ARCHIVES *of* LABOR

WORKING-CLASS WOMEN *and* LITERARY CULTURE *in the* ANTEBELLUM UNITED STATES

LORI MERISH

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To the memory of my grandmother and my mother,
Agnese Dagradi Riccardi and *Elsie Riccardi Merish*

And for Sophia

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Introduction

The Aristocrat and Trades Union Advocate, an 1834 pamphlet poem by a "working woman of Boston," offers a striking commentary on the meaning of industrialism and its much trumpeted "progress" for working people. One of the first works of trade-union imaginative literature published by an American, the poem initiates the tradition of antebellum working-class women's writing examined in this book. Dedicated to members of the Boston Trades Union, the poem purportedly records a conversation overheard between the parties named in its title during a Fourth of July procession—a frame that positions the working-class woman writer as a witness to male politics, a medium, and a scribe of male voices. The poem thus could be seen as allegorizing the gendered (and racialized) politics of class during the antebellum period, when working-class dissent, linked to a recently enfranchised white working-class manhood, was predicated on feminine subordination and silence.[1] However, the text also affirms, in complex ways, female discursive and literary authority. Using a lengthy preface—a frequent feature of poetry of this type—to register her relation to

the class conflict here cast as masculine dialogue, the poet immediately converts the seemingly auxiliary position of spectator or listener into a stance of political affiliation and engagement: "Do not imagine," she charges her Unionist readers, "that I acted the part of a vile listener. . . . Long before the gentlemen began to speak, I had chosen my position and resolved not to give it up for man, woman, or child."[2] Claiming a political initiation that "long" precedes the masculine debate that is her poetic subject, the poet signals the existence of a robust political discourse among antebellum women, one corroborated by recent scholars.[3] But here feminine political autonomy and agency are specifically located in a collective body of *working-class* women. Observing that Unionist readers will doubtless wonder, "as [the recorded dialogue] did not pertain to household affairs or matters of dress, but to topics of political bearing, how could it be interesting to a working woman?" (iv), the poet avers that the political opinions expressed by the advocate "resemble[d] [those] of our working women." "That there were certain customs and practices creeping in among us contrary to a republic," she states with remarkable force, was "discussed by our working women long before you thought of forming a 'dangerous combination'" (vi). Later in the preface she anchors this oppositional oral culture in the historical countermemory of "our mothers and old fashioned aunts," who possess an intimate knowledge of the decline of republicanism and the degradation of the laboring class in the early nineteenth century (vii). For this writer, "republican motherhood" is a locus of working-class power and produces not only "republican sons" but activist, working-class daughters.[4] The oral (counter)knowledge of "our [plebian] mothers" at once unsettles the primacy of the masculine voice of class protest the poem ostensibly records and serves to anchor and authorize workingwomen's textual expression.[5]

The female agency of listening assumes concrete form in the poet's transformation of political discourse into verse. While disparagingly attributing her conversion of everyday speech into rhyming couplets of iambic pentameter to a "defect in early education," a mere "few months [of] instruction" at the age of three, she designs to filter male speech through the medium of feminine literary imagination (v).[6] Workingwomen, she shows, have an unquestioned stake in antebellum print culture. Asserting boldly that "women will read the papers" (vi), she establishes herself as an avid consumer of the emerging transatlantic working-class culture of letters, referencing papers as diverse as Cobbett's *Political Register* and the London *Times* (28–29). The poem itself contributes to the body of working-class political verse associated with the contemporaneous Chartist movement.[7] Armed with such literary competencies, the writer is attuned to the power of words, especially their significance as tokens of class

contest. Thus, she observes, industrial "improvements" do not in reality benefit all (as Whigs contend) but depend upon the degradation and exploitation of labor; the "expansion of . . . national industry" (xi) has widened the gap between rich and poor while generating increasing "pride" among the "gentry" (ix). The "dangerous combination[s]" are not the unions and "clubs" of the "lower orders" (24), as the *Aristocrat* professes, but the chartered corporations and "factio[ns]" of elite professional men ("Judges and Lawyers") who monopolize economic and political power; while the "age of intellect" (the title of a widely circulated Cruikshank print from 1828 and a phrase bandied about by middle-class organizations such as the Societies for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge) is erected on workers' ignorance.

But the poet is particularly attuned to how gender, in David Montgomery's words, "profoundly shaped the everyday experience of class."[8] Capturing the perspective of a female domestic worker, the poem opens with an epigraph attributed to Shakespeare that is actually a clever rewriting of lines from *Othello*:

> Rude am I in speech,
> And little blessed with the phrase of schools,
> For since these arms of mine had ten years pith
> Until these few last hours they have used
> Their dearest action in the busy kitchen:
> And little of this great world can I speak,
> More than pertains to feats of broils and stews;
> And therefore little shall I grace your cause,
> Yet, unions, by your gracious patience,
> I will a plain unvarnished tail [*sic*] deliver.

Cannily revising Othello's speech—warrior is transformed into maid, "feats of stews" replace Shakespearean "feats of battle," and "tented field[s]" become a "busy kitchen" as the setting of the speaker's literary exile—the poet again appropriates a male voice as a vehicle for feminine poetic agency. Further, in adapting Othello's words the poet performs a cross-identification that is racial as well as sexual: in a fascinating instance of "love and theft" by a working-class woman (specifically a servant, with all of that term's racial connotations in the antebellum era), Othello's "rude . . . speech" is an enabling condition of poetic discourse and a textual frame the author repeatedly unsettles. For one thing, the conventional apologia is undone by the poet's treatment of Shakespeare as cultural capital and literary currency, gestures that ironize her assertion of poetic "rudeness."[9] Indeed, the grounds of gendered class contest in the poem are at once political and aesthetic: her language will be "plain" and "unvarnished,"

she declares, repudiating the "grace[s]" of conventional literary arts. Forging her working-class aesthetic, the poet resists the silence imposed by an endless round of household tasks and the "increasing pride of the gentry" (ix) who "impress on the minds of independent women" a sense of class inferiority (xi). Like the Lowell worker who reveals how servants are consigned to silence unless "some question is put to them,"[10] the poet notes that feelings of deference and gratitude, rather than "independence and equality," are expected psychological traits of household workers (x). These constraints on working-class female speech are reinforced by workingmen's gendered expectations: the view of workingwomen as "mere" domestic servants infects workingmen's view as well. After all, it is male Unionists the poet takes to task for their assumption that workingwomen "are not to meddle with matters" outside domestic affairs (v); hastening to conclude her preface, she predicts that her readers' "patience with me is about gone" (xiii). An intensification of feminine "servitude," the author implies, is a direct consequence of industrial "improvement."[11] Invoking while repudiating the gendered, racialized meanings of both servitude and dependency in U.S. political discourse by the 1830s, the poet exploits an identification with Othello as the site of miscegenous desire and an enabling condition of poetic possibility. Her servitude is a position at once inscribed within and undone by the form of the poem itself.

Published twenty years later, at the opposite end of the period covered in this book, Lucy Ann Lobdell's extraordinary autobiography, *The Female Hunter* (1855), envisions what might be described as a more extended performance of cross-gendered vocalization. Indeed Lobdell's narrative literalizes what Engels and others called a "struggle for the breeches" in the working-class household.[12] The wife of a farm laborer, Lobdell leaves her abusive, improvident husband to pursue a career of female self-support, first as a "female hunter" who hunts game to feed herself, her infant daughter, and her aging, feeble parents, and later as an itinerant laborer who dresses as a man to secure "skilled," better-paid work. Lobdell's itinerancy is motivated by both the threat of her husband's return and her family's extreme poverty: "My father was lame, and in consequence, I had worked in-doors and out; and as hard times were crowding upon us, I made up my mind to dress in men's attire to seek labor, as I was used to men's work. *And as I might work harder at house-work*, and get only a dollar per week, and I was capable of doing men's work, and getting men's wages, I resolved to try . . . to get work away among strangers."[13] Male disability and its devastating economic effects in a male breadwinner economy here enable an unsettling of emerging liberal-capitalist norms of able-bodiedness and gendered embodiment. While slave narrators frequently envision the vulnerability of the master's body (the

mortality and therefore inadequate protection even a benevolent master could afford) as a weak point in proslavery ideology in a capitalist order, working-women envision the "protection" afforded by a male breadwinner as more wishful thinking than fact. Lobdell's subversive assertion that she "might work harder at house-work" than "men's work" is reinforced by the strikingly detailed account of poor women's "double burden" with which the narrative concludes. Should she remain at her father's house,

> I should be obliged to toil from morning till night, and then I could demand but a dollar per week; and how much, I ask, would this do to support a child and myself. . . . Woman . . . toils from morning till night, and then the way her sorrows cease is this—her children are to be attended to; she must dress and undress them for bed; after their little voices are hushed, she must sit up and look after the preparations for breakfast, and, probably nine, ten, eleven, or twelve o'clock comes round before she can go to rest. Again, she must be up at early dawn to get breakfast, and whilst the breakfast is cooking, she must wash and dress some half a dozen children. (42)

Appealing to men's concern for their daughters' future, Lobdell asks that her male readers endeavor to "secure to [woman] her rights" to equal wages; otherwise, she demands in barely constrained anger that they "permit her to wear the pants, and breathe the pure air of heaven, and you stay and be convinced at home with the children how pleasant a task it is to act the part that woman must act" (45). Coupling cross-dressing with images of escape and transcendence (the pants-wearing woman breathes "the pure air of heaven"), Lobdell contributes to a burgeoning political discourse of the female breadwinner and the value and productivity of domestic labor that, we shall see, echoed through the feminist periodical press of the 1850s.

Lobdell's powerful indictment of the economic privileges of masculinity is reinforced by another published account of the female hunter: a letter by a peddler, Mr. Talmage, that appeared in "many different papers" (38) (gaining Lobdell some notoriety) and was reprinted in *The Female Hunter*. Encountering Lobdell hunting in the woods sporting male hunting garb while a "good looking rifle" rests on her shoulder and a "formidable hunting-knife" hangs in phallic suspension from her waist (37), Talmage is invited inside the Lobdell home. "The maiden-hunter instead of setting down to rest as most hunters do when they get home," he pointedly notes, "remarked that she had got the chores to do" (37). Lucy, Talmage learns, has taken charge of all the farm chores as well as the household work since her father has been "confined to the house with the rheumatism" (37), and this particular day's activities are not unusual.

After stabling, feeding, and watering the farm animals and chopping wood for the evening, "her next business was to change her dress, and get tea. . . . After tea, she finished up the usual house-work, and then sat down and commenced plying her needle in the most ladylike manner" (37). The evening concludes with Lobdell bringing out her violin, playing and singing "in a style that showed that she was far from being destitute of musical skill" (38). In Talmage's letter, as throughout *The Female Hunter*, Lobdell's defiance of antebellum gender codes is marked both sartorially and economically: her bodily performances transgress the "law" of dress and the gender division of labor. Depicting this defiance of gender norms, *The Female Hunter*—like the treatments of "female Amazons" common in antebellum pamphlet fiction—stresses Lobdell's singularity; many readers will find her, the narrator acknowledges, a type of gender prodigy, a "strange sort of being" (46).[14] But like many early nineteenth-century socialists, including Fanny Wright (who herself habitually wore bloomer-like trousers), Lobdell emphasizes androgyny and sexual nonconformity as the basis of what one Owenite termed the entire reorganization of the "social and domestic system."[15] When her husband, accusing her of "spreeing," attempts to destroy Lucy's reputation through an elaborate charade meant to "expose" to the community her inattentive housekeeping, one can glimpse how closely the discipline of domesticity and working-class female "respectability" were becoming intertwined, during this period, in a discourse largely fashioned by men.[16]

Autobiographical narratives by free African American women similarly reveal the struggles of the female breadwinner and the economic debilities suffered by "domestic" women. For example, Harriet Jacobs charts a course "from slavery to poverty" in Linda Brent's narrative trajectory; mapping continuities from slavery to "free" domestic service, it foregrounds the indispensability of black women's reproductive labor in both the northern and southern economies. The Marxist feminist Sylvia Federici argues that under capitalism the female body was defined as a type of commons for men, a "natural resource, laying outside the sphere of market relations," and that women's unpaid reproductive and sexual labor have served as primary means of capital accumulation under "capitalist patriarchy."[17] Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* suggests that the forced seizure of the black female body is consigned to unspeakability, placed outside the bounds of the literary itself. In struggling against Lydia Maria Child's editorship to cast her story in terms comprehensible to the "delicate ears" of middle-class readers, Jacobs reveals those discursive constraints to be as stifling as the prison-like space Brent inhabits for nearly a decade. In both the South and the North, black female productive and reproductive labor is revealed to be the source of white wealth; in *Incidents* that labor is also ma-

terially and symbolically claimed by black women as the basis of black physical and cultural survival. Similarly, Sojourner Truth's *Narrative* shows how class and labor shape narrative possibilities of gendered identity. In particular, Truth's *Narrative* "instructs [readers] in nineteenth-century working-class realities" while revealing the "overlap[ping]" experiences and cultures of white and black workers in the antebellum North, a period of abolition and racial uncertainty especially in northern cities.[18] We are now well acquainted with the nativism and racism of white workers in the Jacksonian era; less familiar are the forms of racial transgression and liminality—what Shane White calls the "fluidity of racial categories" as well as the interracial relationships and sexuality—common especially in poor urban neighborhoods.[19] In some sense, the miscegenous production of Truth's (auto)biographical narrative—dictated to Olive Gilbert, fellow resident of the Northampton Association—exemplifies the "biracial egalitarianism" of the Northampton Association and the miscegenous desires evident in poor neighborhoods and working-class cultural forms.[20] Truth, who grew up a slave laboring alongside Low Dutch mistresses renowned (as she would become) for their physical prowess and who, once free, worked alongside white female reformers in the Magdalen Society and New York's notorious (and interracial) neighborhood of Five Points, figures physical strength and spiritual sanctity as equally treasured personal gifts. Her autobiographical narrative—as fully as Lobdell's—reveals workingwomen's pressure on antebellum discourses of gendered embodiment and identity. For example, her mystical sense of a "union existing between herself and . . . Jesus, the transcendentally lovely as well as great and powerful," inspires her to imagine "surprising comparisons" between "herself and [the] great of this world" (68). While her repudiation of urban capitalism's "great system of robbery and wrong" (98) fuels her rebirth as "Sojourner," her determination to rely on the hospitality of others and her subsequent residence among various utopian communities (including the Northampton Association), while attesting to her "independence of character" (109), generate a startling range of race and class identifications. Incorporating rhetorics of radical abolitionism, millenarianism, and working-class socialism, Truth's *Narrative* opens up for us an enriched antebellum vocabulary of class. In particular the *Narrative*, like the writings of Fourierists and Saint-Simonians that inspired the antebellum communitarian movement,[21] mobilizes an affective vocabulary of solidarity and universal love in excess of standard interpretations of antebellum sympathy as "disciplinary intimacy" and middle-class affect.

Taken together these texts introduce issues central to this book and the body of workingwomen's literature examined within it. First, they foreground workingwomen's access to "the class-based, racially segregated, gender-exclusive slug-

fest of the Jacksonian public sphere."[22] Challenging the purportedly masculine character of class dissent and an image of workingwomen's silence—familiarly emblematized by the mute paper mill women in Melville's "Tartarus of Maids" (discussed in chapter 2)—they alert our attention to a vital, diverse archive of texts. These texts reveal how the expanding wage labor market in the antebellum period and forms of political discourse and activity associated with that expansion were sites of gendered cultural contest, materializing women's subordination while generating new forms of social identity, agency, and desire. Laboring women record especially the ways class relations are *gendered*, constituted by gendered processes of production and distribution that are justified and represented in discourse, including cultural discourse. Disrupting the hegemonic image of the white male industrial laborer as the "quintessential worker," they fashion new fictions of labor and working-class subjectivity.[23]

Crafting such fictions, working-class women writers necessarily engage with the representational status of working-class women in midcentury cultural and political discourse; in particular, they address ways in which the female worker was positioned to *represent* the condition of class exploitation, subjection, and economic suffering. In a host of texts—court documents and legal transcripts; petitions, testimonials, and "poverty narratives" collected by almshouses and bastardy courts; working-class men's writings about industrialism; and reports by urban and social reformers—poor and working-class women were expected to bear the "burden of poverty" both culturally and socially: they were tasked with representing forms of "social suffering" associated with poverty, excessive labor and bodily violation, physical compulsion (including sexual compulsion), and abuse.[24] According to Adrienne Siegel, women and children came to signify the degradation of the urban labor force in antebellum popular fiction: story paper, pamphlet, and serial fiction was "saturated . . . with the plight of two working-class groups, women and children."[25] The representational division of labor through which poor and workingwomen came to represent the trauma of poverty and economic exploitation certainly limited the cultural imagination of female economic subjectivity and restricted workingwomen's narrative plots; as we shall see in chapter 3, it aligned workingwomen with the tragic mode and conscripted them into what became naturalism's "plot of decline" while distancing them from narratives of individual or collective "progress," including the narrative of the American dream.[26] As one New England mill woman put it, women "have no share in that American privilege which sets in full view of the poorest white male laborer a growing income, a bank account, the possibilities of an Astor, and every office within the gift of the Republic if he have the brain and the courage to win them."[27] Challenging the reduction of working-class

women's experience to inarticulate suffering and sorrow, working-class women writers reinflected the sign of the working-class woman, contesting her reiterated appearance as the very type of the dependent worker.

Of particular importance to my study is the role of the home in workingwomen's writings as an explicit locus of cultural contest, anchoring both gender subjection and class privilege. As Lobdell and the author of *The Aristocrat and Trades Union Advocate* differently suggest, antebellum workingwomen's social identities are often at odds with—but always defined in relation to—the domestic sphere and its increasingly hegemonic gender norms. This entailed refashioning cultural definitions of reproductive as well as productive labor. For example, rather than aligning women with the reproduction of cultural capital, as in domestic fiction—or pathologizing poor and working-class women for their purported role in the reproduction of poverty's moral and material degradation, as in the debates examined in chapter 2—texts such as the *Aristocrat* tie working-class women to the reproduction of a culture of class resistance, a culture transmitted, in part, by written texts.[28] According to one social historian, domesticity's "process of redefinition [of gender] . . . led to a denial of the more radical gender meanings—including greater political awareness and economic independence—implied in the experiences of poorer women who had sacrificed so much during the course of the [Revolutionary] war."[29] Mobilizing these "radical gender meanings" (in the *Aristocrat* these are lodged in the communal memory of plebian women), women workers drove a wedge in masculine, familial definitions of class, both conservative and oppositional, instituted in the early nineteenth century and with us to this day. Contesting the emerging norm of the family wage, these authors envision the family less as an image of class unity than as a site of class struggle; many foreground the gendered nature of class power and exploitation within and outside of the family. Their writings thus illustrate how, in the words of the theorist Joan Acker, "processes and practices [of] gendering and racialization are integral to the creation and recreation of class inequalities and class divisions, emerging in complex, multifaceted, boundary-spanning capitalist activities"—precisely at a moment when a new definition of gender was being installed as socially normative.[30] Working-class women's literature thus brings into clearer view the material and ideological stakes of the domestic model of gender that has received substantial critical attention in the field of antebellum women's writing. Their texts illuminate cultural definitions of class while contributing crucially to our understanding of nineteenth-century U.S. literary and cultural history.

The first book-length study of antebellum working-class women's literature, *Archives of Labor* examines textual representations of a diverse group of work-

ing women: Lowell mill women, African American "free laborers," Mexicana mission workers, urban seamstresses, and prostitutes. The book aims to address a significant absence in the critical literature about class in nineteenth-century U.S. cultural studies: although a number of recent works—by, most notably, Shelley Streeby, Gavin Jones, Amy Schrager Lang, and Eric Schocket—aim to address what Michael Gilmore in 1994 called a general silence about class matters in nineteenth-century literary studies,[31] none focuses expressly on working-class women. Indeed nearly all work on class in antebellum America overlooks working women. While scholarship on women's class identities has focused on the middle class and the role of domestic womanhood in securing middle-class hegemony, studies that address the formation of the working class and working-class subjectivities (including the ways in which, in Eric Lott's terms, class has been *staged* through race in the United States) have examined working-class *men* and the construction of class-inflected masculinities.[32] Delving into previously unexplored archives of working-class women's culture (including pamphlet novels, theatrical melodrama, and literature published in story papers and labor periodicals), *Archives of Labor* recovers working-class women's vital presence in antebellum America as both writers and readers. The book argues that antebellum popular literature both represents and helps shape working-women's subjectivity; challenging what Carolyn Kay Steedman and Cora Kaplan describe as the widespread attribution (in scholarly and other discourses) of a kind of psychological simplicity to working-class subjects, I emphasize the complex, often contradictory forms of antebellum workingwomen's subjectivities and desires.[33]

As the author of *Aristocrat* suggests, working-class women's literary texts are sites of class memory, archives that preserve and transmit popular languages of social class, democracy, and economic justice. I argue in chapter 2 that they can be envisioned as part of what Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge term a "proletarian public sphere" in which working-class and poor women's concerns, experiences, and desires are given cultural expression.[34] As David Montgomery has demonstrated, by the 1840s, with the rise of universal white male suffrage, class was largely removed from the domain of politics and insulated from democratic control;[35] such depoliticization has worked not only to privatize the operations of the economy but also to naturalize racialized, gendered forms of political and economic privilege. The workingwomen's writings I examine here disrupt liberalism's separation of "*class politics* . . . from *identity politics*";[36] they help us see the ways that class—in the antebellum era, as today—is fundamentally a *gendered* as well as *racialized* relation. For example, the activist Lowell women discussed in chapter 1 invoke the figure of the female breadwinner to

challenge emerging models of female economic and political dependency and the gendered exclusions of the workplace; popular fictions about factory women and seamstresses (examined in chapters 2 and 3, respectively) explore the feminization of poverty in the capitalist era and the delimitation of "benevolence" and welfare support that attended the rise of wage labor and the normalization of the family wage. These texts illuminate "intricate imbrications of relations of race, gender, sexuality, and class in the institutions of capitalist modernity" and their historically changing modes of economic distribution and production; they reveal how class operates through "status" categories of race and gender "at every stage of its historical development."[37] Attending to ways that class is actually *lived* through gender, race, and sexuality enriches and complicates our sense of the class past while enhancing our ability to imagine possible class futures. Writing in an era of social reform and utopian socialist experiments (such as those in which Sojourner Truth participated), when the inextricability of gender, class, and sexuality was powerfully theorized, workingwomen crafted languages of class and versions of class identity that remain visionary and politically generative. I see the value of restoring a sense of this tradition as both historical and genealogical: in addition to enabling us to see working-class women as writers and readers—thus shifting our sense of the literature of this period—it recuperates the importance of antebellum activist working-class women for the history of "material feminism" recovered by Dolores Hayden and for the evolution of what Dorothy Sue Cobble has termed "labor feminism" and the "other women's movement."[38]

Part historical recovery project, this book aims to restore an important chapter in American women's literary history, while its multiethnic focus enables an interrogation of the racially hegemonic (white) terms in which class identities, especially working-class identities, have often been defined. And while asserting the national import of this tradition (thus interrupting the myth of classlessness in the United States), I insist on its transnational reach. Like abolitionism, with which it overlapped, labor reform was part of a literary "culture of reform" with transnational, particularly transatlantic coordinates.[39] Not only did activists and their texts crisscross the Atlantic—Chartists, land reformers, and utopian socialists from Britain, Germany, and France emigrated to the United States, while Orestes Brownson's "Laboring Classes," a flashpoint in antebellum political discourse about industrialization, was published first in Britain—but discourses about class were forged in a transatlantic context. The nativist class icon of the Lowell mill girl was itself defined in the shadow of Manchester; strikingly, when one former millworker, Harriet Robinson, wishes to describe the Lowell mill girl's life circumstances, she refers her readers to Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary*

Barton.[40] British debates about Chartism and the expansion of the franchise, reform of the poor laws, the dangers of "combination," and the benefits and liabilities of industrialism were reproduced and followed in the U.S. press and to some extent were mirrored in U.S. policy debates. *Archives of Labor* thus argues for the importance of the transatlantic in understanding antebellum workingwomen's literary culture. This is perhaps especially true of the field of popular literature; in the absence of U.S. copyright laws, the penny press was dominated by pirated stories, many from Britain, signaling how, in the era of the "American 1848," class wishes, aspirations, and fears were forged in a transnational context.[41] The struggle against the capitalist organization of ownership and productive and reproductive labor was transnational in scope, a fact taken up in my last chapter. In tracing these transnational coordinates, the prominence of class in British cultural studies is salutary, for this work can attune us to class accents and possibilities in nineteenth-century U.S. writings. For example, the entire humanist tradition explored by Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society*, which centered on nineteenth-century debates about literature as a repository of humanizing feeling in the industrial era, is largely absent from critical discourse about U.S. sentimentalism, which has often been dominated by a Foucauldian reading of sympathy as an ideological formation that reinforces middle-class hegemony—a theoretical frame that negates the complex cultural and political history of sentimentalism and the nuanced political valences of literary sympathy. Transatlantic work on class, sentiment, and affect (such as Bruce Robbins's important work) can help disrupt the exceptionalist notion that America was exempt from sustained class conflict and enliven our understanding of the class meanings embedded within a range of antebellum texts.

Antebellum workingwomen wrote and published in a variety of forms; some—exemplified by author of the *Aristocrat*, Lobdell, and Truth—published poetry and autobiographies; some published articles and sketches in the new labor periodicals; others published fiction. Several chapters in this study focus on fiction, especially cheap fiction published in story papers and other periodicals and in pamphlet form. Popular fiction is a crucial terrain for bringing workingwomen's subjectivities into critical focus. As several historians have noted, the emergence of the industrial working class in antebellum America coincided with the rise of a popular, democratic journalism and literature directed toward and sometimes produced by the lower classes, including the development of the penny press in the 1830s and the explosion of paperback novels in the 1840s, developments that signal the importance of print culture for the constitution of working-class subjectivities during this period.[42] I argue that working-class women were an important readership for the popular, sensational fiction that

flooded the literary market after 1830 (I discuss examples of this literature in chapters 1–3.) Occasionally this audience was made explicit. For example, in 1871 the *New York Weekly* expressly linked publishing stories about women sewing machine operators with seeking them as an audience, while periodicals published by and for Lowell factory women regularly contained advertisements for cheap fiction (see chapter 2). At other times this working-class audience remained implicit. But it is my contention that even where it is commodified, popular literature operates in a dynamic interrelation with its working-class audience and encodes and facilitates forms of class desire and identification.[43]

ANTEBELLUM LITERATURE AND THE MATTER OF CLASS

Broadly speaking, what Fredric Jameson terms the "dialogical" is the critical frame through which workingwomen's texts will be interpreted. "Refocus[ing]" the "individual cultural artifact" as the "irreconcilable demands and positions of antagonistic classes"—for Jameson the primary manifestation of ideological contradiction in cultural texts—the dialogical allows us to read individual texts as "utterance[s]" in "the vaster system, or langue, of class discourse."[44] Such an interpretive effort requires challenging any illusion of literary "autonomy" while recollecting what V. N. Volosinov first termed the historical "materiality" (the "live social intelligibility" or "accents") of the discursive sign. It involves a double move, both the "rewriting" of literary "masterworks" to their proper place within the "dialogic system" as "the voice of a hegemonic class" and the "restoration or artificial reconstruction" of a voice "opposed" to hegemonic utterance but marginalized, stifled, or "scattered to the winds."[45] Although one must challenge Jameson's description of a singular voice of working-class opposition, whether "restored" or "reconstructed" (and this book contends that working-class voices are indelibly marked by differences of race, gender, and sexuality), the value of this dialectical hermeneutic is to restore a sense of literary texts as sites of live and uneven social struggle—a perspective sorely lacking in nineteenth-century American literary studies.[46]

To grasp the challenge workingwomen posed requires radically historicizing their vision, a project that enables us to glimpse the rich imaginative possibilities, including (re)articulations of democracy and nation legible in their writings. In the antebellum period the ascendancy of the capitalist industrial and market system was decidedly not inevitable; the vast majority of the population remained agrarian in economic orientation and minimally integrated into a market system, and there was, even among Anglo Americans, a strong

tradition of resistance to private property, free market ideology, and an industrial division of labor, from expressions of a "moral economy" inherited from English popular traditions to the agrarian republicanism of Jefferson and the humanism of an Emerson or Thoreau.[47] Writing broadly about the history of class dissent in the capitalist West, Eric Hobsbawm notes, "Looking back on the 1840s it is easy to think the socialists who predicted the imminent final crisis of capitalism were dreamers confusing their hopes with realistic prospects. For in fact what followed was not the breakdown of capitalism, but its most rapid and unchallenged period of expansion and triumph. Yet in the 1830s and 1840s it was far from evident that the new economy could or would overcome its difficulties which merely seemed to increase with its power to produce larger and larger quantities of goods by more and more revolutionary methods."[48] Neither was the domestic ideal that anchored middle-class power an inevitable development. As Mary Poovey observes in her study of Victorian England, middle-class womanhood was "both contested and always under construction; because it was always in the making, it was always open to revision, dispute, and the emergence of oppositional formulations."[49] To cite one relevant example, emerging expectations of a family or breadwinner wage—a rallying cry for workingmen in the 1830s and 1840s—reflected how "public authorit[ies]" have used thoroughly historical expectations of fairness, custom, and social roles (especially gender roles) to justify their intervention in and regulation of the labor and wage market.[50] Reading texts by and about antebellum women workers allows us to glimpse the formation and contestation of these categories as live historical process; these writings pose challenges to normative formations of gender and sexuality, and to the capitalist organization of the labor system, at a crucial moment in the history of American capitalism.

Working-class women waged class warfare on the discursive terrain of gender, race, and sexuality. Indeed it is only when the dialogic nature of this class struggle over gender is restored that we can fully grasp what has often been called the politics of domestic and sentimental fiction. I read domestic sentimental texts as encoding a hegemonic reappropriation of the ethical basis of much working-class and popular discourse, reformulating traditional concerns with social interdependency in ways hospitable to the emerging capitalist wage system. One cannot understand the crucial ideological aspect of sentimental texts, their promotion of benign paternalism through the combined "influence" of domestic femininity and commercial expansion—twinned centerpieces of Whig political discourse—without considering the social meanings that these texts were both reformulating and privatizing. Similarly, female wage labor was a key site of ideological contest: the cultural ideal of sentimental domesticity was insepa-

rable from constructions of feminine leisure and the devaluation and ideological erasure—what Jeanne Boydston terms the "pastoralization"—of female labor in the home.[51] If the ability (and right) to care for dependents at once defined "civil citizenship" and constituted male independence and power, the female wage worker—especially the female industrial worker, with her much-heralded bank account—was an uncanny figure, troubling the very ground of male power. Due to the suturing of *worker* and *citizen* in democratic discourses during the antebellum era, the construction of women as nonworkers had clear political implications, underwriting their political invisibility.[52] Read dialogically and dialectically, constructions of domesticity are inseparable from constructions of female industrial and wage labor: sentimental and domestic texts are haunted by—and arguably work to exorcize—versions of female agency, enterprise, and individual and collective desire imaged by women workers. Workingwomen's writings allow us to glimpse an entire complex of gendered discourses and identities, and attendant political possibilities, not usually visible to us.

The dialogic framework described by Jameson for understanding class in or as literature can thus help revise our understanding of both familiar and unfamiliar antebellum literary texts. Although I focus on working-class texts, I briefly consider here how canonical nineteenth-century American texts might be reconsidered in light of this dialogic model. Specifically I argue that Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* should be read as performing what Jameson calls a hegemonic "re-appropriation and neutralization" of popular materials—in this case antebellum challenges to property ownership (especially the attack on hereditary property) posed by radical workingmen such as Thomas Skidmore and Orestes Brownson.

As some fine work on Hawthorne has demonstrated, he was a writer supremely sensitive to the politics of class and invested in the cultural work of the emergent middle-class familial ideal.[53] In *The House of the Seven Gables* he delineates a class antagonism projected back into the Puritan past: a conflict between the Pyncheons and the Maules, a family of "aristocrat[s]" and another from the "lower classes," that involves the questionable seizure of Matthew Maule's small "homestead," "hewn out" of the forest by "his own toil," by the "prominent and powerful" Colonel Pyncheon for erection of a "family mansion," an appropriation enabled by personal connections and "the strength of a grant from the legislature."[54] The novel interrogates the American myth of a radical break from a prerevolutionary social order, when "the great man of the town was commonly called King, and his wife . . . Lady" (63), and postrevolutionary egalitarianism and "union" (an ideal figured in images of boundlessness, a "mighty river of life" and "surging stream of human sympathies" [165]), documenting the persistence

of class distinctions in a democratic order. That persistence is of course symbolized by the house (called a "gray, feudal castle" [10]), that emblem of ancestral genealogy and the "prejudice of propinquity" in consolidating and transmitting wealth (23), whose lasting material presence seems to naturalize class power. As the narrator states, "There is something so massive, stable, and almost irresistibly imposing, in the exterior presentment of established rank and great possessions, that their very existence seems to give them a right to exist" (25). The contradictory presence of class is also embodied in the character of Jaffrey Pyncheon, whose great wealth and numerous "deeds of goodly aspect, done in the public eye," are metaphorized as a "tall and stately edifice" (229). The text highlights, in the narrator's words, "how much of old material goes to make up the freshest novelty of human life" (6).

The House of the Seven Gables is obviously concerned with inheritance in all its spiritual, moral, psychological, and social complexity; but it explicitly casts this preoccupation in the antebellum idiom of class conflict. Whereas the Pyncheons "cherish, from generation to generation" a sense of "family importance," a "kind of nobility" (19), the "poverty-stricken" Maules are "always plebeian and obscure; working with unsuccessful diligence at handicrafts; laboring on the wharves, or, following the sea, as sailors before the mast; living . . . in hired tenements," before finding their "natural home" in the almshouse (25). The text's depiction of the "controversy" over ownership in the language of natural "right[s]" (7, 19) and the invocation of a labor theory of value situate this controversy in discourses of class in the industrial era, as does the metaphoric description of Colonel Pyncheon as "iron-hearted" (15) and animated by "an iron energy of purpose" (7). The "public memory" (19) of his act of illegitimate appropriation and "proprietorship" (7) is cast from the start as historical countermemory, the product of oral "tradition" (7) and the common gossip of old women (10)—knowledge "obliterate[d]" (7) by "mouldy parchments" (19) and the authoritative textuality of the law, which, for instance, bury "the [original] appellation of Maule's Lane" (6) under the more "decorous" name of Pyncheon-street (11).[55]

In a classic reading Walter Benn Michaels argues that the novel is indeed centrally preoccupied with questions of property as they emerged "during the years of Jacksonian democracy." However, he contends that the text invests in a bourgeois fantasy of inalienable property freed from the violent fluctuations and social instability of the antebellum market, an ideal exemplified by the "title of the hereditary noble," the "land for the landless" movement that culminated in the 1862 Homestead Act, and the fiction of property expressed by abolitionists such as Harriet Beecher Stowe. Michaels sees this conception of inalienable

property as fundamental to Hawthorne's idea of romance as nonmimetic representation. For Michaels the novel "by no means enacts a Jacksonian confrontation between the 'people' and those who sought to exercise a 'despotic sway' over them." Instead it evinces "the appeal of a title based on neither labor nor wealth and hence free from the risk of appropriation."[56]

I would argue, of course, that *The House of the Seven Gables* indeed "enacts" just such a "Jacksonian confrontation" and that its fictive resolution of this conflict and the fiction of ownership that enables it are inseparable from its treatment of gender—of little import in Michaels's reading. In this novel, as in so many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels, class conflict is undone by domestic desire: femininity converts a violent (and racialized) class antagonism into what antebellum writers called a "harmony of interests" between the classes. Marginalizing gender, Michaels's reading marginalizes Holgrave (while indirectly calling attention to Holgrave at several points). A Maule by blood, Holgrave speaks out not in support of his family's claim to rightful ownership but against the principles of inheritance and transgenerational familial identity—indeed genealogy—altogether. Holgrave is a reformer who lives by "a law of his own" (85). Hepzibah recalls with distaste "a paragraph in a penny-paper" that describes a "wild" speech he delivered "at a meeting of his banditti-like associates" (84). Speaking with Phoebe midway through the text, Holgrave states with great earnestness:

> Shall we never, never get rid of this Past? . . . It lies upon the Present like a giant's dead body! In fact, the case is just as if a young giant were compelled to waste all his strength in carrying about the corpse of the old giant, his grandfather, who died a long while ago, and only needs to be decently buried. . . . A Dead Man, if he happen to have made a will, disposes of wealth no longer his own; or, if he die intestate, it is distributed in accordance with the notions of men much longer dead than he. . . . Whatever we seek to do, of our own free motion, a Dead Man's icy hand obstructs us! . . . We must be dead ourselves, before we can begin to have our proper influence on our own world, which will then be no longer our world, but the world of another generation, with which we shall have no shadow of a right to interfere. (182–83)

It is the ownership of real estate that comes under particular censure: "We shall live to see the day, I trust," Holgrave continues, "when no man shall build his house for posterity. . . . If each generation were allowed and expected to build its own houses, that single change, comparatively unimportant in itself, would imply almost every reform which society is now suffering for" (183–84). Although Phoebe is made "dizzy" by such talk of a "shifting world," Holgrave continues

more strongly, "To plant a family! This idea is at the bottom of most of the wrong and mischief which men do!" (184–85).

If much of this sounds Thoreauvian, it resembles still more closely the arguments of radical workingmen, especially Skidmore and Brownson, who challenged the era's legal consolidation of absolute private property rights by marshalling traditional and natural rights arguments about communal claims to ownership. Holgrave's language echoes Skidmore directly: arguing boldly in *The Rights of Man to Property* that "all men should live on their own labor, and not on the labor of others" and thus that men of "enormous property . . . have no just title to their possessions," Skidmore proposes to abolish hereditary property altogether, imploring his fellow citizens to pull "down the present edifice of society, and . . . build a new one in its stead." Like Holgrave, Skidmore is especially troubled by the authority that the "law of property" vests in the "rights of dead men," enabling a "posthumous dominion over property" that exerts a gothic power over the living.[57] The critique of private property, articulated most strongly in *The House of the Seven Gables* by Holgrave, is echoed by Uncle Venner, that representative of "the very lowest point of the social scale," who has "seen a great deal of the world" in kitchens and backyards, on street corners and wharves (155, 82). His accumulated wisdom, Holgrave notes, has something of "the principles of Fourier" in it (156). Uncle Venner speaks particularly for the traditional claims to charitable, public care; had he devoted his life to the labor of accumulation, heaping up "property upon property," he tells the group, "I should feel as if Providence was not bound to take care of me; and, at all events, the city wouldn't be" (156). The narrative as a whole, in venturing to differentiate between a "moral" and a "legal" right to ownership (20), treads upon the territory of the "moral economy," evoking traditional, customary limits on absolute private property ownership for what revolutionary-era writers termed the "public good." Such views, collectively considered, cannot be collapsed into the aristocratic ideal of inalienable property or the bourgeois model of market alienability that Michaels outlines—or the hybrid fiction of bourgeois inalienability that, for Michaels, represents the novel's fantasized solution to the text's dilemmas of inheritance. In fact that solution—what Michaels describes as the text's "anchoring" of property in "character," which gives ownership a "kind of psychological legitima[cy]"—depends entirely upon gender: while Michaels interprets Holgrave's eventual "legitimation" of property late in the text as exemplifying the transmutation of "accumulation" into inheritance, this reading of Holgrave's conversion entirely overlooks the agency of domestic desire.[58] In effecting Holgrave's conversion, the novel envisions a feminine tempering of masculine "grasping spirit," which redefines the "moral" right to ownership as

the particular property of the virtuous, domestic woman. In Phoebe proprietary desire equates to (domestic) benevolence, and ambition—the desire to "seek [one's] fortune"—equates to "a self-respecting purpose to confer as much benefit as she could anywise receive" (*The House of the Seven Gables*, 74). That the novel, in what many view as an awkward application of the machinery of closure, transforms Holgrave from radical to conservative, incorporating him in its marriage plot, does not negate the oppositional force of his proclamations; rather, it makes the mechanics of bourgeois narrative, its incorporation and containment of popular materials, conspicuously apparent.

Like the domestic woman theorized by Nancy Armstrong, Phoebe is an agent of (self-)discipline and domestic desire: if she is "sweet," she is also "order-loving" (305). Emphasizing Phoebe's domestic charm, Hawthorne also stresses her limitations: her "essence," the narrator says, "was to keep within the limits of law" (85). A prominent part of Phoebe's "limit-loving" (131) nature is love of private property; baffled by Uncle Venner's views, she affirms that "for this short life of ours, one would like a house and a moderate garden-spot of one's own" (156). The discipline she works on Holgrave entails engendering an attachment to property. While she fears that Holgrave will "make [her] strive to follow you, where it is pathless," he replies with "almost a sigh," "I have a presentiment, that, hereafter, it will be my lot to set out trees, to make fences—perhaps, even, in due time, to build a house for another generation . . . to conform myself to laws, and the peaceful practice of society" (306–7). In the end Holgrave's transformation is complete; admiring Judge Pyncheon's country house, Holgrave wonders that the Judge "should not have felt the propriety of embodying so excellent a piece of domestic architecture in stone, rather than in wood," for the "impression of permanence" (314–15). If Hawthorne ironizes the concluding vision of domestic happiness, as he surely does (his couple declare their love in the garden, "transfigur[ing] the earth, and ma[king] it Eden again," while the Judge's corpse rots in the house [307]), his is the irony of a fatalist; Hawthorne invests Holgrave's conversion with the increasingly normative force of domestic desire.

In *The House of the Seven Gables* the domestic woman secures masculine consent to the law of property and the course of social reproduction; it is his spontaneous love of Phoebe that fosters Holgrave's desire to "plant a family" and build a stone house as love's enduring legacy. In a similar way the reformer Orestes Brownson acknowledged that conventional ideas of "family love" are thoroughly entangled with—and often serve to justify—the "law of property"; like Skidmore, Brownson envisioned a redistribution of property and questioned the role of the family in its consolidation and transmission. In two controversial articles published in 1840, "The Laboring Classes" and "Defense

of the Article on the Laboring Classes," Brownson argues for the abolition of hereditary property as an inherently antirepublican, monopolistic, oppressive institution. In the tradition of Tom Paine, he advances a plan for redistribution that involves reappropriating each citizen's property at the time of his death, so that each citizen will receive, as a national birthright, a certain portion when he (or, more radically, she) attains adulthood. Brownson demonstrates how sympathy for a man's dependents was used to defend private property and a wage and inheritance system that itself disadvantaged women and children essentially by producing the very dependency it was enlisted to remedy. In the "Defense" he identifies one "objection" to his plan he "had not anticipated": it "would bear exceedingly hard upon the widow and the orphan. As soon as a man dies, the state takes his property, and the widow and the orphan must be sent to the almshouse"; this argument, Brownson acknowledges, "appeals to our sensibilities." However, according to his plan, children would be "provided for in the school, where they fare the same [as] they would were the father living," while apropos the widow, Brownson boldly argues, "in the reappropriation, the distinction of sex should not play the important part it does now. In all that concerns property, woman should share equally with man, and like him be an independent proprietor, a relation which marriage should not [affect]." Powerfully, Brownson asserts that "the idea of dependence should never necessarily attach to the one more than to the other. Marriage . . . should never be regarded as a marriage of estates, but of persons, and hearts. Each should have the means of living independent of that relation." To the inevitable concern that his "proposed reforms will break up the family relation," Brownson, while admitting "great respect" for "the family feeling," argues for a reformation and expansion of social sentiment in accord with a truly democratic social order: "We have been taught by our religion, and by our philosophy, that the family is subordinate to Humanity, and that, though it is the centre of our affections, and the sphere in which lie our special duties, still it is in our love and action always to give place to mankind at large, and to universal justice."[59] Like many of the workingwomen I discuss in this study, Brownson proposes a reformation in social sympathies, boldly imagining a new erotics not governed by a Victorian gender binary of masculine independency and feminine dependency.

CLASS AND SEXUALITY

I argue throughout this book that antebellum workingwomen's interventions into discourses of class took shape in a highly visible way across the cultural terrain of sexuality. This is in part because, as Armstrong and others contend,

middle-class cultural texts disseminated a particular, sexualized model of class power; Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* demonstrates that the ideal of femininity and the "sexual contract" *constituted* middle-class authority and a form of social power rendered all the more effective because of the force of ideological (mis)recognition—that is, because it purportedly operated at a remove from politics and thus appeared no force at all. Armstrong argues that the domestic woman, written into existence in the voluminous conduct literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and elevated into cultural common sense in domestic fiction, came to epitomize the new middle-class self; in particular, she embodied the self-regulatory, supervisory techniques that characterize disciplinary society and constitute middle-class power. Radical workingwomen such as Sarah Bagley recognized the class power embodied in the domestic ideal; as chapter 1 shows, factory women recognized the ideological power of femininity and feminine "delicacy" to privatize the identity of female factory operatives, specifically to mark politicized female speech as deviant and to contain workingwomen's class dissent. Lowell women's disruption of the "Romance of Labor" entailed uncoupling factory work from the domestic norms that would render female bodily labor invisible and positioning workingwomen outside the sexual contract that legislated feminine economic dependency and defined a willing submission to male authority as a desirable—indeed the only legitimate—form of female power.[60] Countering mainstream depictions of the "beauties of factory life," radical Lowell women challenged the aestheticization of female factory work that would efface the pains of the female laboring body and euphemistically construe female labor as feminine leisure.[61] The cultural struggle to feminize workingwomen traced in these pages—and workingwomen's resistance to these efforts (especially in gestures of what Christine Stansell calls "antidomesticity")[62]—highlights the special ability of workingwomen to disrupt and contest what was an increasingly hegemonic formation of class and gender.

As a public, visibly social form of labor, female factory work was a hotly contested sign. As chapter 1 demonstrates, the female factory worker assumed an iconic presence in the discourse of industrialization, with many writers contrasting the virtuous, cultured American mill girl with her degraded British counterpart. Such idealistic accounts ignored the observations of workingmen such as James Burn, who claimed that, like the Lancashire factory girls he had known in England, American factory women "are neither fitted for wives by a due regard for the feelings and wishes of their husbands, nor a knowledge of the simple rudiments of housekeeping. . . . They will not be instructed by their husbands; and as proof of their obstinacy, one of their common remarks to each

other when speaking of their husbands is that they would like to see a man who would boss them."[63] They also ignored the words of Lowell women themselves, such as the writer who argued that long hours of factory labor "destroy all love of order and practice in domestic affairs . . . so that by the time a young lady has worked in a factory one year, she will lose all relish for the quiet, fireside comforts" of domestic life.[64] Lowell women took special pleasure in exposing contradictions in industrial propaganda about Lowell women; writing in the *Voice of Industry*, Bagley notes that, while factory defenders are fond of "talk[ing] about the 'virtuous and puritanical daughters of the New England farmers'" who supposedly populate Lowell, claiming that supervision is "so vigilant that it is hardly possible for an operative to be vicious," they at the same time protest the prospect of a ten-hour workday because "the time allowed to the operatives, would be spent in vicious indulgence."[65] Although Lowell women aimed to complicate this account, many antebellum depictions of them represent factory work as an apprenticeship in virtuous domesticity. The *Lowell Offering* was established, in fact, to display the superior cultural accomplishments and attributes of the American female factory worker—to display through her writing (especially poetry) that she possessed feminine sensibility. In the pages of the *Lowell Offering* the public nature of factory work was representationally contained by a thoroughgoing domestication; by depicting flowers and other traces of domestic decor in the factory, by describing factory women's good manners and other domestic graces, and by inscribing the supervisor as a benevolent paternal figure, the factory was portrayed as an extension of the home.[66] Celebratory renderings such as these positioned the mechanized order of the factory in opposition to—indeed as the imaginary corrective of—the disorderly, promiscuous (and interracial) mixing of bodies in working-class streets and housing depicted in the new, proto-sociological literature on the urban poor.

If, as Armstrong suggests, the self-regulated domestic woman was assigned the hegemonic cultural task of civilizing (domesticating) men and producing their consent (willing submission) to modern forms of power, then workingwomen's very subjectivity was an object of profound cultural concern; policing and re-forming that subjectivity was understood to be a precise form of labor discipline (securing workingmen's accommodation to the wage labor contract). In light of this reading, the debates about American factory women's femininity—Was factory work compatible with domesticity? Did factory work compromise women's manners, sensibility, or sexuality?—start to make a good deal more sense. Universalizing domestic womanhood was quite clearly a class tool. As the historians Anna Clark and Barbara Taylor have pointed out, some radical authors concerned with the capitalist reordering of economic

life imagined a redefinition of social relations that included gender and sexual relations. Owenite socialists, for example, advocated an egalitarian society, challenged conventional sexual morality, denounced tyranny in marriage, organized women along with men, and demanded truly universal suffrage. Robert Owen rejected the central patriarchal tie of marriage, whose contractual origins signified to him its market origins. Referring to gender relations in the 1830s in Britain, Taylor writes, "All was plastic, all was possible." Such utopian visions of class and gender transformation—combining free love, a critique of the capitalist division of labor, and a commitment to common ownership—were well known in America; in *The Blithedale Romance* Hawthorne gives them canonical inscription. Other long-standing sexual traditions "from below," such as consensual union and betrothal, persisted even with the hegemony of domestic norms.[67] The power and meaning of those norms cannot be understood, I suggest, apart from the class and sexual traditions I describe. Workingwomen who emphasized the economic value of women's domestic labor and sexual services profoundly destabilized the domestic model by calling attention to forms of power typically masked by domestic norms. By desentimentalizing domestic labor and sexual relations—extricating them from norms of middle-class eroticism—workingwomen insisted upon the relevance of economic and political power to the construction of domesticity: specifically, they refused to separate women's sexual "consent" from relations of domination and exploitation.

The discourse surrounding Lowell women can thus be seen to specify ways gender helps to *constitute* class relations.[68] In chapters 1 and 2 I demonstrate that the category of gender was central to debates about industrialization and an American industrial system. Writers since Jefferson had expressed grave concern about urbanization and industrialization, fearing that wage labor would undermine (male) citizens' independence; as Richard Slotkin observes, women were viewed as a group of workers who could supply factories with necessary labor because their "natural" political dependency rendered them compatible with wage work, thus assuaging political fears and easing the contradiction between capitalism and democratic republicanism. Women's political dependency was thus imagined as inextricable from their economic dependency; indeed, the former both determined and justified the latter. By the 1830s domestic ideology inflected this gendered dependency with psychological and moral content so that women's dependency (their passivity, passionlessness, modesty) was seen as a *positive* attribute, a "natural and gratifying component of respectable femininity."[69] I have argued elsewhere that sentimental literature eroticized this dependency, constructing feminine dependency as both natural and desirable.[70] I argue here that workingwomen's dependency was a primary form of

class discipline: dependency constituted a means to "civilize" male workers and configure their consent to forms of wage labor as a product of private desire, not public coercion and force. For example, an article in the *New York Post* suggested that the only way to make husbands sober and industrious was to keep women dependent by low wages.[71] As I demonstrate throughout this book, many working-class women understood the ideology of feminine dependency and the forms of eroticism that subtend it as a crucial psychological site for what we might call gendered "injuries of class."[72] While middle-class reformers tended to highlight workingwomen's dependency in fashioning a sympathetic vision of urban workers (see chapter 3), workingwomen resisted this construction in various ways, emphasizing their pragmatism and economic rationality in navigating heterosexual relations and stressing the value of female economic independence. Viewing the family as the institution through which the erotics of feminine dependency were both sanctioned and normalized, they presented thoroughgoing critiques of both domestic ideology and working-class family practices, problematizing the family as what Stansell terms "a controlling metaphor of class consciousness" and political unity.[73]

The discourse of the family wage brought capitalist processes of distribution and the reproduction of labor into harmony with these increasingly hegemonic domestic norms of desire. As Joan Acker explains, the wage is both "an aspect of production and a mechanism of distribution. It is the major way that production becomes the means of subsistence for the majority of adult males, and many adult females. At the same time, it is the wage relation that specifies the worker's connection to the means of production and to those who own and control industry and capital."[74] As the vehicle for converting labor into the "means of subsistence," the wage is a site where capitalist processes of distribution touch the bodies of class subjects, engendering requisite forms of (self-)discipline and desire. The whole discourse of wages was highly sexualized: many writers on working-class wages (such as Malthus) protested high wages for workers as the cause of both idleness and sexual and reproductive excess. The discourse of the family wage normalizes forms of female dependency and erotic (self-)discipline; reinforcing an image of women as nonlaborers, the family wage enables the reconfiguration of distribution as a sign of desire. This marked a departure from earlier forms of distribution characteristic of traditional (feudal) societies, in which an individual's right to support rested in a relation of entitlement, not market exchange.[75] In this way the rise of the domestic ideal displaced earlier models of economic entitlement or support, ushering in a distinct, (hetero) eroticized model of paternalism. This model of familial distribution expanded outward in antebellum discourses of charity; as chapter 3 demonstrates, the

sentimental (fragile, meek) seamstress was the era's predominant example of the "worthy poor," a figure whose economic need was legitimated by her performance of normative domestic femininity.

WORKINGWOMEN AND NARRATIVE FORM

Reconstructing antebellum literature as class dialogue involves contextualizing laboring women's texts in the era's dominant representations of working-class women, including available narrative possibilities for representing workingwomen's class experience. For instance, the very term *mill girl*, like the late nineteenth-century *working girl*, assigned the woman worker a kind of liminality by designating female labor as a transitory state; obviously serving the logic of capitalist exploitation, this construction cheapened female labor by severing it from adulthood, making the female breadwinner a conceptual impossibility. This is the version of female labor featured in many domestic novels, which plot labor (and female working-class status) as a developmental stage; thus in *The Wide, Wide World*, Ellen Montgomery's passage from urban comfort to the hard domestic labor of the rural home of Miss Fortune, in which female labor has a clear cash value, is cast as a spiritual trial, an intermediate narrative episode superseded by her class redemption (through marriage) and recuperation in proper domesticity. This is also the version scripted by George Lippard, who refers to the seamstress as a "girl-woman," a formulation that places the seamstress, like the mill girl, in a time-space at once dilated and transitory. This plotting of female labor along a temporal trajectory, as a stage to be outgrown, was underwritten by an evolutionary narrative already conventional in the antebellum era, in which women in "savage" or "primitive" societies (such as the Native American women in Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes* or Mexicanas on the California frontier) were cast as drudges and "civilized" women were properly valued for their affective, not physical labor—a working-class variant of the distinction between feminine (bodily) surface and (psychological) depth that Armstrong traces in British women's writing. Indeed, domestic fiction, in which girls learn to manage their bodily passions and transcend their savage, embodied (and laboring) pasts, can seem to both cite and enact this broader social narrative of individual and collective amelioration. This ascription imparted a certain racial instability to workingwomen's narratives, examined throughout this book. Overall it led to a conceptual and temporal containment of female wage labor, its melancholic encrypting in the social order; like domestic work it was assigned a kind of cyclicality, a going nowhere, outside time and outside social progress—a cultural vision that has certainly inhibited labor organizing

among women workers as thoroughly as it has shaped literary fictions of female work. The working girl's perennial adolescence is thus tied to her economic and social immobility, barring her from scripts of both individual progress (or mobility) and ambition (a hallmark, according to Peter Brooks, of the nineteenth-century bourgeois novel) and collective transformation. This is the version of workingwomen's "stuckness" that the Lowell writer refers to when she complains that women "have no share in that American privilege which sets in full view of the poorest white male laborer . . . the possibilities of an Astor, and every office within the gift of the Republic." The texts addressed in this study register and at times contest the gendered class limits on workingwomen's stories; together they expand the narrative repertoire in which workingwomen's lives have been imagined and culturally defined.

In the antebellum cultural imaginary, workingwomen could signify women's economic possibility (best exemplified by Lowell women) and economic abjection (melodramatically epitomized by the seamstress). According to the feminist labor historian Annelise Orleck, through their words and activism antebellum factory women made wage work "respectable" for women, representing a usable past that Progressive Era labor reformers could draw upon in organizing and advocating for female workers.[76] Factory women's writings thus helped establish new economic and literary trajectories for women; these in turn helped constitute new forms of social subjectivity, embodiment, and structures of social and political desire. Looking back on antebellum Lowell from the late nineteenth century, one former millworker, Harriet Robinson, describes factory labor as a powerfully progressive force, transforming a woman from "a ward, an appendage, a relict" to an active social subject: "For the first time in this country woman's labor had a money value. She had become not only an earner and a producer, but also a spender of money, a recognized factor in the political economy of her time. And thus a long upward step in our material civilization was taken." Wages could transform women in "a condition approaching pauperism" from abject dependency to active agency; women who were "depressed, modest, mincing," with a "limp carriage and inelastic gait," were visibly re-embodied. "After their first pay-day came, and they felt the jingle of silver in their pockets, and had begun to feel its mercurial influence, their bowed heads were lifted, their necks seemed braced with steel, they looked you in the face, sang blithely among their looms or frames, and walked with elastic step to and from their work." In language that recalls Hepzibah's invigoration through trade in Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, Robinson depicts the industrial element as a force that animates and strengthens women's very bodies: "It seemed as if a great hope impelled them,—the harbinger of the new

era that was about to dawn for them and for all women-kind." Such women were enabled, in Herculean fashion, to "lift" a mortgage from the family homestead.[77] The transformative power Robinson describes, and the shift in women's narratives that it enables, is legible in the texts I discuss.

Workingwomen's texts thus reworked the "plots and plausibilities" of antebellum women's narratives.[78] As noted earlier, a concern with the condition of poor and working-class women was a primary focus of social reformers (especially labor and urban reformers) in the antebellum United States; such a concern shaped factory debates in England and America as well as sociological studies of urban life. In courtrooms, charitable institutions, and cross-class encounters on urban streets, laboring and poor women were asked to provide moving testimonies of economic suffering. Such accounts pressured literary discourse in complex ways. For example, a range of midcentury fiction and nonfiction literary texts (including Lydia Maria Child's *Letters from New York* and George Foster's *New York by Gas-Light*) include scenes in which a wealthy man or woman encounters a female stranger who recounts a "poverty narrative," firsthand experiences of economic deprivation; explicitly challenging the reformer Charles Loring Brace's claim that "the poor *feel*, but they can seldom speak," these works depict scenes in which poor women come to voice and articulate moving if attenuated life narratives.[79] Such a repertoire made poor women's narratives a conventional part of antebellum oral and written culture but radically simplified their stories, creating exceptionally narrow frameworks for representing poor and workingwomen's lives. As we shall see, both radical workingmen and middle-class feminists came to find in working-class women's experience an important literary and political resource, but both routinely spoke *for* working-class women, defining working-class women's experience according to their own needs and interests. This book will ask not only to what uses workingwomen's stories were put but also what uses they defined for themselves.

At times working-class women labored to gather and reshape these oral narratives. Jennie Collins, a one-time mill girl and the author of one of the first book-length works by a white U.S. workingwoman, is especially intent upon recording everyday acts of kindness and generosity by poor and working-class people, for "it often happens that the most charitable are never heard of by the world."[80] Collins affirms the findings of twenty-first-century studies that poor and working-class people give a greater percentage of their earnings to charity than do the wealthy, although it is the wealthy donors of huge sums who are known for their philanthropy and whose benevolent acts are "noised abroad" (144) and "emblazoned on the banners of worldly praise" (142). Like Harriet Wilson in *Our Nig* (discussed in chapter 4), Collins insists upon the moral authority

of the "kitchen-girl," for it was commonplace for people in need of food to come to the kitchen door of large houses; thus were female servants best positioned to hear the stories of the poor. Collins recounts several such kitchen encounters with "poor beggar-wom[e]n" (19) and men and relates the "simple stor[ies]" they tell (20), enlightening her readers with the narrative wisdom of the kitchen-girl: "Ah, ye drawing-room beauties . . . ye cannot see the phases of life which the kitchen-girl sees. . . . If you would but go to the kitchen door in the cold winter mornings when that hesitating, gentle rap comes upon the panel . . . and would look into the little pleading faces as they tremblingly ask for food, you would find a field of useful work" (21). The kitchen is thus an incubator of sympathy, a school of "generosity and kindness" (85); the "infection" with which domestic servants were frequently associated is here envisioned as at once affective and morally beneficial. While the kitchen-girl meets these pleas with unheralded acts of benevolence and generosity, Collins describes how wealthy men routinely "turn a deaf ear" to supplicants' "touching" stories (28). Complaining that women are often faulted by men for being "unkind" and malicious toward one another, Collins reveals workingwomen to be "exceedingly charitable towards those of their own sex" (65). Indeed, Collins argues that precisely because men have the opportunity for advancement and can benefit materially by aligning with capitalists—thus becoming "a fit tool for tyranny, and hence an 'excellent overseer'" (123)—they are less reliable instruments of class benevolence, less effective in preserving the kitchen-girl's moral economy of feeling. Preserving that feminine ethic is critical, for in this "age of bargains and contracts" the "good old days of generous hospitality, of friendly assistance, and of mutual good-will have passed into history as a thing that existed once, but can never come again" (87). Collins imagines the workingwoman's text as a kind of archive, one that memorializes and preserves a social ethos of "hospitality" in the kitchens, in the "friendly treatment" of the poor toward one another, in the sisterhood of shop girls, the abiding "attachments" (105) and loyal friendships forged in the "community" (89) of the factories and workshops, and the solidarity of the unions. Reflecting her interest in spiritualism, Collins depicts writing as a form of mediumship, a gesture of communion with the dead:

> They are sad tales indeed which I have to tell. Too full of sorrow and suffering, defeats and discouragements, oppression and cruelty to be sought by the gay, and too true to attract the novelist. Yet I must write them. The world shall hear them, though the recollection brings tears and the repetition a shudder. Sad faces! How they crowd upon me now that I open

> the gate of memory! Lonely wives, oppressed daughters, tearful toilers at needle and loom, broken-hearted victims, and lifeless suicides.
>
> Must I live it over again? Must I look once more into those tearful eyes, and see those outstretched hands? . . . Yea, I will tread fearlessly back along the thorny path of my short life; and the shades of the hungry, toil-killed, and heart-shattered men and women shall tell their tales to the world in death, as they told them to me in life. (11)

Writing during the Depression, the proletarian author Meridel Le Sueur described her work as "epitaphs marking the lives of women who . . . leave no statistics, no record, obituary or remembrance."[81] Like Le Sueur—and like the author of the *Aristocrat*, who locates workingwomen's literary authority in the historical countermemory of "our mothers and old fashioned aunts"—Collins imagines her writing as a bearer of class memory, a means of honoring, preserving, and transmitting the voices of the dead while preserving a female moral economy of class feeling.

As Collins's writing suggests, workingwomen's rearticulation of sympathy was crucial to their feminist working-class politics. Workingwomen's texts contribute forcefully to our understanding of the politics of sympathy in the antebellum era; indeed, they remind us that sympathy *had* a (class) politics. As Brownson's essays and Truth's *Narrative* indicate, *sympathy* was a keyword in socialist debates, in the work of Owenites and especially Fourierists and Saint-Simonians; hegemonically defining the meaning of *sympathy* was thus essential to the operations of class power. Describing this process in Britain, Poovey has argued that sentimentalism, with its doctrine of innate and spontaneous humanitarian benevolence, anchored the moral authority of the bourgeoisie; as an economic strategy its "paradigm" of innate benevolence "sanctioned . . . and helped underwrite" the laissez-faire individualism that gradually transformed England from a paternalistic hierarchy to a modern class society while allowing the bourgeoisie to usurp from the aristocracy the role of England's moral conscience.[82] In bourgeois society this benevolence was largely circumscribed within the nuclear family, thus domesticating and privatizing traditional forms of social benevolence associated with a paternalist social order. As demonstrated in chapter 1, Lowell women responded forcefully to the class parameters of bourgeois sentimentality, particularly as it was increasingly localized within the domestic sphere; they especially objected to the ways antebellum sentimental literary texts domesticate sympathy and gender it feminine while using it to underwrite novel but supposedly natural versions of female subjectivity. Exposing the ideology of corporate benevolence as a sham, Lowell women at once

protested the constriction of sympathy to the familial realm, denaturalized sentimentality as a regulatory norm that privatizes femininity, and exposed the ways that norm could legitimate, by masking, an exploitative economic relation between the sexes. Workingwomen's texts, I argue, thus contribute a critical if unremarked chapter in the history of sentimentality. In particular, in contesting the normalization of domestic sentimentality, their writings made legible other versions of sympathy as class affect, at once marking and memorializing, mobilizing and preserving structures of feeling marginalized in the liberal-capitalist social order.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Chapters 1 through 3 focus on women in the textile and garment industries. Marx describes the female army of factory laborers as the "mass of cheap human material" to match the supply of "raw material" in the textile industry. The first to industrialize, textile manufacturing was a major employer of (cheap) female labor in the antebellum era, as in today's global economy.[83] Taking up depictions of the New England factory girl during the 1830s and 1840s, in chapter 1 I examine periodicals edited by mill women, especially the *Voice of Industry* and the *Factory Girls' Album*, as formative cultural sites for the production of workingwomen's subjectivity and discourse. Continuing this analysis of the mill girl as a contested sign in early industrial discourse, in chapter 2 I analyze popular fiction about Lowell women from the 1840s. I argue that working-class and popular fiction exploits emerging urban discourses of the subliterary, especially the gothic and sensational, to register often inchoate longings, affinities, aspirations, and social tastes; these works thus fashion an alternative, popular discourse of female working-class experience.[84] Turning to writings by and about needlewomen, in chapter 3 I examine the construction of the "sentimental seamstress," a stock figure in discourses of class in the 1840s. Countering the oppositional class accents of factory girl fiction (and the real militancy of activist needlewomen), crafters of seamstress narratives fashioned an influential—and highly problematic—image of antebellum workingwomen.

Chapters 4 through 6 foreground a problematic central to this study: the racialization of class and the contested cultural and political association of "unfree labor" with people of color in the antebellum United States. Additionally all three chapters focus on class (as) *performance*, proposing new ways to read workingwomen's literature in relation to working-class oral and performance cultures. Published on the brink of the Civil War, both Wilson's *Our Nig* (the subject of chapter 4) and Southworth's *The Hidden Hand* (discussed in chap-

ter 5) are Bildungsromane of sorts, fictional records of working-class girlhood as it pressures the contours of working-class womanhood; both highlight the insistent, historically charged ways that class was refracted by race in the watershed years of the 1850s.[85] Replacing northern free labor with black and white servitude and framing the narrative of a mixed-race daughter with that of her (precariously) white working-class mother, Wilson's tale of miscegenation figures oft-unspoken racial complexities of antebellum working-class life. Tracking rich exchanges between print and performance cultures in the antebellum era, in chapter 5 I consider how popular performance—a crucial site of working-women's culture—shapes (and is shaped by) *The Hidden Hand*; in particular, I explore how the "transmission of [lower-class] interracial affiliations" in and by antebellum vernacular performance leaves a clear imprint on Southworth's novel.[86] Chapter 6 extends the book's analysis of the dialectic of race and class, resituating it within the frame of U.S. empire building and territorial expansion. I focus on the Californio *testimonios*, first-person narratives by Mexicanos/as living in Mexican California during annexation to the United States, collected by Hubert Howe Bancroft in the 1870s. Central to my analysis are narratives by Apolinaria Lorenzana and Eulalia Pérez, domestic workers in the missions, which shed critical light on relations of gender and labor in Alta California, constituting an invaluable archive of Mexican (American) working womanhood. Taken together these chapters focus the book's gendered class lens on the unmistakably racial and imperial coordinates of the "American 1848."

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 On the discursive masculinization of working-class political rights and agency in the contemporaneous Chartist movement in England, see Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 53–67. She writes, "We cannot understand how concepts of class acquired legitimacy and established political movements, without examining concepts of gender. . . . The link between gender and class . . . [is] every bit as material as the link between productive forces and relations of production" (66).

2 *The Aristocrat and Trades Union Advocate,* iii–iv.

3 Zboray and Zboray, *Voices without Votes*; Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*.

4 According to Gilje and Rock, the emergence of republican motherhood and cult of domesticity marked a "process of redefinition" and a "denial of the more radical gender meanings—including greater political awareness and economic independence—implied in the experience of poorer women who had sacrificed so much during the course of the war" (*Keepers of the Revolution*, 246). I argue that the historical memory of the range of women's economic activities and identities, disavowed by the new ideology of gender, were preserved in cultural texts. Workingwomen's reproductive labors are, in part, cultural and literary labors, facilitating the preservation and transmission of class memory.

5 On the history of this counterknowledge in the revolutionary era, which mobilized plebian women's participation in popular politics "not as republican wives or mothers but as social and economic actors within household, neighborhood, and marketplace," see Smith, "Food Rioters and the American Revolution." The complex interrelationship in antebellum working-class culture between orature and written texts is explored throughout this book.

6 Like many radical workingmen from this period, the poet was largely self-taught; she clearly embraced the working-class movement's republican emphasis on educational equity and the dissemination of knowledge as means of freedom. On the debate about educational reform among radical workingmen, see Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*. On the emphasis on education among British workers, see Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom*.

7 On Chartist poetry, see Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse*.
8 Montgomery, *Citizen Worker*, 72.
9 On the conventional appeal to Shakespeare in working-class culture, see Nathans, "'A Course of Learning and Ingenious Studies'"; White, *Stories of Freedom in Black New York*; and Levine's classic *Highbrow/Lowbrow*.
10 "From the Valentine Offering," *Voice of Industry*, February 27, 1846.
11 On dependency as a sign of gender, see Fraser and Gordon, "A Genealogy of 'Dependency.'" In "Contract versus Charity," Fraser and Gordon argue that women's "subsumption in coverture" was not so much a holdover from the feudal era as the "enabling ground" of a gendered version of modern civil citizenship predicated on women's domestic servitude and subordination (55). In the antebellum era *servitude* had a racial as well as a gender legacy; both must be considered in relation to one another.
12 Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*.
13 Lobdell, *The Female Hunter of Delaware and Sullivan Counties, N.Y.*, 40–41, emphasis added.
14 On popular fiction of gender transgression, see for example Smith, *Virgin Land*, 112–20. Lobdell is cited as an example of transgender or "passing women" in Katz, *Gay American History*, 214–25.
15 As seen in Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 168.
16 On the emergence of a "moral environmentalism" that imbued the signs of domestic poverty with moral import during this period, see Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*; for American examples, see Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America*.
17 SenGupta, *From Slavery to Poverty*; Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 97.
18 Painter, Introduction to *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, xx.
19 White, *Stories of Freedom in Black New York*, 214. In "The Mercurial Nature and Abiding Power of Race," Martha Hodes similarly notes, "As much as ancestry was most often the legal and social determinant of whiteness in the nineteenth-century United States, a certain porousness nonetheless prevailed in daily life. Ideologies about class and gender came into play, since poverty could intervene to cloud the supposed or ideal immaculacy of white womanhood. . . . A woman's behavior mattered, too. In New England [a woman's] sinking class standing [could push] her to the margins of white womanhood" (107). Hodes examines in particular the "precarious whiteness" of laboring women, whose "poverty and plebian occupations crowded [them] into circumstances closely resembling . . . [that of] black women" (94). Hodes traces the life of one Anglo American working-class woman, Eunice Connelly, a life that acutely reveals the "mercurial nature" of race; born in Massachusetts in 1831, Eunice works as a mill girl, housecleaner, and washerwoman and (like Frado in *Our Nig*) fashions hats out of palm; eventually she marries a mixed-race man from the West Indies and migrates to the Cayman Islands.
20 Washington, *Sojourner Truth's America*, 167. On (auto)biography, see Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography*.
21 Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative*.

22 Fanuzzi, *Abolition's Public Sphere,* xxxiv; Ellis, *Silent Witnesses*.
23 Rose, "Class Formation and the Quintessential Worker."
24 Rogers, *Women and the People*.
25 Siegel, *The Image of the American City in Popular Literature*, 83, 81, 79.
26 Anderson, *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces*.
27 "A Working Woman's Statement," *Nation*, February 21, 1867.
28 Ross, *Love and Toil*.
29 Gilje and Rock, *Keepers of the Revolution*, 246.
30 Acker, *Class Questions*, 7.
31 Gilmore, "Hawthorne and the Making of the Middle Class," 215.
32 Lott, *Love and Theft*, 64.
33 Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*; Kaplan, "Pandora's Box."
34 Negt and Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience*. On popular culture as "social horizon of experience" for working-class women, see Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*.
35 Montgomery, *Citizen Worker*, 2.
36 Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?*, 7.
37 Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?*, 83–84.
38 Hayden, *Grand Domestic Revolution*; Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*.
39 For example, Claybaugh, *The Novel of Purpose*.
40 Robinson, *Loom and Spindle*, 98.
41 McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting*.
42 On the expansion of popular print culture and a working-class readership during this period, see Denning, *Mechanic Accents*. Drawing from the work of materialist feminist theorists on the relationship between culture and class, I argue that women's class identifications are defined, at least in part, by language or discourse, and that popular literature, especially periodical literature, was an important cultural site for the construction of working-class womanhood.
43 See, for example, Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," 132.
44 Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 85–86, 70.
45 Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 21–23; Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 85.
46 Stuart Hall makes a related point: "Transformation is the key to the long and protracted process of the 'moralisation' of the labouring classes, and the 'demoralisation' of the poor, and the 're-education' of the people. Popular culture is neither, in a 'pure' sense, the popular traditions of resistance to these processes; nor is it the forms which are superimposed on and over them. It is the ground on which the transformations are worked" ("Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" 232, 228).
47 On the legacy of the "moral economy" in America, see Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd"; Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America*, 3–78; Kelley, *Race Rebels*.
48 Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, 304.
49 Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, 3.
50 Kessler-Harris, "The Just Price, the Free Market, and the Value of Women," 482–83.
51 Boydston, *Home and Work*.

52 Gordon and Fraser, "A Genealogy of 'Dependency'"; Montgomery, *Citizen Worker*.
53 For example, Gilmore, "Hawthorne and the Making of the Middle Class"; Pfister, *The Production of Personal Life*.
54 Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, 55, 7, 9, 7.
55 On the role of the law in the production of economic inequities during this period, see Tomlins, *Law, Labor, and Ideology in the Early American Republic*.
56 Michaels, *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism*, 92.
57 Skidmore, *Rights of Man to Property!*, 4–5, 86.
58 Michaels, *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism*, 98.
59 Brownson, *Defense of the Article on the Laboring Classes*, 79, 80, 85. Brownson's essays, republished as pamphlets, first appeared in the *Boston Quarterly Review*. For a broader discussion of how utopian socialists aimed to rehabilitate the spirit of love and counter the "fanaticism of the family," see Rancière, *Proletarian Nights*.
60 "Factory Life: Romance and Reality," *Voice of Industry*, December 3, 1847. See my discussion of this text in chapter 1.
61 See, for example, the Factory Tract by "Amelia" entitled "Some of the Beauties of Our Factory System—Otherwise Lowell Slavery." The Tracts were published in 1845 by the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association. The first Tract and excerpts from the second are reprinted in Foner, *The Factory Girls*, 134–36.
62 Stansell, *City of Women*, 129.
63 Burn, *Three Years among the Working-Classes in the United States during the War*. Born in Glasgow, Burn was a weaver and a "physical force" Chartist who moved to London in the early 1850s before leaving for Newark and New York in 1862; after working in a federal munitions factory during the war, he returned to London. Burn's writing is discussed at length in Vincent's *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom*.
64 *Factory Tracts*, in Foner, *The Factory Girls*, 132–33.
65 Sarah Bagley, "The Ten Hour System and Its Advocates," *Voice of Industry*, January 16, 1846.
66 An editorial entitled "Plants and Flowers in the Mills" refers to the "cultivation of Flowers in the Mills," noting, "Several proprietors have displayed commendable liberality in sending floral contributions, in rich variety, to ornament the mills" (*Lowell Offering*, series 1, no. 2 [1840]: 32).
67 Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*; Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 193; Stansell, *City of Women*.
68 Bettie, *Women without Class*, 40.
69 Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*; Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 29.
70 Merish, *Sentimental Materialism*.
71 Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 51.
72 Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. On ways "women can experience the consequences of structural relations [of class and gender] as personal failure," see Acker, "Class, Gender, and Relations of Distribution," 483.
73 Stansell, *City of Women*, 143. For example, John Commerford, a chair maker and president of the New York General Trades Union, described wage earners as "the family of labor" and the "working classes" (143).

74 Acker, "Class, Gender, and Relations of Distribution," 480.
75 Acker, "Class, Gender, and Relations of Distribution," 486.
76 Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire*.
77 Robinson, *Loom and Spindle*, 68, 69, 70, 76.
78 The reference is to the title of the classic feminist essay by Nancy K. Miller.
79 Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New* York, 119.
80 Collins, *Nature's Aristocracy*, 160.
81 Le Sueur, "Women on the Breadlines," 166.
82 Poovey, "Ideology and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*," 317, 308, 314.
83 Marx, *Capital*, 516.
84 See note 34.
85 On this refracting, see Lott, *Love and Theft*.
86 Lhamon, *Raising Cain*, 216.

1 • FACTORY FICTIONS

1 A Maine lawyer turned popular author, Bradbury published chiefly in the Boston paper *Uncle Sam*, one of the first American story papers and the first to present work by predominantly American authors rather than pirated English and European materials. See Noel, *Villains Galore*.
2 Foster, *New York by Gas-Light*, 120.
3 Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*.
4 Lehuu, *Carnival on the Page*; see also chapter 2.
5 Schiller, *Objectivity and the News*.
6 Anna Jameson, "The Milliners," *Athenaeum*, March 4, 1843, 203.
7 On links in mainstream reports between utopian socialism and (particularly female) sexual disorder, see Barbara Taylor's fine study *Eve and the New Jerusalem*.
8 Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians*. Robert Dale Owen's widely circulated early birth control tract, *Moral Physiology* (1830), and its reception are discussed in Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 54–55, 215–16.
9 Gray, "The Languages of Factory Reform in Britain," 143.
10 Factory women's precarious whiteness was registered, indeed valorized, by some activist workingwomen, such as the following contributor to the *Factory Girl's Album*: "No matter if our hands are less white than others', or our arms more 'coarse and brawny,'" for "all work is honorable, and in the faithful performance of our work is centered our highest credit" ("The Factory Operative," March 14, 1846).
11 Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*.
12 Lown, *Women and Industrialization*, 214.
13 Marx, *Capital*, 620–21. As noted, the image of the mill woman was an Anglo American construction. Called by Zlotnick the "prototype of the wage earning woman," the English female factory worker "emerged in the 1830s and 40s as the future face of the workforce" (*Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution*, 16–17). While signifying for some the social progress enabled by industrialism, for many contemporaries, especially elite men and workingmen, the mill girl was