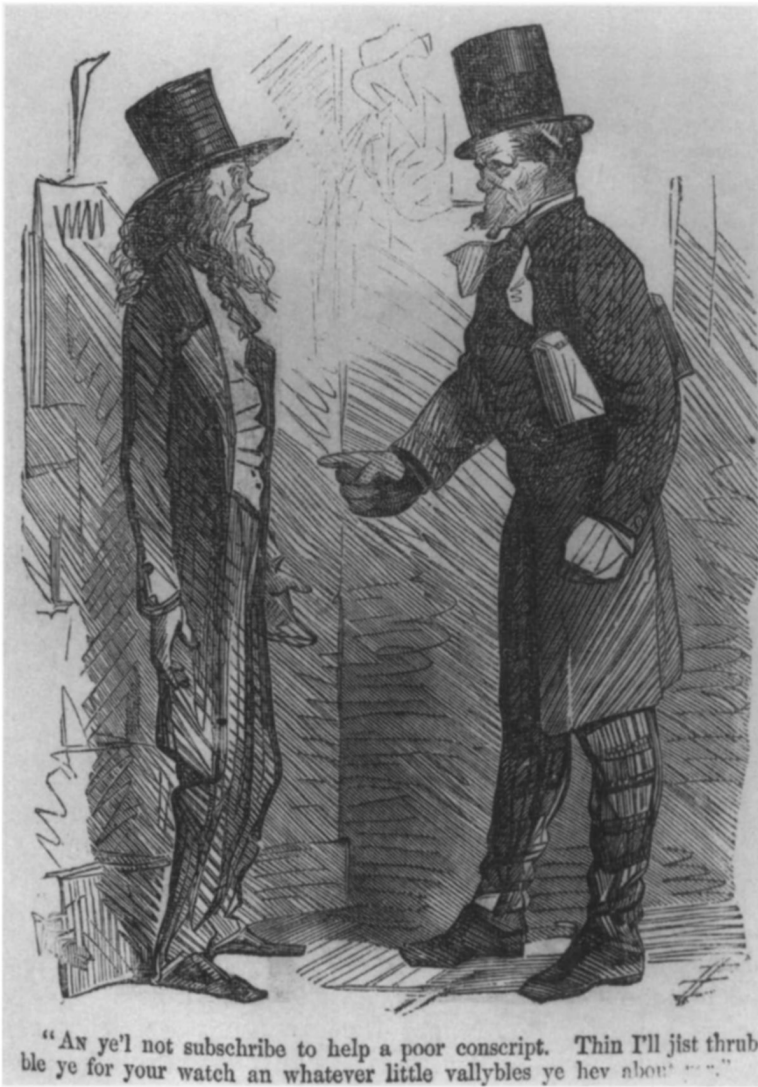


Figure 8. *An ye'l not subscribe to help a poor conscript.* From *Harper's Weekly* (August 1, 1863). Boston Athenaeum.

The last-page cartoon of the August 1st *Harper's Weekly*, “How to Escape the Draft” (Figure 9), was equally troubling, as two beastly, club-wielding rioters threaten a black man and child. And yet even as the cartoon effectively synthesizes a horrifying aspect of the riots – the senseless violence done to New York City’s black community – “How to Escape the Draft” also begins to rework the bloody vision of the draft upheaval. The title of the cartoon initiates this process, reducing the actions and ambitions of a large and complex body of insurgents to a single imperative: es-



Figure 9. *How to Escape the Draft*. From *Harper's Weekly* (August 1, 1863). Boston Athenaeum.

caping the draft, which in turn rewrites the motivations of the rioters. Sociopolitical frustration is replaced with mere civic irresponsibility (escaping one's duty to fight) as the driving force of the upheaval. The little scene of the cartoon reinforces the simplifying function of the title, as the wide range of actions of the weeklong draft riots is reduced to one, albeit terrible, component: the violence wrought on the Black community.

For all of their ideological manipulations, the center layouts of the July 25th and August 1st issues of *Frank Leslie's* provided fuller accounts of the complexity of the week of rioting, including scenes of lynching – “Hanging a Negro in Clarkson Street,” at the upper right-hand corner of the earlier layout, and “Scare at Thirty-Second Street . . .,” at the lower right-hand corner of the latter – alongside pictures of rioter's fighting with troops, destroying state and private property, and looting. In contrast, “How to Escape the Draft” eliminates these other aspects of the event and, in so doing, shifts the threat of the riotous violence away from the Northern white middle and upper classes, who formed the bulk of the magazine's

readership, in a way that the other cartoon of the August 1st issue of *Harper's Weekly* (Figure 8) did not. Even as it exposed a repugnant aspect of the draft riots, "How to Escape the Draft" reaffirmed the security of its so-recently endangered white dominant-class readers.

"Public Opinion" (Figure 10), published a week later in the August 8th edition of *Harper's*, reworks the vision of the riots in another fashion. The violence of the upheaval is replaced here with the state-sanctioned violence of retribution, as a top-hatted elite offers a horrible substitute for the "ilegant [*sic*] new Neck Tie" of a buffoonish Irishman bedecked in gaudy, stolen clothes. "Public Opinion" thus offered a satisfying tonic to nervous readers, shifting attention away from the riots and toward the inexorable victory of order, or the reestablishment of the social hierarchy of elite dominator and immigrant dominated. *Harper's Weekly* would publish other riot-based cartoons of similar character in the weeks to come: "Don't You See the Point?", a scene of a soldier moving an Irish rioter to the draft office at bayonet point, for example, appeared in the August 22nd issue.³² Like its August 8th predecessor, "Don't You See the Point?" satisfyingly reaffirmed the triumph of social order through the mediation of grim humor.

As illustrators and cartoonists reframed the bloody spectacle of the riots, many editors, journalists, and writers worked out visions of the upheaval that could be comfortably committed to the collective memory and historical record of the middle and upper classes. An early and common reframing of the riots argued that the upheaval was the product of a Southern conspiracy in the North; thus, the author of "How to Enforce the Draft," in the July 18th edition of the *New York Tribune*, averred,

They [the mob] were really originated and fomented by Northern traitors, in aid of the failing fortunes of the Rebellion at the South; the draft being the occasion, and not the cause, of the insurrection.³³

Blaming the South for the draft riots effectively moved readers' attention back to the sectional conflict, while negating the possibility of any local political motivation on the part of the rioters, or of the existence of local class conflict at all. As Eugene Leach has noted, the riots were frequently depoliticized in period responses.³⁴ Neither the underlying conditions of the riot nor its specific actions were assigned political meaning by writers in the wake of the uprising. As a contributor to the August 1863 issue of *Scientific American* explained,

Of the political character ascribed to the mob we say nothing, because words are useless on that head. If there was any deep-seated determination on the part of the rioters to deter the Government from carrying out the conscription, the futility of the course is apparent now. We do not believe, however, that any such animus controlled them . . . The real source from which



Figure 10. *Public Opinion*. From *Harper's Weekly* (August 8, 1863). Boston Athenaeum.

the rioters were encouraged and recruited, was, and is, the mobs of young men who stand about street corners; without any means of support they are yet dressed in the extreme mode, talk loudly, insult women, and are an unmitigated nuisance.³⁵

For the anonymous author of this passage, the violent riot sprang not from any deep-seated tension within the social structure, but rather from the rowdy dispositions of the shiftless young, whose exact social position is left unarticulated.

The unknown author approaches another common reframing of the riot, in which the class conflict of the bloody week is erased entirely. In this envisioning, the struggle of the draft riots pitted a generic good portion of the population against a vaguely defined bad section, both categories

composed of the members of all social strata. As the author of "How to Deal with Mobs," wrote in the July 21st issue of the *New York Times*,

It will not do any longer to tell people who have passed four nights in their houses with the hideous uproar of street massacres ringing in their ears, and the flames of their neighbors' houses reddening the sky above their heads, that this havoc was wrought either by "the people" or "the laboring population" or by "outraged conscripts." They know well that if these atrocious libels were true, it would be the duty of those who have enough manhood and religion left them to make them refuse to belong to a community of thieves and assassins, to take their muskets and bring about reform, or else quit the country.³⁶

For these observers, the mob of rioters became an inert, senseless body mobilized by a handful of treasonous (often Democratic) opportunists and sustained by the animalistic euphoria of mob violence.³⁷

Many writers followed the illustrators and cartoonists in dwelling on the victory of law and order. For some, this involved recounting the various heroic actions of the police and federal soldiers. David Barnes's *The Draft Riots in New York, July 1863*, published not long after the cessation of the turmoil, followed the stirring exploits of the police in chapters devoted to each precinct of the city.³⁸ For others, the riots provided a useful lesson on the need for the swift and brutal application of justice in the face of civil unrest. This claim was usually made in conjunction with a belittling passage on the Democratic Governor Horatio Seymour's "My Friends Speech" of July 14, in which the leader promised a crowd of rioters that he would respect their rights so long as the violence stopped, a tactic that was considered to epitomize weak-kneed submission to the violent mob.³⁹ Most of the observers among the elite agreed, in light of Seymour's pleadings, on the necessity of forthright suppression, and thus for many of them the legacy of the riots became the increased resolution and further entrenchment of the dominant classes. As a contributor to the July 28th edition of the *New York Times* wrote,

Their temporary success in their first grand attempt in this direction was entirely due to the fact that it was a surprise. Now that we know what their tastes are, we can assure them that they will never get such a chance to despoil us by open force again, because if it should ever again appear that our possession of our houses and furniture depends on our knocking them in the head, the owners of property will assuredly do so, summarily and effectively.⁴⁰

The panic of early commentaries has been replaced here with confidence in the stability of the social structure. Several troubling aspects of the riot

have, in turn, disappeared from public attention: the political ambitions of the rioters, their successful interruption of the draft, the underlying socioeconomic causes of the violence, and even the class conflict within the riots. In their stead, writers, illustrators, and cartoonists presented their audiences with a myriad of comforting revisions.⁴¹

In September of 1863, as journalists and artists grappled with the troubling legacy of class conflict, Thomas Nast completed *The Attack on the "Home Guard,"* an ambiguous vision of childhood play. Organized around a bizarre and violent confrontation, Nast's picture was unlike other Currier and Ives prints of childhood life and the middle-class home, which typically reaffirmed 19th-century notions of both of these entities as sanctified and inviolable institutions.⁴² *The Attack on the "Home Guard"* also diverged from the firm's other pictures of childhood war play in featuring an actual "battle." *The Little Recruit*, for example, which was published in 1863, depicted a mother and daughter dressing a boy in a little soldier's uniform so that he might participate in a scene of frolicking in the background. *The Little Recruit* thus emphasizes the performance of conflict – the boy puts on a costume in order to play as soldier – rather than conflict itself. The inclusion of an act of violence, however inane, sets *The Attack on the "Home Guard"* apart from popular, midcentury visions of the middle-class home. In the only other scholarly analysis of the print, Mark Neely and Harold Holzer have suggested that its strange boy-dog battle, when read together with the embracing couple (smiling girl and panicked boy) at left, allows *The Attack on the "Home Guard"* to parody the popular "Soldier's Return" scenes peddled by Currier and Ives during the war; in their reading, Nast's print substitutes the typical bravery of the returning fighter with the boy's ignominious retreat from a dog.⁴³ While such a parody is a plausible component of the picture, this analysis overlooks a number of details that suggest another function for the print.

It is significant, firstly, that there are two "attacks" in the picture: as the dog bites the pant leg of the uniformed boy, a nonuniformed youth stabs the point of a rifle bayonet at, or into, the dog's mouth. This double attack makes the identity of the home guard, which appears in the title in conspicuous quotation marks, uncertain. On one level, "home guard" refers to the dog, whose little house is positioned so that the animal might guard the larger, human home in the background, the typical role of the family dog.⁴⁴ And yet the dog also attacks, snapping at the fleeing boy, and so it is possible to understand the children as the home guard, the defender of the house beyond. Which sense of the phrase applies? While both are present to some degree, the use of quotation marks requires a reading of the lithograph that expands beyond an inventorying of the commonplaces of the home life and of genre representation (home, happy children, guarding dog, etc.). Indeed, these simple marks indicate that meaning has been imported to the pictorial text, that the normative envisioning of the home, and the self-enclosed conceptual space of an artistic genre, has been disrupted by and adulterated with an imported set of concepts, a quotation.

And in fact the term *home guard* does import a whole other network of meanings to the print, related to the second, atypical sense of the phrase: positioning the children as the home guard overlaps with a particular use of the phrase that appeared during the draft riots. *Home Guard* referred, for observers of the riots, to a proposed corps of citizen-defenders, trained in the latest military tactics and fighting techniques, which could be called up at an instant to protect the lives and property of the city from the civil unrest of recent immigrants and workers. The author of an article entitled "Home Guards" in the July 16th edition of the *New York Tribune* called upon the city's private citizens to defend their family and property:

Our City has at length felt the need of this corps, so much ridiculed at the time of its incipient organization. Twenty thousand citizens, duly enrolled, mastered, drilled, to turn out whenever the peace of the City is menaced, and second the efforts of our admirable Police to preserve or restore order . . . Let there be at least one rendezvous in each Ward; let all who stand by Liberty, Order and Property repair forthwith to their respective places of mustering; and at each take an oath to stand unflinchingly by the constituted authorities and put down insurrection, devastation, arson, and murder, at whatever cost.⁴⁵

Two days later, an editorial in the *New York Times* noted with pleasure that home guards were finally being organized:

We are glad that the citizens are so generally organizing into Home Guards and other associations for the defense of the City. It is shameful to us that it should be necessary to send here the war-worn regiments of the Army of the Potomac to keep the peace in our streets. There are enough law-abiding citizens here to crush out all the felons and rioters in the City, though they were ten times more numerous than they are. We ought to do it. It is an excellent opportunity for our citizens of all classes to exercise themselves in military drill and perfect themselves in military manoeuvres [*sic*].⁴⁶

In this context, *home guard* could be quite appropriately applied to the group of children, trained and outfitted with military gear, who have sprung to the defense of the home in the background (some more bravely than others). The children also spring to defend the dominant moral order – the hilt and handle of the toy sword in the grass of the yard at the left edge of the picture form a crucifix, subtly referencing another, cultural antagonism at the heart of the riot: the conflict between the largely Catholic immigrant population and the entrenched Protestantism of the empowered classes.⁴⁷

If the children are figured as home guard, the dog, whose bonds have been loosed (the chain ends below the dog without connecting to any post), is aligned with the rioter. Certain factors encourage the unlikely conflation: the dog, it should be noted, challenges the domestic bliss of the little middle-class “family” at the left. Mob behavior was also frequently explained, as previously mentioned, as an exploration of animalistic passions, and rioters themselves were often described in beastly terms. To return to the article “How to Deal with Mobs,” in the July 21st issue of the *New York Times*,

All who have any familiarity with mobs . . . know well that a mob *which has once shed blood with impunity instantly changes its character and becomes a wild beast, both in its nature and in its aims*. Human blood whets its ferocity, and inflames its courage just as it does those of a tiger, and when . . . it has been allowed to draw ardor from this horrible source, it is mercy to it and to the community to assail it with musketry, and, if need be, with grape and canister.⁴⁸ [original emphasis]

A writer for the *American Phrenological Journal* even likened the rioters, in an article in its September edition, to rabid dogs:

The appetites being strong and ungoverned, and the hot blood, fired up by the liquor, tobacco, and a July sun, deluging the base of the brain, these creatures of impulse gave way to the rule of their lower natures, and became wild and rampant, without any other real motive than such as would actuate a mad dog.⁴⁹

Of course, it was also common, before and after the riots, to caricature Irish immigrants as beastly. Currier and Ives, for example, published a print, *The Man That Gave Barnum His Turn*, that participated in this typing of the Irish. The undated print refers to a story, circulating around New York City at midcentury, in which P. T. Barnum, in a hurry to get a haircut and finding a line at the barbershop, offered to pay for anyone that would let Barnum take his turn; the “joke” was that the hairy Irishman who took him up opted for the full treatment: haircut, bath, shave, etc.⁵⁰ The joke of the Currier and Ives print, and apparently its source of appeal, was the juxtaposition of before and after: organized as a double portrait with a pair of tondo images of the Irishman, the print depicts the immigrant man at left, in his “natural,” hairy, half-human state, and at right, shaved, coiffed, and “civilized” (but retaining the swollen nose of the alcoholic). For the artist and audience of *The Man That Gave Barnum His Turn*, shagginess was a clear marker of social identity, even of one’s position in the great chain of being. In fact, shagginess was understood by a wide range of midcentury audiences as social marker: George Caleb Bingham’s *Country Election* of 1852, for example, includes a voter with a low brow, a doglike pushed-in

nose, and a mop of shaggy hair, all signs of the man's position among the rural poor.⁵¹ And hairiness-as-social signifier continued to appear in popular illustrations for some time. In all of the cartoons Thomas Nast produced for *Harper's Weekly* after the Haymarket bombing of 1886, for example, the working-class insurrectionist invariably sports raggedy clothes, shaggy mustache and beard, and a mane of dirty hair.⁵²

The Attack on the "Home Guard" capitalizes on the popular conflation of animal and Irishman to perform its own reworking of the legacy of the riots. Hairy Irishman has become shaggy dog, home guard soldiers become armed children, and the bloody spectacle of the riots has been reframed as the humorous struggle between children and animal. Contemporary markers of class position and ethnic difference are maintained in the transition: the shagginess of the dog is contrasted with the porcelain skin and neat coiffures of the children. And, in the picture's juxtaposition of human and animal worlds, social hierarchies are ultimately reaffirmed: the unequal social positions of middle-class home guard and Irish rioter are likened to human dominion over beast, two constructed power relations that work to reaffirm the other.

The Attack on the "Home Guard" thus displaces the struggle of the riot onto the sphere of childhood, a safe space where dominant-class anxieties could be worked out in soothingly sentimental and highly mediated fashion. The result of this displacement is a scene of little adults, children mimicking the recent, troubling behaviors of the mature (that is, defending the home). Paradoxically, the displacement of the violence of the riots onto the safe sphere of childhood requires that the sphere continue to be read as safe, so that the violence is understood as amusing and not threatening. The children in *The Attack on the "Home Guard"* are thus both adult and child, little adults, who refer to, and repress, the violent struggle of the riots.

In its construction and use of little adults as space for the working out of anxiety, Nast's print draws on a pair of recent phenomena. The first was the rebirth, in 1863, of popular interest in "General" Tom Thumb, which centered on his wedding in the winter of that year. On February 10th, Tom Thumb (Charles Stratton) and Lavinia Warren, both midgets, were married in Grace Church. The marriage was the culmination of a long marketing drive on the part of P. T. Barnum, whose museum regularly hosted the bride and groom and their associate "Commodore Nutt."⁵³ The event was wildly popular, receiving attention in the popular press (the cover of the February 21st *Harper's Weekly* featured the bride and groom) and inspiring a commemorative Currier and Ives print, *General Tom Thumb and Wife, Commodore Nutt and Minnie Warren*, issued in 1863 (Figure 11). Lori Merish has proposed several underlying sources of the popularity of General Tom Thumb, arguing that Thumb and his cohorts entertained audiences because the midgets "looked like children imitating adults."⁵⁴ She also notes that Thumb and Nutt reaffirmed social hierarchies by ridiculing "the pretensions of the 'low' to the status and privileges of the 'high,'" thus the grandiose titles of "General" and "Commodore," applied to the



Figure 11. *General Tom Thumb and Wife, Commodore Nutt and Minnie Warren*. Published by Currier and Ives (1863). The Gerald LeVino Collection, Museum of the City of New York.

midgets' bodies, were rendered "amusingly" inappropriate.⁵⁵ Merish overlooks another probable source of the renewed popularity of Thumb and his cohort Nutt, which is implicated in the Currier and Ives image of the wedding. On either side of the central wedding group are scenes of Commodore Nutt in military attire: on the left, "Com. N. as Drummer boy" and, on the right, "Nutt in Military." Both vignettes clearly separate the uniformed Nutt from any possibility of conflict, placing the Commodore on a small pedestal and posing him with an unwieldy drum or a flimsy officer's saber. In both scenes, Nutt wears a Revolutionary War-era uniform complete with tricornered hat.

In these two scenes, the troubling prospect of the violence of war is thoroughly suppressed, and replaced by harmless tomfoolery, with Nutt posing in an antiquated uniform with a drum he could not carry (at left) and a sword that would not cut (at right). In the same vein, General Tom Thumb, in his appearances at P. T. Barnum's American Museum, often performed military drills and marched around on a small stage, the closest he would ever get to military action.⁵⁶ It seems then that a component of the new popularity of General Thumb and Commodore Nutt was precisely their status as little adults playing at war, their involvement in a spectacle of the ridiculous that soothed the anxieties of Northern audiences



Figure 12. *The Naughty Boy Gotham, Who Would Not Take the Draft*. From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (August 29, 1863). Boston Athenaeum.

mired in a drawn-out conflict. In this context, the melodramatic conflict at the heart of *The Attack on the "Home Guard,"* with its own Lilliputian players staging the ridiculous, would have seemed similarly relieving.

Nast's print also follows the lead of popular, post-riot illustration in displacing the specific violence of the affair onto the safely sentimental sphere of the little adult. *Frank Leslie's* ran a cartoon entitled "The Naughty Boy Gotham, Who Would Not Take the Draft" (Figure 12) in its August 29th edition, which featured a perturbed Lincoln in a house dress and a shaggy-haired, pug-nosed Irish child as New York City, who rejects the "draft" offered by Lincoln, a bowl of food, even as the child's obedient sister, Philadelphia, leaves the scene. Like Nast's lithograph, "The Naughty Boy Gotham" reaffirms social hierarchies: if *The Attack on the "Home Guard"* uses the relation of human and animal worlds to do so, the cartoon likens the relation of rioter and dominant class (here represented by

the president) to the power relation of parent and dependent child. Unlike the cartoon, however, Nast's print leaves the process of repression just incomplete. Though the rioter's attack on the dominant-class home space has become the attack of a dog on a group of children, the status of the home as *attacked*, as requiring armed defense, remains.

This precarious status also appears in Nast's other 1863 Currier and Ives design, *Light Artillery* (Figure 2), in which a boy, dressed as a cavalryman, defends a corner of his parlor with wine-bottle cannons and a dashing officer's sword. A subtle detail of the picture reaffirms the status of the home as battlefield (an identity suggested by the boy's play), which was so recently a reality for the embattled New York middle classes. The green tablecloth over the small end table in the background features an ostensibly embroidered pattern – repeating rectangle-and-triangle polygons set above two parallel lines and a row of circular forms – that also reads as a row of houses, a street, and a line of shrubs. This little neighborhood scene in turn appears behind the lines erected by the boy: the wine-bottle artillery emplacements and a book-as-tent with tiny flag. The troubling status of home-as-battlefield is thus doubly referenced in *Light Artillery*.

Of course, the boy's play in *Light Artillery* refers to some degree to a conflict outside of the riots. The map of Richmond on the table – the Confederate capital, target of Northern campaigns, and likely object of patriotic childhood fantasy – certainly refers to the ongoing Civil War. Nevertheless, the evocation of Richmond serves a dual purpose, as the Southern capital was also marked by violent civil upheaval in 1863, witnessing a series of violent bread riots, which received attention (and illustration) in the Northern press in the spring of that year. Even this component, ostensibly a clear reference to the war, had some relation to the specter of recent class conflict.

Whatever the character of the boy's play, however, the construction of the middle-class home-as-battlefield in *Light Artillery* and *The Attack on the "Home Guard"* would have had particular implications for its middle-class artist and audience in the fall of 1863. Though the home is now defended with a row of wine bottles, a rocking horse, or a loosely organized home guard, and the troubling vision of recent class conflict and the vulnerable middle-class home is reframed in the safely ridiculous sphere of the little adult, the home still appears as needing defending. What *Light Artillery* and *The Attack on the "Home Guard"* register, then, is the last stages of the process of reframing the vision of the riots, a struggle that was still under way in the fall of 1863.

Even so, both prints work out a legacy of the upheaval that would have been acceptable to their audience and that had begun to appear in the popular press of the time. The readiness of the children to defend their homes – as suggested by the confident pose of the young cavalryman or the decisive bayonet strike on the attacking dog – reaffirms the determined re-trenchment of the dominant classes that many period observers proclaimed as the necessary outcome of the conflict. In this context, Nast's

deployment of children takes on an additional meaning, as both prints suggest the longevity of the middle-class position, the assured continuation of the social structure in the generations to come.

Nast had explored this sort of social reaffirmation before. His first and only other Currier and Ives print, *The Domestic Blockade* (Figure 13), which he designed in 1862, opposed a pair of idyllic Anglo-Saxon youths and a dark-haired maid-as-“other.” Though this earlier print referred to some degree to the contemporaneous Union naval blockade of Southern ports, the central conflict of the print is rooted in class and ethnic difference rather than sectional rivalries.⁵⁷ A boy in a Zouave uniform and a little girl-as-Columbia, in classical shift, defend a room with a silver cabinet, an emblem of American cultural legacy, from the maid. To block her advancement, and confine her to the kitchen, the children have piled up the woman’s instruments of labor – washbasin, broom, pot, tea kettle. The resistance of the working-class woman is in turn figured as futile: she holds a broom to the boy’s miniaturized, and yet clearly dangerous, bayonet. Interestingly, the woman’s stance and grip on the broom also seem to have been borrowed from the burgeoning visual culture of baseball, a sport that was reaching new levels of national popularity even as Nast completed his design.⁵⁸ Her split-handed grasp and splayed feet echo, for example, the similar posture of the batsman in Currier and Ives’s slightly later *The American National Game of Baseball* of 1866; even the tile at the maid’s feet echoes the typical position of home plate at the feet of a batter. In this visual context, the glowing white orb that is the boy’s head (set against the blue-painted walls) takes on new meaning. Within the comic potential of the scene however, social hierarchies are maintained, as the maid’s challenge to the social structure is further trivialized: the kinesthetic connection of maid and batsman reworks her resistance as a mere act of play. At the same time, the longevity of the social order is guaranteed in the barricade-mounting youths of the print.

Significantly, Nast had *The Domestic Blockade* reissued in 1864 as a chromo *carte de visite*, which suggests that he understood the need for images reframing the troubling challenge of the working classes.⁵⁹ Nast’s connection with the psychic needs of his national, middle-class audience was noted and lauded at the time; as James Jackson Jarves wrote (probably about Nast’s oil-paintings) in his 1864 study *The Art-Idea*,

Nast is an artist of uncommon abilities. He has composed designs, or rather given hints of the ability to do so, of allegorical, symbolical, or illustrative character, far more worthy to be transferred in paint to the wall-spaces of our public buildings than anything that has yet been placed on them. Although hastily got up for a temporary purpose, they evince originality of conception, freedom of manner, *lofty appreciation of national ideas and action*, and a large artistic instinct.⁶⁰ [emphasis added]



Figure 13. Thomas Nast, *The Domestic Blockade*. Published by Currier and Ives (1863). The Harry T. Peters Collection, Museum of the City of New York.

Of course, Nast's position within the classes that he sought to reach enabled this intimate connection: his fears, passions, and desires were theirs. And so Nast, who witnessed the violence, devastation (physical and psychic), and social challenge of the riots firsthand, designed a pair of prints, *Light Artillery* and *The Attack on the "Home Guard,"* that engaged these troubling visions and reworked them in such a way as to restore the social confidence of *his* middle class.

The riots would reappear, in much different form, in the artist's work after 1863. Free of the imminent danger of social upheaval, the illustrator could make more explicit reference to the affair in his mature cartoons

and begin to rethink and reformulate the riots' political content within the strict bounds of his own radical Republicanism. The reappearance of the draft riots in Nast's later work is ultimately, however, the topic of another lengthy discussion. It is enough for our purposes here to note that these later illustrations, produced at a safe temporal and psychic distance from the imminent danger of the riots' challenge to the social network, confront the violent upheaval with an unmediated directness not found in the lithographs Nast designed on the heels of the horrifying affair.

NOTES

I thank Patricia Hills, whose patient guidance has helped me to refine this essay and my thinking more generally. I also thank Danielle, who has set the bar at a height I hope one day to reach.

1. There are few mentions of *The Attack on the "Home Guard"* in scholarship on Nast, Currier and Ives, or Civil War visual culture generally. For the only substantial mention of the lithograph, see Mark Neely and Harold Holzer, *The Union Image: Popular Prints of the Civil War North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 88–90. For the best treatment of Nast's career and work, see Albert Bigelow Paine, *Thomas Nast, His Period and His Pictures* (New York: Macmillan, 1904); and also Morton Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); Ernest Knauff, "Thomas Nast," *American Review of Reviews* 27 (January 1903): 31–35; Arthur B. Maurice, "Thomas Nast and His Cartoons," *Bookman* 15 (1902): 19–25; William Murrel, "Nast, Gladiator of the Pencil," *American Scholar* 5 (1936): 472–85; and J. Chalmers Vinson, "Thomas Nast and the American Political Scene," *American Quarterly* 9 (Fall 1957): 337–44. The best treatment of Currier and Ives work is Bryan Le Beau, *Currier & Ives, America Imagined* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); and see also Russel Crouse, *Mr. Currier and Mr. Ives: A Note on Their Lives and Times* (New York: Garden City, 1937); *Currier and Ives: Chronicles of America*, ed. John L. Pratt (New York: Promontory, 1968); and Harry T. Peters, *Currier & Ives: Printmakers to the American People* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1942).

2. Neely and Holzer, for example, note that *Attack on the "Home Guard"* is a "rather confused scene." Unsure as to the exact meaning of the lithograph, they conclude that the print's final significance lies in its elaboration of the profound effect of the war on American life, as suggested by the militarization of children's play (*Union Image*, 88–90).

3. For the best treatment of the draft riots, see Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); and also Adrian Cook, *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974); Joel Tyler Headley, *The Great Riots of New York 1712–1873* (New York: E. B. Treat, 1873); and David Barnes, *The Draft Riots in New York, July 1863* (New York: Baker and Godwin, 1863). For a mention of the dominant class's efforts to reframe riotous upheaval, see Eugene Leach, "Unchaining the Tiger: The Mob Stigma and the Working Class 1863–1894," *Labor History* 35 (Spring 1994): 193–94.

4. Keller, *Art and Politics*, 7.

5. Paine describes Nast as "mingling with the mob" during the riots and wit-

nessing several of the event's crucial developments, including Horatio Seymour's speech on Tuesday, July 14 (Paine, *Thomas Nast*, 92–94). Keller mentions offhandedly that Nast produced sketches of the riots for *Harper's Weekly*, without any reference to an issue in which these sketches appeared; it is possible that Nast produced the designs for the centerfold of the August 1st edition, but this two-page montage is unsigned – and Nast made a habit of signing his illustrations prominently (Keller, *Art and Politics*, 12).

6. Nast's relation to the middle classes overlaps the relation of class and cultural producer proposed by Karl Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International, 1998), 50–51.

7. Bernstein, *New York City Draft Riots*, 9–10.

8. *Ibid.*, passim.

9. *Ibid.*, 40–41.

10. The burning of the asylum came to function as a sort of pictorial shorthand for the riots in Nast's illustration of the late 19th century. For a contemporaneous illustration of the catastrophe, see the two-page center montage in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* for July 25, 1863.

11. Leach, "Unchaining the Tiger," 192–93.

12. "The Riots Yesterday," *New York Times*, July 14, 1863, 4.

13. "The Riot," *New York Tribune*, July 14, 1863, 4.

14. "The Spirit of the Mob and Its Promoters," *New York Times*, July 17, 1863, 4.

15. "The Draft," *Harper's Weekly*, July 25, 1863, 466. For another attempt to explain the upheaval in New York in terms of foreign riots, see "Riots and Mob Law," *Scientific American* 9 (August 1863): 74.

16. These include the Abolition riots, the Five Points riot, the Stonecutters' riot, and the Broadway Hall riots of 1835–36; the Flour riot of 1837; the Loco-Foco riot of 1840; the Astor Place riot of 1849; and the Bread riot of 1857. For an extensive listing of the riots between 1800 and 1863, see Thomas Rose and James Rodgers's bibliographic note to a newer edition of Joel Tyler Headley's *The Great Riots of New York: 1712–1873*, ed. Thomas Rose and James Rodgers (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), 307–11.

17. For a treatment of the Astor Place riot in the context of theatrical history, see Richard Moody, *The Astor Place Riot* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958). See also Bernstein, *New York City Draft Riots*, 148–50.

18. On the former account, see Moody, *Astor Place Riot*, passim; and Bernstein, *New York City Draft Riots*, 149–50.

19. Bernstein, *New York City Draft Riots*, 149.

20. *Ibid.*, 150.

21. "Another Shameful Riot," *New York Daily Tribune*, May 11, 1849, 2.

22. See, for example, "Another Shameful Riot," *New York Daily Tribune*, May 11, 1849, 3; "The Riots!" *New York Daily Tribune*, May 12, 1849, 2; "Dreadful Riot and Bloodshed at the Astor Place Theater," *New York Herald*, May 11, 1849, 3 (pages unnumbered); "Additional Particulars of the Dreadful Riot," *New York Herald*, May 12, 1849, 3 (unnumbered); "Great Riot, Bloodshed, and Loss of Life!" *New York Morning Courier and Enquirer*, May 11, 1849, 3; and "The Riot of Thursday Night," *New York Morning Courier and Enquirer*, May 12, 1849, 3. See also "Incidents &c., of the Riot," *New York Morning Courier and Enquirer*, May 14, 1849, 3; and "Law and Order Have Triumphed . . ." *New York Morning Courier and Enquirer*, May 16, 1849, 3.

23. "The Late Riot," *New York Daily Tribune*, May 12, 1849, 2.

24. "The Moral of the Riot," *New York Daily Tribune*, May 15, 1849, 3.

25. I have found different dates for *Henry Hoff's Views of New York and View of Astor Place Theater*; the Museum of the City of New York owns a copy of this print, which it dates, along with the book, to 1850. There was also an edition of the book published in 1852; it seems likely that Hoff produced two editions in 1850

and 1852. Whatever its exact date, *View of Astor Place Theater* was published after the Astor Place Riot, and presents a thoroughly reworked vision of the site of upheaval.

26. Of course, between the Astor Place riot and the draft riots, a number of violent uprisings occurred in New York, including the Bread riot of 1857. The visual culture of these uprisings has yet to be studied. Leach has suggested, however, that by the time of the draft riots a tradition existed of discounting the potential for further class conflict ("Unchaining the Tiger," 192–93).

27. See "The Riots at New York," *Harper's Weekly*, August 1, 1863, 484–85.

28. Bernstein, *New York City Draft Riots*, 37–38.

29. *Ibid.*, 35.

30. Though both papers often sprinkled cartoons throughout their text, the last page of *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* issues typically included a cartoon spoofing current events; nonhumorous pictorial accounts of the same appeared at various points in the text. Renderings of the most spectacular events or calamities were depicted in a two-page layout at the center of the magazines.

31. It should be noted that *Harper's Weekly* had a lengthy lag between its report of an event and the event's actual occurrence; the August 1st issue was thus the first to deal substantively with the riots. It is not particularly surprising, therefore, that the cartoon of that issue was so ambiguous in tone.

32. See "Don't You See the Point?" *Harper's Weekly*, August 22, 1863, 560.

33. "How to Enforce the Draft," *New York Daily Tribune*, July 18, 1863, 4. For another claim of conspiracy, see "The Enforcement of the Draft," *New York Times*, July 20, 1863, 4; and also "The Left Wing of Lee's Army," *New York Times*, July 16, 1863, 4. Leach also mentions this strategy ("Unchaining the Tiger," 192).

34. Leach, "Unchaining the Tiger," 193.

35. "Riots and Mob Law," *Scientific American* 9 (August 1863): 73–74.

36. "How to Deal with Mobs," *New York Times*, July 21, 1863, 4. For another view of the riots as "class-less" struggle, see "The Conservation of New York," *New York Daily Tribune*, July 21, 1863, 4. Leach also describes the nullification of class conflict in dominant-class accounts of the riots ("Unchaining the Tiger," 193–94).

37. See "How to Deal with Mobs."

38. David Barnes, *The Draft Riots in New York, July 1863* (New York: Baker and Godwin, 1863). The subtitle of Barnes's work was *The Metropolitan Police: Their Services During Riot Week, Their Honorable Record*.

39. See, for example, "The Laws and the Mob," *New York Times*, July 18, 1863, 4.

40. "Liberty and Property in New York," *New York Times*, July 28, 1863, 4. The *New York Daily Tribune* published a particularly resolute declaration on July 21: "We can now no more afford to concede to the illegal demands of skulking murderers than when they were rushing through our streets almost resistless. We have won a victory for law – now let us have its resolute enforcement. Firmness alone will save us from future terrors ("The Conservation of New York," *New York Daily Tribune*, July 21, 1863, 4).

41. Herman Melville's poem "The House-Top: A Night Piece," which he wrote in 1863 and published in his 1866 collection *Battle Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866; rept. New York: Da Capo, 1995), can be considered a reframing of the violent spectacle of the riots. Of course, Melville's poem is dense and complex, with whole networks of complicated allusions. I would note simply that the poem reestablishes the distance between elite reader and violence, by opposing the "hushed nearby" and the "Atheist roar of riot" that is "from far." In the poem, the riots are mere whispers and "low dull" rumblings, a red glow of arson in the sky; the elite reader and violence, which were so recently brought together in the flow of the riots, are separated again. The rioters themselves are figured as atavistic,

savages even: "And man rebounds whole aeons back in nature." Though the poem notes the "grimy slur" on the national "faith" left by the riots, and that the warning of the riots will not be heeded, it thus nevertheless reaffirms the psychic distance of reader from that grimy slur – from the horrible spectacle of riot – with a sort of pleasurable national self-pitying (80–81).

42. Le Beau, *Currier & Ives*, 181.

43. Neely and Holzer, *Union Image*, 88–89. Patricia Hills (personal communication) has observed that such a soldier's return, if indeed a component of the print, could have been understood by 19th-century viewers as a humorous allusion to the story of Odysseus, who, having returned to Ithaca a destitute man after ten years of adventure, was recognized *only* by his dog.

44. Neely and Holzer accept this meaning of the phrase as the meaning intended by Nast (*Union Image*, 89). Patricia Hills (personal communication) has noted that the placement of the little doghouse next to the larger home supports the conflation of dog/rioter, in that the little structure alludes to the servants' quarters often affixed to the back of an elite home, and thus the dog's revolt alludes to the rising of the subordinate classes.

45. "Home Guards," *New York Daily Tribune*, July 16, 1863, 4.

46. "Home Guards," *New York Times*, July 18, 1863, 4.

47. Bernstein notes that the clash of religious ideologies in New York, and the sociopolitical domination of the Catholic immigrant community at its core, motivated the many riotous attacks against prominent Protestant individuals and institutions (*New York City Draft Riots*, 32–33).

48. "How to Deal with Mobs," 4.

49. "The Rioters," *American Phrenological Journal* 38 (September, 1863): 86, 88.

50. Le Beau, *Currier & Ives*, 255–56.

51. I am indebted to Patricia Hills for this observation.

52. See, for example, the Nast cartoons in the May 8, May 15, May 22, May 29, and June 5 issues of *Harper's Weekly*.

53. On the sensational wedding, see Lori Merish, "Cuteness and Commodity Aesthetics," in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. Rosemarie Thomson (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 188–203.

54. *Ibid.*, 194.

55. *Ibid.*, 190–91.

56. *Ibid.*, 191.

57. Elizabeth O'Leary has noted the conflict in the picture, but in a note suggests that the thrust of the print might be related to the naval blockade (*At Beck and Call: The Representation of Domestic Servants in Nineteenth-Century America Painting* [Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996], 116–17, 282 n. 28).

58. For an account of the early development of baseball, and its flourishing in the first years of the Civil War, see Melvin Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820–70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 121–37.

59. Holzer and Neely, *Union Image*, plates insert.

60. James Jackson Jarves, *The Art-Idea* (1864; rept. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), 197.