suppress error, but openly, with full faith in human nature under the sway of freedom, win the day against it” (2:48). But the critics would not be pacified.

Three phrases are common to the biographies of most of those involved in the Radicals: “attended Harvard Divinity School,” “was a disciple of Theodore Parker,” and “held beliefs outside the bounds of orthodox Unitarianism.” Such a group, consciously iconoclastic, embracing Darwin and evolution, accepting science as the partner of religion, and urging their readers to probe further and further from the established comfortable beliefs, inevitably had to alienate what was not a large readership to begin with. When more and more writers urged a search to find a replacement for the Bible, more and more subscribers cancelled.

In the spring of 1872 an attempt was made to raise funds to save the magazine. Five members of the Radical Association formed a corporation called The Radical Publishing Company and issued $50,000 of stock at $100 a share (10:319). Only ninety-three shares were sold, many to the magazine’s contributors, and the attempt to save the Radical failed. In his valedictory, Morse wrote, “The magazine has made a fair record and done good work” (10:468).

Notes
5. Gohdes, p. 223.

Information Sources

BIBLIOGRAPHY:
Cooke, George Willis. An Historical and Bibliographical Introduction to Accompany the Dial. Cleveland: Rowfand Club, 1902.
INDEXES: Indexes at the end of each volume: volumes 1 and 2, title entries, volumes 4–10, author and title.
LOCATION SOURCES: Widely available.
crowded and varied life of each passing week, most merits or demands the thoughtful attention which it is impossible men should give to the facts of each day as they fly past them on the wings of the morning journal” (1:4).

The Sweaters—perhaps with characteristic American idealism—assumed that their journal could succeed without establishing ties to a political faction, religious denomination, or publishing house, as was typical of American magazines. Of course, to do so would place external constraints on a journal that sought to approach all subjects in a free and open manner. “Politics without partisanship, criticism without partiality or prejudice” was its motto (2:8). But the difficulties of producing an independent magazine during the war forced the inexperienced editors to suspend publication with the number for 23 July 1864. They claimed that the Round Table had been a “success,” that its “circulation and advertising patronage are greater than it was anticipated they would be at this date...” It has definitely proved that an independent, spirited and literary journal was an actual want in the country” (2:88). But, the Sweaters complained, they could not have anticipated the tremendous inflation caused by the war. On 9 September 1865 they made good their promise to resume publication, but it would not be long before each of the Sweaters withdrew, Henry in April and Charles in November 1866. Their positions were assumed by Dorsey Gardner and Henry Sedley, who would turn the magazine sharply to the right and away from its strong American cultural nationalism.

Under the Sweaters the Round Table was politically liberal, supporting a vigorous prosecution of the war as a means of ending the evil of slavery and restoring the Union. Unhesitatingly critical of the failures of both parties, it repeatedly warned against the dangers of factionalism. On the crucial issue of race, it was comparatively enlightened, praising the behavior of the Negroes, “bond and free, North and South,” during the war and urging that the Federal government assume the responsibility for caring for the recently emancipated slaves (1:100). The high-minded paper condemned the excessive profits of the few, and urged all citizens to share equally in the war’s burdens. After the war it observed sadly that everywhere “we see evidences that the desire for money has acquired a strength in our American nature which almost makes it now one of those passions before which all principle is powerless” (2:25). A supporter of Lincoln, the Round Table campaigned for a wider democratization of American life, both in social policy and in the discussions of literature and the arts that figured prominently in its pages.

Attacking the “deference” paid to English cultural standards, the Round Table sought to stimulate “a taste for American in preference to English books and periodicals” (2:8). It criticized the “elegant mediocrity” of American literature and called for a “rouger, stronger race of literary athletes” to create a national literature expressive of the people themselves. Insisting that “the one great requisite” for such a national literature is “trenchant, unsparing, vigorous criticism” (2:18), the Round Table charged that fear of losing publishers’ advertising had prevented most American periodicals from telling the truth about bad books

(1:55). It showed no such timidity in its own criticism of literature, drama, or the fine arts. For instance, its regular art critic, Eugene Benson, a self-styled “literary frondeur,” brought a new outspokenness and thoroughness to art criticism in America. “The first and last idea of the paper is free, independent, and hearty criticism,” the editors asserted. However, the Round Table ran the risk, in its unrestrained and high-minded treatment of every aspect of American life—it was particularly harsh on the religious press—of becoming censorious. But refreshingly the editors admitted that “we should be graceless cowards if unwilling to receive that which we freely give” (3:344).

The Sweaters did not establish an in-house corps of editors, but, in keeping with their goal of creating a truly national publication committed to informed discussion of all subjects, sought subscriptions from throughout the country. It subscribed to the policy of anonymous journalism, although it did permit the authors of “letters” from outside New York, such as Justin Winsor from Boston and Moncure Conway from London, to affix initials. Evidently, it was Charles Sweetser, an 1862 graduate of Amherst, who secured Emily Dickinson’s “My Sabbath” (“Some Keep the Sabbath”), published anonymously in the number for 12 March 1863 (1:195). On 16 January 1864 the editors asserted that the policy of anonymous journalism had been no bar to their ability to secure contributions from writers whose eminence in their respective departments, whether of belles-lettres, history, jurisprudence, metaphysics, warfare, science or art, is universally acknowledged” (1:67). However, in July 1866, they confessed their “disappointment” in not being able to enlist the aid of literary men who can and ought to aid in supporting the magazine and periodical literature of the day. “We believe that nearly half of the articles which have appeared in this journal from the date of commencement have been the production of writers comparatively unknown in the literary world” (3:440). The statement expresses both their dissatisfaction with the timidity of American literature and their disappointment in not attracting writers of established reputation, particularly from Boston. The editors refused to admit that their unrealistic policy of not identifying their authors had something to do with the reluctance of some writers to contribute. For instance, the New York poet and critic E. C. Stedman, despite his support of the Sweaters’ brave endeavor, decided not to send his best poems to the Round Table because its “impersonal” rule “bides its author’s name, and where it can reach but a limited audience.” At the conclusion of the first volume the editors listed some sixty-seven writers who had contributed with some frequency, including such leading scholars as Daniel Gilman and Noah Porter of Yale, but New Yorkers, such as R. H. Stoddard, William Winter, C. B. Conant, Stedman, and T. B. Aldrich, composed the great majority, and it does appear that New York writers made up the bulk of the magazine’s regular columns.

The resurgence of literary activity following the war brought with it a startling increase in the number of periodicals, most of which, the Round Table predicted, could not survive: “At no time have the expenses of publishing a paper been so great as now... Our readers can get some idea of what it costs to make a
paper when we state that the ordinary expenses of The Round Table vary not a great way from eight hundred dollars each week" (3:89). The editors expressed confidence that the high quality of their weekly would attract increasing numbers of readers, but they also urged their regular subscribers to solicit new ones. Charles Sweetser's "A Card.—Personal," published on 14 April 1866, the date of his withdrawal, gives us some insight into the extraordinary struggle that these editors regularly faced: "None can so well know the great difficulties to be surmounted in establishing a literary adventure as those who have themselves attempted it; and it will, perhaps be considered, just to say that no efforts have met more obstacles than this endeavor to create a critical periodical literature in our own country." Circulation, which, Charles Sweetser wrote, "should not be less than 25,000" (3:232), never exceeded 5,000, according to Frank Luther Mott. There is, then, reason to be skeptical of the editors' claim at the end of 1866 that the magazine paid a "handsome profit" (4:357). With E. L. Godkin's establishment in New York of his well-financed Nation early in 1865, during its suspension, the Round Table faced a difficult competitor in a very limited market.

Much as the Sweetser's Round Table reflected a Lincolnian commitment to democracy, so the Round Table under Gardner and Sedley became an expression of postwar disillusionment. Disgusted by widespread corruption in government, the magazine now propounded an inmutable social law: "In proportion as suffrage is extended downward the amount of ignorance and prejudice in the aggregate voting body is increased, with the direct consequence that politicians will become more and more demagogues—men who appeal to ignorance and prejudice and not knowledge and reason." And so, at a time of "enormous influx of ignorant immigration, together with the proposed enfranchisement of an entire race, late a servile and now a semi-civilized one," the Round Table fastened on the threat from below, adamently opposed Reconstruction, grew livid over the prospect of Negro suffrage, and questioned democracy itself (7:99). It spoke longingly of the advantages of a House of Lords as a conservative check on a popularly elected legislative body (8:19–20) and asserted that the absence of standards of proper behavior in social life was proof-positive of American provincialism (8:20–21). And whereas the old Round Table spoke out in favor of cultural nationalism, now the magazine adopted the stance of such English critics of American democracy as Carlyle and Arnold. Especially under Henry Sedley, who became sole editor and proprietor in December 1868, the magazine lost its earlier editorial openness, its willingness to consider tolerantly and critically all sides of any question, perhaps the most important contribution to American journalism of the Sweetser's lively weekly. But under Sedley the magazine was no more popular with readers than earlier incarnations, and after the first number of volume 10, for 3 July 1869, the Round Table merged with the Citizen and ceased to exist.