

# Denying the Wages of Whiteness: The Racial Politics of George Lippard's Working-Class Protest

Timothy Helwig

That solidarity between working-class and anti-slavery advocates did not materialize during the antebellum period is well accepted. Racist caricatures and lamentations against “white slavery” that adorn pages of the class-inflected penny press give evidence that labor advocates were often more concerned with the material conditions of northern workers than the plight of black chattel slaves in the south. Out of the proliferation of sensational penny papers evolved city-mysteries, a popular genre that appealed to the laboring classes and helped to shape a number of America’s best-selling novels in the 1840s. As critics have noted, the racist caricatures and hostilities of the popular penny press reappear in the city-mysteries of George Lippard, George Thompson, Ned Buntline, and Augustine Duganne. It has been the critical consensus of city-mystery scholarship since the early 1980s that the popular, class-inflected novels reflect the insensitivity and hostility of many labor advocates toward the question of slavery. However, such a monolithic view of the popular genre—as well as its working-class readership—is untenable when tested against the city-mystery and newspaper writings of labor activist George Lippard. Despite his invocation of “white slavery” in his Philadelphia *Quaker City Weekly*, Lippard reveals the potential of racial discourse to register class protest in the antebellum period. In fact, class critique in Lippard’s city-mysteries relied upon the employment of black male protagonists, the vexed use of the term “wage slavery,” and

sympathetic representations of fugitive slaves. This essay considers the deployment of racial discourse in Lippard's city-mysteries from the mid-1840s until his death in the early 1850s, and will provide a close reading of the progressive anti-slavery rhetoric in his best known novel *The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk-Hall*. By analyzing how Lippard's investment in racial discourse is central to his development of class protest, I will suggest that Lippard's popular city-mysteries are distinguished among nineteenth-century American literature for their racial sympathy. Close study of Lippard confutes the notion that antebellum labor writing was largely hostile to black experience.

I begin with George Lippard's 1853 city-mystery, *New York: Its Upper Ten and Lower Million*. In a key scene, white shoemaker Arthur Dermoyne interrogates clergyman Herman Barnhurst, whom he suspects of seducing the daughter of a wealthy Philadelphia merchant and forcing her to have an abortion. Although Dermoyne's suspicions about Barnhurst are correct, he cannot elicit a confession from the devious clergyman and makes an ominous threat before departing. A shoemaker of medium height yet with a muscular body that is "hardened" by labor, Dermoyne bends an iron candlestick nearly double and claims that he can fell an ox with a single, well-placed blow. "'Why, you are a very Hercules!'" Barnhurst cries, and then listens in horror as Dermoyne explains in detail how he would punish the young woman's seducer.<sup>1</sup> "'Now, for instance, were I to encounter the seducer of Alice Burney,—were I to stand face to face with him, as I do with you,—were I to place my thumb upon his right temple and my fingers upon his left temple,—thus. . . I would, quietly, without a word, crush his skull as you might crush an egg-shell.'"<sup>2</sup>

Such an improbable feat of strength might have seemed credible to readers familiar with P. T. Barnum's freaks and with penny press reports on human oddities. But what is noteworthy is how Lippard's contrast of the shoemaker's bodily strength and "honest" labor with middle-class abstracted forms of power and authority has racial implications. Just prior to Dermoyne's displays of physical prowess, he recounts how he became a shoemaker in order to take an interest in the kidnapped young woman well above his class status. Dermoyne's personal history shares tropes with the black slave narrative popularized eight years earlier by Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* and by the public testimonies of former slaves. Dermoyne explains that as an orphan, "'There was no other career before me, than the pauperism of the outcast or the slavery of an apprentice. I chose the latter. The overseers of the poor bound me out to a trade. I grew up without hope, education, or home.'"<sup>3</sup> After a decade of ten-hour days as an apprentice, he became a journeyman and literate.<sup>4</sup> To contrast the honest laborer's virtue with the haughty clergyman's duplicity, Lippard tells what amounts to a "white" slave narrative. In addition to overcoming a fractured home life and being sent by an "overseer" to an apprenticeship that is equated with slavery, Dermoyne gains self-knowledge after he teaches himself to read in a scene that resonates distinctly with Douglass's achievements in the *Narrative*.

Although the invocation of “white” slavery is problematic, threatening to minimize the horrors and cruelty of chattel slavery, Dermoyne’s sympathy for black slaves, even as he traces his lineage according to “class” rather than “racial” lines, reveals how Lippard’s working-class protest relies upon an ambivalent engagement with racial discourse. Through Dermoyne, Lippard launches an artisan republican critique of the professional classes for their indifference toward the plight of the working poor. Dermoyne’s diatribe against the middle-class singles out four professions—lawyers, doctors, ministers, and merchants—for exploiting the “fruits of the labor” performed by white workers. When he shares his hope for the future, Dermoyne imagines a space that is free of “wage” and chattel slavery, though not expressly multi-racial:

“May be the day will come, when, gifted with wealth, I can enter the workshops of Philadelphia, and say to the workmen, ‘Come, brothers. Here is CAPITAL. Let us go to the west. Let us find a spot of God’s earth unpolluted by white or black slavery. . . . And there,—oh, my God!—there will we, without priest, or monopolist, or slaveholder, establish in the midst of a band of brothers, the worship of that Christ who was himself a workman, even as he is now, the workman’s God.”<sup>5</sup>

Lippard’s inclusion of black slavery as a pressing social ill, and his designation of slaveholders as oppressors, shows how the popular writer linked chattel slavery and the working poor and indicates his growing commitment to end chattel slavery.

In addition to relating wage and chattel slavery, the scene between Dermoyne and Barnhurst reveals another strategy of Lippard’s working-class protest as class consciousness trumps racial division. At the same time Lippard was struggling to navigate between his sympathy for black slaves and his disdain for middle-class abolitionists, he was navigating the politics of whiteness. With the unprecedented influx of Irish and German immigrants into northeastern cities during the 1840s and early 1850s, the ability of artisan republican rhetoric to articulate the interests of all white persons was weakening. As Matthew Jacobson has shown, before the immigration of the 1840s, whiteness was defined simply in opposition to blacks and Native-Americans. However, native-born artisans, especially those of Anglo-Saxon stock, began to distinguish gradations of “whiteness” in which the Irish and Germans were viewed as more akin to blacks than to “whites.”<sup>6</sup> Lippard, who witnessed the nativist riots in Kensington in 1844 and lamented that ethnic divisions were fracturing working-class solidarity, was reluctant to engage in the politics of what Jacobson calls “variegated whiteness.”<sup>7</sup> While Lippard’s investment in black characters helped him to consolidate whiteness and avoid sectarian division as seen in *New York*, he also conflates class and race in an arguably idealistic approach that could nonetheless pave the way for an alliance between multi-ethnic white workers and black slaves.

Again, *New York* provides an example of Lippard's attempt to negotiate racial politics by shifting the impetus for solidarity from race to class. Initially, in response to Barnhurst's insult to his German heritage, Dermoyne defends the Germans as a weakened race that will soon rise and invigorate the nation. Yet ultimately, Dermoyne traces his heritage according to a lineage based upon class. Touting his working-class roots, Dermoyne explains,

“My father, (I am told, for he died when I was a child), was a wealthy farmer, whose wealth was swallowed up by an unjust lawsuit and a fraudulent bank. My grandfather was a wheelwright; my great-grandfather a cobbler; my great-great-grandfather a carpenter; and his father, was a tiller of the field. So you see, I am *nobly* descended. . . . Not a single idler or vagabond in our family,—all workers, like their Savior,—all men who eat the bread of honest labor.”<sup>8</sup>

If Shelley Streeby is right that in his pro-Mexican War novels Lippard “tries to subsume class within race and nation by urging his readers to identify with a fictive, white U.S. national body,” the reverse is true in his city-mysteries as class interests have the potential to trump racial division. In his working-class hero Arthur Dermoyne, Lippard provides readers with a class-based identity independent of race and ethnicity and develops working-class consciousness through a de-racialized oppositional relationship to the privileged classes. *New York*, therefore, encapsulates Lippard's racially sympathetic representation of white workers; anti-slavery discourse helps Lippard to articulate the grievances of the white working-class, and a class-based identity that is not racially or ethnically exclusive serves as his hope for the future.

Immediately following the racially ambivalent chapter in *New York* that constructs working-class solidarity, Lippard's “Below Five Points” chapter introduces the reader to black vigilante Old Royal and the members of the Black Senate. In an underground room accessible only through narrow passages from a gambling-house in Five Points, the Black Senate, a group of fugitive slaves from the South, plots flight to Canada. Old Royal, an escaped slave from South Carolina, resembles Arthur Dermoyne in his powerful physique and in the respect he commands as a leader: “This gentleman is a giant; his chest is broad; his limbs brawny; and his face, black as the ‘ace of spades’. . . . He is a negro, with flat nose, thick lips, and mouth reaching from ear to ear.”<sup>9</sup> Although Lippard's description of Old Royal's facial features calls up the racist imagery of the 1840s, it does not bear out presumptions of racial inferiority. Instead, when his former master Harry Royalton and a slave-catcher aptly named Bloodhound burst into the subterranean room, Old Royal protects the fugitive slaves.<sup>10</sup> Just as Dermoyne would crush a libertine's skull with his bare hands, Old Royal dominates his master. The chapter concludes with the fugitive slaves murdering Bloodhound in cold blood, the sensational violence ameliorated in that the slaves recognize

in *Bloodhound* the man who “stole my fader” and “took me mother from Filfedlfy and sold her down south.”<sup>11</sup>

Lippard’s juxtaposition of the Herculean Arthur Dermoyne and the giant-like Old Royal is neither incidental nor exceptional. Black and mulatto characters—from Revolutionary War heroes and grog-shop owners to fugitive slaves and mundane servants—appear everywhere in Lippard’s novels. Sometimes the tragic victims of the Fugitive Slave Law, for which Lippard held especial animus, and sometimes the heroic defenders of a woman’s virtue, black and mulatto characters often share their white working-class counterparts’ disdain for abstracted forms of middle-class power. In *New York*, for instance, Lippard links Dermoyne and Old Royal by their mission to mete out vigilante justice against duplicitous “respectable” citizens who would otherwise escape punishment. Dermoyne announces his duty to clergyman Barnhurst “to punish those criminals whom the law does not punish; to protect the victim it does not protect.”<sup>12</sup> When the mysterious Court of Ten Million convenes and tries a corrupt senator for attempting to rape a fugitive mulatto woman named Esther Royalton, Old Royal stands among the court’s esteemed members.<sup>13</sup> In what other antebellum text can we find a vigilante court comprised of blacks and whites trying a white politician for crimes against a black woman? That the Court of Ten Million is a vigilante one underscores Lippard’s point that legal courts fail to protect society’s most vulnerable members. Indeed Lippard’s employment of such sympathetic black and mulatto characters as Old Royal and Esther Royalton distinguishes him among his contemporaries. That critics have largely overlooked the broad spectrum of Lippard’s black characters is surprising, and calls for further inquiry into his complex rendering of class protest through racial discourse.

David S. Reynolds describes Lippard as a “radical-democrat,” Gary Ashwill calls him a “quasi-pornographer,” and Michael Denning terms him “the most overtly political dime novelist of his or subsequent generations.”<sup>14</sup> Which characterization is correct? Probably all. After all, Lippard wrote more than twenty novels and published his own weekly paper competing for a rapidly growing readership in the 1840s and the 1850s.<sup>15</sup> With technological advances in printing and the opening of the Erie Canal in the early 1830s, cheap newspapers could reach an unprecedented number of readers. Although many were short-lived, successful penny papers as Benjamin H. Day’s *New York Sun* printed 22,000 copies daily in 1835 and James Gordon Bennett’s *New York Herald* claimed a daily circulation of 20,000 in 1839.<sup>16</sup> The newspaper market was flooded with penny papers; New York City in 1850 recorded 153,000 copies of dailies in circulation.<sup>17</sup> And they were unlike their predecessors. In contrast to the reserved tone of the 6-cent newspapers tailored to the upper classes, the new class-inflected dailies and weekly story papers provided the lurid details of gruesome murders, fatal shipwrecks, and tragic fires alongside more traditional news items.<sup>18</sup> With the penny press catering to mass readers’ thirst for explicit

crime reporting and salacious scandal, the violent imagery and sexual suggestiveness of Lippard's writing appears not so shocking after all.

What distinguishes Lippard from his fellow city-mystery and serial writers is the tireless energy he devoted to exposing social injustice in northeastern cities throughout his writing career.<sup>19</sup> A descendant of German and English immigrants, Lippard was born on a farm west of Philadelphia in 1822 and endured a number of personal tragedies in his short lifetime. After his mother died in 1831, Lippard moved in with relatives in Philadelphia and lived apart from his father, who would remarry in 1833.<sup>20</sup> When his father died in 1837 and Lippard received no inheritance, he looked for work and began writing for the Philadelphia penny paper *Spirit of the Times*. Despite his work for several other Philadelphia newspapers and his own novel-writing, Lippard struggled financially until he died in 1854. At his death at the age of 31, Lippard had outlived his wife and two children. As a writer for the class-inflected penny press and in struggling with poverty, Lippard came to the militant view that literature had the responsibility to expose corruption and improve society. In the lone edition of his self-published quarterly *The White Banner*, Lippard declared, "Our Idea of a National Literature, is simply: that a literature which does not work practically, for the advancement of social reform, or which is too dignified or too good to picture the wrongs of the great mass of humanity, is just good for nothing at all."<sup>21</sup> Writing for a largely white working-class readership, Lippard critiqued capitalist greed that he considered responsible for growing class inequities, railed against corrupt politicians that he perceived had failed to uphold the republican principles of the country's founders, and exposed the self-serving paternalism of the professional middle-class and hypocritical moral reformers. When homestead legislation that Lippard supported died in Congress and the western territories did not provide an outlet for the urban white working-class, he founded a semi-secret society, the Brotherhood of the Union, based on cooperative labor and farming. In an era of wage-labor expansion and the middle-class consolidation, Lippard was a seminal if minority voice politicking on behalf of the working-class.

Despite Lippard's prolific city-mystery writing and the unmatched popularity of his bestselling novel *The Quaker City* of the mid-1840s, scholarly attention to Lippard was rare until the revisionary work of Michael Denning's *Mechanic Accents* and David S. Reynolds's *Beneath the American Renaissance* helped to expand the literary canon in the 1980s. Perhaps partly a defensive posture against those who would question Lippard's admission into a revised canon, these critics have tried to account for the sensational excesses and the salacious sexuality inherent to the city-mystery genre when evaluating the efficacy of Lippard's working-class protest. Preoccupied with following a meta-narrative in which the canonical "greats" masterfully reworked the images and rhetoric of popular city-mystery writers, David S. Reynolds uses Lippard to show how the subversive themes of his "flawed" writing were reworked by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. Although Michael Denning credits Lippard with providing

the “mechanic accents” and “mechanic heroes” to post-bellum dime novels and story papers, he concludes that Lippard’s failure to graft the eighteenth-century seduction plot onto the class conflicts of the antebellum period compromises the radical political content of his city-mysteries. Moreover, Denning observes, “For the most part, Lippard’s seduction tales do *not* involve poor girls.”<sup>22</sup> By focusing on the seduction plots and the perverse voyeurism of Lippard’s novels, these critics have largely overlooked the racial and ethnic discourses integral to Lippard.

Inquiry into anti-slavery discourse offers one of the best avenues for studying Lippard’s working-class politics. Because exposing the corruption of the wealthy classes and realistically detailing the suffering of the poor precluded romantic representations of white working-class agents of change, Lippard employs disempowered black characters to help figure the exploitation of the white working-class. His city-mysteries feature northern white mechanics, free black workers, and fugitive slaves from the south who struggle to resist the machinations of northern merchant princes implicated in the slave trade, dissipated southern planters, and despotic officials of the Roman Catholic Church. Lippard’s occasional use of nativist discourse also has racial implications, as he appropriates the tropes of chattel slavery and “Catholic slavery” to help figure the “wage slavery” of his white working-class readership. Significantly, unlike many labor advocates’ invocation of “white slavery” that ignored the plight of black slaves, Lippard’s extensive engagement with racial discourse led to sympathetic representations of blacks and sharp denunciations of the Fugitive Slave Law. Only by analyzing his employment of anti-slavery discourse, by surveying his extensive use of black and mulatto characters, and by contextualizing those racial representations in antebellum popular print culture, can we provide a full assessment of Lippard’s working-class protest.

Such an assessment necessarily complicates the prevailing assumptions about the reactionary racial politics of the city-mystery genre. Critics Eric Lott and Shelley Streeby have pointed out the “class accents” and racial ambivalence that mark the parallel plot lines of Lippard’s city-mysteries. Showing how blackface minstrelsy influenced such working-class forms as city-mysteries and dime novels, Lott locates racial ambivalence in *New York* because its inheritance plot “twins” a black man (Randolph Royalton) with a working-class white man (Arthur Dermoyne) as potential heirs.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Streeby demonstrates how parallel plot lines of exploitation among white workers, women, and free blacks help Lippard to construct working-class identity.<sup>24</sup> Lott’s and Streeby’s attention to parallel plot lines is not all that different from Reynolds’s focus on Lippard’s plot-level role reversals.<sup>25</sup> I contend that to appreciate the depth of Lippard’s racially sympathetic strategies for working-class protest, we must look beyond his texts’ plot devices to his deft and subversive employment of anti-slavery discourse. Contrary to the prevailing critical perception that racism plagues Lippard’s portrayals of black characters, Lippard’s racial sympathies are, in fact, complex and radical.

Consider this startling description: “Then came the slaves of the city, white and black, marching along one mass of rags and sores of misery, huddled together; a goodly tail to the procession of the King. Chains upon each wrist and want upon each brow. Here they were, the slaves of the cotton Lord and the factory Prince.”<sup>26</sup> In an apocalyptic vision of America in 1950 that marks the climax of the class critique in *The Quaker City*, Lippard links not only the oppression of white wage laborers in northeastern cities with the oppression of black slaves on southern plantations, but also economic and racial repression, announcing that only by addressing them simultaneously can America change its course. While critics have singled out this passage as a unique moment of cross-racial identification in Lippard’s writing, anti-slavery discourse paired with class consciousness permeates Lippard’s city-mysteries in representations of the white working poor as “wage slaves,” in sympathetic portrayals of fugitive black slaves, and in constructions of villains implicated in the slave trade. In *The Quaker City* the bankrupt white worker John Davis appeals to the haughty bank-president that ““for six long years have I slaved for that six hundred dollars””; in *New York: Its Upper Ten and Lower Million*, fugitive slave Randolph Royalton, disguised as a white slave-owner, laments that ““at every turn of life, I am met by the fatal whisper, ‘There is *negro blood in your veins!*’””; and in *The Nazarene*, arch-villain Calvin Wolfe taunts the homeless white worker in his power, ““Consider yourself sold to me, as a mere bale of goods is sold, after this hour.””<sup>27</sup> Why does Lippard’s critique of the wealthy classes rely so heavily upon anti-slavery discourse? And to what extent does Lippard’s use of that discourse carry with it a critique of the institution of chattel slavery?

A key to understanding Lippard’s racially inflected strategies for representing the fears and anxieties of his white working-class readership lies in his editorials in his *Quaker City Weekly*. Lippard’s weekly story paper, with its stated object “to make the Literature of Fact and Fiction, an effective instrument in the cause of human progress,” became a prominent voice of labor reform in the antebellum period. In *Quaker City Weekly* Lippard supported workers’ call for a ten-hour workday, defended the rights of factory operatives to strike, and promoted his communitarian semi-secret society the Brotherhood of the Union.<sup>28</sup> Like other labor agitators of the period, Lippard sometimes invoked “white slavery” to describe the exploitation of the white working-class; however, more frequently he employed “wage slavery” as a call to working-class solidarity. David Roediger has observed that the term “white slavery” had greater currency than the term “wage slavery” among antebellum labor advocates because the former suggested a mutable state; while “white slavery” could be eradicated and white workers could rise above their degraded state, “wage slavery” would always exist in a wage marketplace and thus white workers would remain in a state of “enslavement.”<sup>29</sup> Because “white slavery” focused on the needs of *white* workers, Roediger argues, the “use of a term like *white slavery* was not an act of solidarity with the slave but rather a call of arms to end the inappropriate oppression of

whites.”<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, Eric Foner has asserted that the term “wage slavery” contains the potential for an alliance between white workers and black slaves because “slavery contradicted the central ideas and values of artisan radicalism—liberty, democracy, equality, independence.”<sup>31</sup> Bearing in mind the racial exigencies of the two terms, it is telling that variants of “wage slavery” appear approximately twice as often as “white slavery” in the columns of *Quaker City Weekly*.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Lippard’s opposition to chattel slavery is reinforced by his using the term “white slavery” almost always in the context of poor labor conditions in England. That slavery had been abolished in England in 1807 enabled Lippard to lament the “White Slavery of England” without inadvertently denying the horrors of chattel slavery.

Although he criticizes abolitionists whom he paints as “bigoted” sectarians who would sacrifice the very Union itself to achieve their cause, Lippard does express anti-slavery sentiment when he draws comparisons between wage and chattel slavery in his newspaper. Like some white labor activists of the period, Lippard utilized the metaphor of “slavery” to lament the plight of white laborers without dismissing the horrors of chattel slavery.<sup>33</sup> For example, in an editorial “Wages vs. Chattel Slavery,” the writer “Aleph” (likely a penname for Lippard) criticizes senators for debating which form of slavery is worse: “What miserable special pleading! While the mass of the people know and feel the evils of both kinds of Slavery, these lawyers on the floor of Congress attempt to whiten the evils of their respective localities, by blackguarding the vices and virtues of all other parts of the Union.”<sup>34</sup> Lippard also shows his commitment to ending chattel slavery when he draws an analogy between the “ground rent” slavery of northern whites and the enslavement of southern blacks: “THE SAME system of reasoning, which enables a White Man to hold property in a Black Man in South Carolina, enables a White Man in Philadelphia, to hold a White Man under bondage, by means of Ground Rents. When you destroy one kind of Slavery you must destroy the other.”<sup>35</sup> And yet despite expressing such explicit sympathy for black slaves in these editorials, Lippard distances himself from abolitionists for threatening the Union and ignoring the needs of white workers:

At the same time let us observe that we have never been, in the popular sense of the word, an abolitionist. We hold allegiance to no sect nor name. . . . Hitherto some of the greatest talkers against slavery—Southern slavery—have been refreshingly oblivious of the existence of a serfdom in our midst, compared with which even black slavery looks beautiful.<sup>36</sup>

Lippard’s sympathy for black slaves and hostility toward abolitionists reveal a complex writer who supports the aims, but not the methods, of the abolitionist movement. Lippard insists on linking wage and chattel slavery and argues that

abolitionism, with its propensity to obscure the plight of the multi-racial laboring classes, is not the only way to abolish slavery.

The opposition to chattel slavery and the racial sympathy that mark Lippard's labor agitation in *Quaker City Weekly* re-appear in his fiction's critique of class oppression. Despite Eric Lott's claim that "black characters (and black writers) were seldom featured" in such working-class forms as the dime novel, Lippard's texts regularly feature the oppressed classes as multi-racial.<sup>37</sup> For example, in his Christian parable of 1851, *Adonai: The Pilgrim of Eternity*, Lippard represents world history as a series of failed revolutions against class oppression since the reign of Emperor Nero. In a prologue that establishes the text's pre-occupation with class conflict, Lippard relates the parable of the Rich Man and the landless poor. A humble Jesus figure dressed in rags meets the Rich Man who oversees vast lands and great riches. When the Rich Man asks what he can do to inherit eternal life, the humble stranger replies: "'You have a Palace, Rich Man! Let its luxurious chambers be tenanted by the blind, the halt, the famine-stricken, who now surround me. You have lands, Rich Man? Divide them among the white and black slaves who now gather your harvests, with the labor of hopeless bondage, and baptize their hard-earned food with bitter tears.'"<sup>38</sup> Just as black and white slaves suffer under a monarchy in a futuristic America in *The Quaker City*, blacks and whites are united in performing fruitless labor in *Adonai*. And whereas *The Quaker City* imagines the wrath of God raining down upon America's oppressors, *Adonai* argues for a radical and racially inclusive re-organization of wealth and property consistent with the aims of Lippard's Brotherhood of the Union.<sup>39</sup>

Lippard's treatment of economic oppression is also notable for the realistic depiction of the multi-racial quality of slums. Lippard uses this to challenge the claim that blacks and whites cannot co-exist and posits a racially mixed working-class alliance against the white wealthy classes. One of many such examples appears in *The Nazarene; or, The Last of the Washingtons*, Lippard's 1846 city-mystery that takes as its backdrop the 1844 Philadelphia nativist riots. The novel follows the treachery of arch-nativist bank president Calvin Wolfe in inciting Protestant-Catholic violence through his secret society. In a subplot prior to the riots, dissipated medical student and part-time body-snatcher Harry Blair leads a gang of students to a gambling-hall—the Devil's Grave—in dilapidated tenements. For many middle-class temperance reformers and defenders of slavery, race-mixing in slums signified whites' ultimate moral degradation. Lippard, who could bank on increasing the sensational impact of describing racially mixed orgies of debauchery, nevertheless insists on viewing such degradation as the product of poverty rather than the result of racial amalgamation, as the residents, "white and black," gather "in groups of wretchedness and squalor."<sup>40</sup>

As part of Lippard's representation of the seedy gambling-hall, blacks and mulattoes appear as sympathetic fugitive slaves. Inside this "low haunt," a drunken mob of blacks, mulattoes, and whites flail to the music of one-eyed

fiddler Black Samuel. When the white medical students arrive and force the slumbering mulatto women to dance, Lippard, in rhetoric unusually consistent with middle-class temperance reform, measures the immorality of these white future professionals against the racially mixed inebriates.<sup>41</sup> Yet with the revelation that some of the blacks and mulattoes in the room are fugitive slaves who suspect that the students are disguised slave-catchers, the racial politics take on a sympathetic tone. Challenging pro-slavery apologists who argue that blacks are content under slavery, Lippard describes the fugitive slaves' terror of being recaptured—they would “sooner hack the hearts out of their bodies, than be taken to their masters as slaves again.”<sup>42</sup> Lippard heightens the danger to the fugitive slaves by implicating the gambling-hall's proprietor, ex-attorney Peter “Graveyard” Crow, in illegal slave-dealing.<sup>43</sup> While Lippard does indulge in some racist caricature, his chief occupation is to argue for class solidarity against middle-class oppression.

Yet Lippard is not alone. Although the physical prowess of blacks was often caricatured in dailies and weekly story papers, there are notable exceptions that provide a useful context for reading Lippard's works. In the mid-1840s, the Boston, *Star Spangled Banner*, edited by Justin Jones, serialized two novels featuring a Herculean black hero nicknamed Big Dick (Figure 1). In 1845, Justin Jones, writing under his prolific pseudonym Harry Hazel, serialized *Big Dick, The King of the Negroes; or, Virtue and Vice Contrasted*, and its sequel *Fourpe Tap; or, the Middy of the Macedonian* a year later. The two class-inflected novels chronicle the efforts of Big Dick to expose vice among the wealthy classes of Boston and to protect the virtue of honest working-class whites. Like Lippard's vigilantes Old Royal and Arthur Dermoyne, “[Big Dick] was, in truth, a magnanimous and generous man, always to be found advocating the cause of the right, and preventing the strong from trampling upon the weak.”<sup>44</sup> Over the course of the two novels, for example, Big Dick rescues an orphan discarded in a winter snowstorm and turns a wealthy villain into minced meat. When he leads a group of white mechanics to clean up a racially mixed gambling district known as “Nigger Hill,” Big Dick is attacked by the wealthy white villain Philip Peterson, and in turn, uses Philip as a human cudgel.<sup>45</sup> That Big Dick spends the next chapter pondering the moral consequences of having killed Peterson during the fracas further humanizes this black character who serves—in perhaps unprecedented fashion—as a popular text's locus of virtue.

Lippard's earliest employment of Herculean black figures, the racially caricatured sentries Glow-Worm and Musquito of Monk-Hall in *The Quaker City*, has received the most attention in the scant scholarship devoted to the writer's racial politics. In terms of the sentries' appearance, David S. Reynolds has written that “Devil-Bug's helpers Musquito and Glow-Worm seem the stereotypically brutish, comical blacks characteristic of antebellum popular culture.”<sup>46</sup> Although he recognizes the virtue of their “honest brutishness” as they “punish bourgeois hypocrites,” Reynolds does not delve further into the



Figure 1. “Fourpe Tap’s Encounter with the Giant Negro,” from Harry Hazel, *Fourpe Tap* (Boston: Jones’s Publishing House, [1847]). Courtesy of the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

affinity the black sentries share with Lippard’s heroic portraits of white male laborers.<sup>47</sup> One such group of laborers, the raucous Bowery B’hoys of working-class fire companies, represented an implicit working-class consciousness, described by Sean Wilentz as “a sort of republicanism of the streets that connected the workingmen’s pride, resentments, and simple pleasures to the language of

republican politics.<sup>48</sup> Working-class Bowery B'hoys appear in many of Lippard's city-mysteries clad in the traditional "red flannel shirts" associated with the local fire-companies. As one indication of Lippard's attempts to draw a parallel between white laborers and free black workers, many of his "Herculean" males—from the black Glow-Worm and Musquito of *The Quaker City* to the white Giant Peter of *Memoirs of a Preacher*—don the classic red flannel shirt of the Bowery B'hoy.

But the similarities do not end with dress. Lippard's black and white working-class heroes mirror each other in their class accents: all are brawny figures who tower over their aristocratic and effete antagonists; all fight, on behalf of the virtuous dispossessed, against the power of the corrupt privileged classes; and all hold humble yet "honest" occupations. In the 1847 compilation of his Revolutionary War sketches, *The Legends of the American Revolution, "1776"*, Lippard juxtaposes sketches of a black and a white reluctant soldier who fight the British at the Battle of Brandywine. The first sketch, entitled "Black Sampson," chronicles the heroism of a fugitive slave from the south who takes revenge upon the British after they murder his employer and rape the man's daughter. Like his description of white hero Arthur Dermoyne of *New York* six years later, Lippard describes Black Sampson's form "with its breadth of chest, its sinewy arms, its towering height, [and] Herculean outline of iron strength," and he infuses the black hero's vigilante violence with class accents.<sup>49</sup> Armed only with a scythe and accompanied by his white dog named Devil, Black Sampson wreaks havoc on the British forces who share the aristocratic airs of the wealthy villains of Lippard's city-mysteries. In keeping with his fear that abolitionists would destroy the Union "in order to free the African race," Lippard clarifies early in the sketch that he is no "factionist."<sup>50</sup> Again, Lippard distances himself from abolitionist sentiment, but makes clear to his reader that his hero is a black man who is heroic for his deeds rather than his race. And yet despite this disavowal of abolitionist sentiment that contains Black Sampson's subversive potential in terms of race, the class accents that mark Lippard's lionization link the black hero to his white counterpart of the subsequent sketch and reinforce working-class politics.

Immediately following the sketch of Black Sampson in *The Legends of the American Revolution, "1776"*, Lippard sketches the heroic actions of a white laborer in "The Mechanic Hero of Brandywine." Sharing the physical prowess of Arthur Dermoyne, Old Royal, Black Sampson, and Harry Hazel's Big Dick, the unnamed white mechanic is a righteous family man who enters battle only after his wife and child are murdered by British soldiers.<sup>51</sup> He then reports to General George Washington on the British movements near his cottage, and armed not with a scythe, but with a hammer, is infused with patriotic heroism.<sup>52</sup> This class-accented pairing of Black Sampson and the Mechanic Hero of Brandywine provides another instance of Lippard's working-class solidarity crossing racial lines. Two other Herculean white working-class heroes, noteworthy for their racially ambivalent class accents, appear in Lippard's later

city-mysteries. In the two-part serial *Memoirs of a Preacher* (1848) and *The Man With the Mask* (1849) published in *Quaker City Weekly*, Giant Peter, a “sun-burnt” white worker loyal to the novels’ primary hero, helps to prevent a slick-tongued Popular Preacher from seducing a young virgin. Lippard’s description of Giant Peter resonates with images of both the Bowery B’hooy and the black Hercules:

Imagine a form at least six feet one inch in stature, with broad shoulders, bulky chest, and iron limbs, with sinews like whip-cords. This form is enveloped in a huge great coat, blazing red in color, with two rows of white buttons down the front, each the size of a dollar. . . . Above [the coat], or rather above a handkerchief of some indescribable plaid, you catch a substantial vision of a sun-burnt face, with whiskers like the flakes of snow, and eyes flashing like hickory coals from underneath the front of a cap of coarse grey fur.<sup>53</sup>

In his racial affinity with black characters, the working-class Giant Peter shares the red coat of Glow-Worm and Musquito, the dialect of Black Sampson, and the snow-white hair and “flashing” eyes of Old Royal. In Lippard’s last novel, *Eleanor; or, Slave Catching in the Quaker City*, serialized in 1854, the Mechanic Hero of Brandywine becomes Adam Smith, the white mechanic protector of fugitive slaves, who is described as having “the throat of a Hercules.”<sup>54</sup> That Adam Smith, a white worker, opposes the Fugitive Slave Law and risks his life to rescue the abducted Eleanor further shows how Lippard’s racially ambivalent characterizations ultimately express anti-slavery sentiment in a popular genre generally viewed as hostile or indifferent to black experience.

In some instances, black characters even serve as the primary voice of class critique. In Lippard’s 1849 serialized city-mystery, *The Killers*, a fictionalized account of Philadelphia’s Election Night race riots that same year, burly grog-shop owner Black Andy single-handedly frustrates the plots of the “aristocratic” white villains. When dissipated youth Cromwell Hicks foments a race riot in order to create a cover for robbing his licentious step-father who has come to the grog-shop to seduce a virgin he has paid Black Andy to restrain in a room, Black Andy defends his drinking establishment, rescues the girl he initially abducted, and thwarts the villains’ schemes. Having killed the younger Hicks in self-defense and now preparing to defend himself against Hicks’s Cuban partner Don Jorge, Black Andy strikes a defiant pose in a racially charged scene that looks ahead to Herman Melville’s anti-slavery symbolism in *Benito Cereno* six years later. The dramatic illustration that accompanied the 1851 edition reinforces the text’s racial sympathy as Black Andy, dressed in modest garb and showing his labor-hardened body, contrasts sharply with the extravagant top-hat and dress-coat of the delicate and wealthy villain (Figure 2). In a scene reminiscent of Big Dick’s rescue of an abducted virgin in Hazel’s *Big Dick* and of Giant Peter’s

rescue of a kidnapped virgin from a fire in Lippard's *The Man With the Mask*, Black Andy appears on the roof of his burning groggery carrying the senseless young woman.<sup>53</sup> As if reluctant to explore further the dramatic scene's sensational allusion to miscegenation, Lippard closes with the groggery caving in, the girl rescued, but Black Andy gone, presumably dead. And yet, despite the disappearance of the brawny black hero, Lippard concludes *The Killers* with anti-slavery sentiment. The rescued girl and her boyfriend flee unmolested to Panama because they have proof of illegal slave-trading between the elder Hicks and his business associates in Philadelphia. Following the conclusion of the narrative, Lippard appends an excerpt from President Zachary Taylor's message of December 24, 1849, to Congress calling for action to prevent Americans from using Brazilian ships to participate in the illegal slave trade.

Although in his editorials for *Quaker City Weekly* Lippard routinely criticized abolitionists whom he perceived as indifferent to the suffering of the laboring poor, he became an outspoken critic of chattel slavery after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. In fact, Lippard's clearest condemnation of chattel slavery



**Figure 2.** The Negro, “Bulgine”: “Prostrate on his face, the blood from the wound trickling over the boards of the floor, and over him triumphant and chuckling stood the Negro, ‘Bulgine,’ the knife which he shook dripping its red drops upon his black and brawny arm,” from George Lippard, *The Bank Director’s Son* (Philadelphia: E. E. Barclay and A. R. Orton, [1851]). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

comes in his final city-mystery, *Eleanor; or, Slave Catching in the Quaker City*. Serialized in the *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury* in 1854, *Eleanor* relates the efforts of a Quaker merchant of Philadelphia, Elijah Carwin, and a “reformed” southern planter, Blair Malcolm, to rescue a kidnapped fugitive slave before she is sold back into slavery. Prior to the southern planter discovering that Eleanor is his daughter and subsequently denouncing slavery, Carwin and Malcolm debate the Fugitive Slave Law and slavery itself. Reflecting Lippard’s view that the causes of labor reform and ending slavery are linked, Carwin argues,

“I am no Abolitionist. I never liked their sectarian spirit. . . . Until the Fugitive Slave Law, I thought of slavery as an evil afar off; as a matter belonging to you alone; and my attention was occupied by the hideous White Slavery of England, and the fear that it would in time, plant itself on our soil. But the Fugitive Slave Law woke me up, as it did hundreds of thousands of others, who had never mixed with Abolitionists.”<sup>56</sup>

While Lippard’s protagonist distances himself from middle-class abolitionists who are preoccupied with the slavery question at the expense of labor reform, Carwin also realizes that labor advocates are preoccupied with the plight of the working poor at the expense of sympathy for the chattel slave. Carwin goes on to turn the disingenuous logic of “white slavery” on its head.

“[The Fugitive Slave Law] taught us, that as terrible as is the White Slavery of English factories and mines; as fearful as is Wages Slavery, when it spoliates the poor of large cities, and great industrial districts; that Black Slavery is the very embodiment of all the evils of White Slavery, multiplied *ad finitum*; the great Sum of all villainies and tyrannies that ever existed beneath the sun.”<sup>57</sup>

By serving as Lippard’s final spokesperson on the questions of labor reform and slavery, Carwin provides us with a lasting impression of the racial sympathy and the republican spirit central to all of Lippard’s works.

Despite such bold proclamations by Lippard, critics have been reluctant to view Lippard’s *The Quaker City* as mounting an effective critique of the wealthy classes on behalf of the working-class. Lippard’s claim in his preface to the 1849 edition of the novel that he “determined to write a book which should describe all the phases of a corrupt social system, as manifested in the city of Philadelphia,” is countered by the primary seduction plot, which centers on a middle-class white young woman, and the scarcity of assertive working-class white characters.<sup>58</sup> In this regard, Michael Denning’s criticism of the city-mystery genre would seem to apply to *The Quaker City*: “The narrative elements [Karl]

Marx identified in [Eugene] Sue—the depiction of workers as passive victims, a world made up of the elite and the lumpen, and the quasi-aristocratic supermen heroes—prevent the emergence of an active working-class protagonist, a mechanic hero.”<sup>59</sup> And yet, *The Quaker City* proves to be the novel in which Lippard creates his most powerful class critique of the “upper ten” through a combination of artisan republicanism and cross-racial sympathy. Although *The Quaker City* lacks a white mechanic hero as in Lippard’s later city-mysteries, the novel’s stalwart black heroes and anti-slavery discourse represent the fears and anxieties of the white working-class. Through a class-inflected forgery plot that implicates the north in chattel slavery and through an inheritance plot that involves the long-lost daughter of the racially ambiguous anti-hero Devil-Bug, *The Quaker City* relies primarily on racial discourse to advance its class critique.

The first third of the novel retells the crime at the center of the actual trial and acquittal in 1843 of a Philadelphian who murdered his sister’s alleged rapist. Similar to Edgar Allan Poe’s ruse in the preface to his 1838 *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, Lippard enhances the sensational narrative’s verisimilitude by relating how a dying attorney provided him with the details of the case in a packet entitled “Revelations of the Secret Life of Philadelphia.” Yet after Mary Arlington is lured into a sham wedding ceremony and is raped by the rakish “Man of Pleasure” Gus Lorrimer, the novel is devoted to unraveling a forgery plot that dramatizes how duplicitous anti-republicans can manipulate the marketplace and exploit the underprivileged. In the forgery plot, worldly villain Colonel Algernon Fitz-Cowles and his “Jewish” accomplice Gabriel Von Gelt forge a \$100,000 letter of credit against the Philadelphia importing firm of Livingstone, Harvey, and Co. The northern importing firm has “made a large purchase in cotton from a rich planter” in Charleston, South Carolina, and the firm’s partners try to apprehend the forgers before they escape.<sup>60</sup> The plot thickens as Fitz-Cowles plans to murder his accomplice with the help of Devil-Bug and to seduce merchant Albert Livingstone’s wife, Dora; meanwhile, merchant Luke Harvey searches throughout the city for the forgers and exposes Dora’s infidelity to his business partner. To compound the potential confusion of the interweaving plots, the forgers are also imposters. Colonel Fitz-Cowles is actually Juan Larode, the bastard son of a Creole slave in Louisiana and thus likely a fugitive slave; Gabriel Von Gelt, Lippard explains in his 1845 “Key to *The Quaker City; or, the Monks of Monk-Hall*,” is “a fictitious name for a notorious personage, a pretended Jew, who occupied a large share of the public attention, some years since.”<sup>61</sup> With characters donning multiple racial and ethnic disguises to either aid in the search for the forgers or to evade capture, the forgery plot becomes a class-inflected metaphor for the instability of the wage marketplace and the threat an unregulated marketplace poses to the laboring poor.

Early in *The Quaker City*, rakish Gus Lorrimer sums up the unpredictability of the urban marketplace: ““One moment you gather the apple, the next it is ashes,”” Lippard wrote. ““Every thing fleeting and nothing stable, every thing

shifting and changing, and nothing substantial! A bundle of hopes and fears, deceits and confidences, joys and miseries, strapped to a fellow's back like Pedlar's wares."<sup>62</sup> Just as the value of bank notes fluctuated in response to economic conditions during the antebellum period, letters of credit—a form of paper money—could be manipulated and forged by criminals who lacked the republican principles of civic virtue. In this context, the episode of the confrontation between bankrupt laborer John Davis and haughty bank president Job Joneson reinforces wage-earners' anxieties about the marketplace. While the bank president remains unscathed when his bank fails, John Davis has lost his life's savings of \$600 and his young family starves to death. For Lippard, the brief subplot is also symptomatic of the white-collar crime that goes unpunished in the metropolis: "Our Episode will furnish to the world a pleasing illustration of that Justice, which in the Quaker City, unbars the jail to Great Swindlers, while it sends the honest Poor Man into the grave of the Suicide."<sup>63</sup> While such explicit scenes of class-based suffering are rare in *The Quaker City*, the forgery scheme, figured through anti-slavery discourse, provides an extended indictment of society's "upper ten."

With the importing firm's large purchase of southern cotton implicating the north in chattel slavery, the forgery plot also performs the symbolic work of linking dissipated, effeminate southern slave-owners and aristocratic northern merchants as "non-producers." Fitz-Cowles, who dons the proud title of a colonel, gains the northern firm's confidence by assuming the role of a successful and flashy southern planter. Luke Harvey enthuses over Fitz-Cowles to his business partner Albert Livingstone,

"Splendid fellow. Dresses well—gives capital terrapin suppers at the United States—inoculates all the bucks about town with his style of hat. . . . Got lots of money—a millionaire—no end to his wealth. By the bye, where the d——I did he come from? isn't he a Southern planter with acres of niggers and prairies of cotton?"<sup>64</sup>

David Anthony has shown how Fitz-Cowles's effeminacy, which he compensates for by wearing padding under his clothes, points to the professional male's crisis of "masculinity" in the antebellum period.<sup>65</sup> I would also argue that Fitz-Cowles's effeminacy links him to the moral corruption and dissipation that Lippard associated with southern slaveholders and ascribed to many of his villains. Such "southern" dissipation is reflected in Fitz-Cowles's facial features: "The brow of Fitz-Cowles was disfigured by a hideous frown, and his entire countenance, wore an expression, characteristic of a low bully, who has been accustomed to the vilest haunts, in the most corrupt cities of the South."<sup>66</sup> Lippard also mocks southern planters when Luke Harvey, disguised as slave-owner Major Rappahannock Mulhill, tries to gain Fitz-Cowles's confidence. Describing the

state of affairs in South Carolina at the time he headed north, Luke tells Fitz-Cowles: “‘Lively! Roasted an Abolitionist the day afore I left, for tryin’ to steal my niggers. Lynched a Yankee, the day afore that, for sellin’ me some Jersey cider for sham-pane! Things is werry lively in our diggings, jist now.’”<sup>67</sup> Although neither Fitz-Cowles nor Luke Harvey is actually a southern planter, they rehearse the role of the dissipated southern non-producer that Lippard contrasts with the “honest” labor of his white and black working-class stalwart heroes of the north.

Artisan republican rhetoric characterizes Lippard’s critique of the professional middle-class in the north, as he presents unflattering portraits of the duplicitous, “respectable” men who carouse and hatch plots as Monks in the subterranean caverns of Monk-Hall. Through artisan republican rhetoric, Lippard describes how the “Monks”—comprised of such professionals as lawyers, doctors, judges, parsons, and tradesmen—revel and indulge their lusts at midnight in the subterranean caverns of Monk-Hall.<sup>68</sup> In *The Quaker City* Lippard represents the virtues and hopes of the northern white and free black working-class through the racially ambivalent representation of black characters. Just like Lippard would do with Black Andy in *The Killers* four years later, he relies heavily upon blackness in *The Quaker City* to express his class critique.

The novel’s foremost voice of working-class protest belongs to the sardonically witty Devil-Bug. The racially ambiguous tenant of Monk-Hall and arguably the novel’s hero, Devil-Bug is ubiquitous in the text as he plays host to the corrupt “Monks” and figures in the resolution of nearly every subplot. Although David S. Reynolds links “likable criminal” Devil-Bug with the radical-democrat and black humor running through antebellum popular culture, he writes little about this “insanely sane” outcast’s racial ambiguity and use of the class-inflected rhetorical devices of blackface minstrelsy. Dana Nelson has pointed out Devil-Bug’s “tawny cheeks” and “swarthy visage” as suggesting the novel’s middle-class anxieties about “the irregular and hybrid results of a forfeited pure group ideal.”<sup>69</sup> But to appreciate the racial implications of the novel’s *working-class* protest, we must consider Devil-Bug’s racial ambiguity and his prominent role in the narrative events. Upon Devil-Bug’s “stout and muscular frame, with the heavy body, knotted into uncouth knobs at the shoulders,” rests the class critique of *The Quaker City*.<sup>70</sup>

In describing Devil-Bug, formally named Abijah K. Jones, Lippard suggests strongly that his novel’s hero is either black or mulatto. As for his family background, the reader learns the little that Devil-Bug knows:

Born in a brothel, the offspring of foulest sin and pollution, he had grown from very childhood, in full and continual sight of scenes of vice, wretchedness and squalor. From his very birth, he had breathed an atmosphere of infamy. . . . No mother had ever spoken works of kindness to him; no father had ever held him in his arms.<sup>71</sup>

Based upon Lippard's portrayal of race-mixing in urban brothels and his occasional indulgence in temperance rhetoric's sensational treatment of amalgamation, Lippard leaves open the possibility of Devil-Bug's black heritage by linking his childhood to brothels. A more persuasive reading of Devil-Bug's blackness is provided by Lippard's physical description of Devil-Bug and his henchmen. Devil-Bug has within his employ two black sentries, Glow-Worm and Musquito, who share the physical traits and garb of Lippard's other black and white working-class heroes.<sup>72</sup> Embodying the "mere brute strength" of honest labor, Glow-Worm and Musquito are loyal to Devil-Bug and subdue rakish criminals when called upon. Devil-Bug's physical prowess links him to his henchmen, to Lippard's Black Sampson of *The Legends of the Revolution*, and to Harry Hazel's Big Dick. The dwarfish Devil-Bug's compact strength, Lippard writes, "all gave you the idea, of a Sampson, stunted in his growth; a giant whom nature had dwarfed from the regular proportion of manly beauty, down into an uncouth image of hideous strength."<sup>73</sup> Devil-Bug, referred to as an "insect" like Glow-Worm and Musquito, is described in terms consistent with racist caricature. He has, "A flat nose with wide nostrils shooting out into each cheek like the smaller wings of an insect, an immense mouth whose heavy lips disclosed two long rows of bristling teeth, a pointed chin, blackened by a heavy beard, and massive eyebrows meeting over the nose."<sup>74</sup> Although Devil-Bug's garb is never described in the novel, a wood engraving by popular illustrator F. O. C. Darley for the 1845 edition shows Devil-Bug—identifiable because he has use of only one eye—dressed similarly to his henchmen and with similarly shaded skin (Figure 3). Darley's illustration links Devil-Bug to his black henchmen, who are depicted in sharp contrast to the richly clad white characters at the center of the seduction plot.

Devil-Bug, in his deformity and unusual upper-body strength, is also linked with the racially ambiguous "freaks" exhibited in P. T. Barnum's museums. Paul Gilmore has argued that Edgar Allan Poe's depiction of the title character of his short story "Hop-Frog" would resonate with the audience members who saw white American actor Harvey Leach's "blackface" performances as an ape-like creature. Quoting from the *Selected Letters of P.T. Barnum*, Gilmore compares Hop-Frog and Leach's performed "Ourang-Outang":

Like Leach, because of "the distortion in his legs," Hop-Frog "could only get along by a sort of interjectional gait—something between a leap and a wriggle." Similarly, despite his troubles walking, Hop-Frog is also a spectacular acrobat: "the prodigious muscular power which nature seemed to have bestowed upon his arms . . . enabled him to perform feats of wonderful dexterity, where trees or ropes were in question." And like Leach, who regularly performed as an ape, Hop-Frog, it seems, "resembled . . . a small monkey."<sup>75</sup>



**Figure 3.** “Frontispiece wood engraving,” F. O. C. Darley, delineator, from George Lippard, *The Quaker City; or The Monks of Monk Hall: A Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery, and Crime* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson and Brothers, [1845]). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

---

Poe’s description of Hop-Frog in 1849 and P. T. Barnum’s description of Leavy’s “ourang-outang” in the mid-1840s nearly mirror Lippard’s description of Devil-Bug, who “was a strange thickset specimen of flesh and blood, with a short body, marked by immensely broad shoulders, long arms and thin distorted legs. The head of the creature was ludicrously large in proportion to the body.”<sup>76</sup> By

racially locating Devil-Bug as black or at the very least associating him with blackness, Lippard expresses his most powerful working-class sympathy through the rhetorical devices of blackface minstrelsy that Devil-Bug invokes.

Over the course of the novel, Devil-Bug, through minstrelsy's subversive strategies of mockery, burlesque, and cheeky wit, lampoons numerous emerging middle-class professions. From mimicking medical discourse as he gleefully "prescribes" opium to hasten the death of Mary Arlington's brother Byrnewood, to assigning his two black henchmen as "defense lawyers" for his torture victim Reverend F. A. T. Pyne, the misanthropic Devil-Bug mocks the discourses of the hypocritical professionals who revel nightly in Monk-Hall. Devil-Bug's irreverent, cheeky spirit is on display as he slices the throat of merchant Luke Harvey. Lippard writes,

There was a great deal of the philosopher in Devil-Bug. Never a doctor of all the school, with his dissecting knife in hand and the corpse of a subject before him, could have manifested more nerve and coolness than the savage of Monk-Hall. . . . Then as if to show that his spirits were not depressed by the solemnity of the operation, he laughed merrily to himself, and hummed the catch of some dismal song.<sup>77</sup>

In another perverse scene in which he dominates the middle-class Byrnewood Arlington, Devil-Bug refers to the minstrel's plantation song as he prepares to bury his victim alive. When Byrnewood groans in pain, Devil-Bug replies, "Oh, groan, little children groan, as the nigger wot plays on the banjo ses, but it won't help you the least circumstance!"<sup>78</sup> While his black humor mocks the professional classes, Devil-Bug performs his most subversive and his most heroic act when he dupes the wealthy classes and sacrifices himself for his long-lost daughter Mabel.

Devil-Bug's subversive mockery of the middle class is rendered more effective through his own redemption in the text because, through self-sacrifice, he is able to secure a stable future for the daughter who would otherwise have been oppressed by both economic and racial injustice. In addition to being haunted by the spectral images of those whom he has killed in the past, Devil-Bug commits most of his crimes in the book for the sake of his recently re-discovered daughter and the current object of rakish Reverend Pyne's affections, Mabel. The girl's mother, Ellen, was seduced by wealthy merchant Albert Livingstone and gave birth to a child in 1824. A year later, that child having died unbeknownst to Livingstone, Ellen gave birth to a second child—Mabel—whom Devil-Bug sired. In hopes that he can present Mabel as the daughter and heiress of the wealthy Livingstone, Devil-Bug kills the forger Gabriel Von Gelt in order to protect Livingstone's fortune; he slays the confidence-man and cult leader Count Ravoni who has mesmerized Mabel; and he sets the fire at Livingstone's country estate that engulfs the merchant and his adulterous wife

Dora. In a scene reminiscent of the blazing pines in the haunted forest of Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1835 short story, "Young Goodman Brown," Devil-Bug—associated with the antebellum "Black Devil" figure—ignites the pine trees under a blood red sky. Like the mysterious Satan figure who accompanies Young Goodman Brown through the woods, Devil-Bug devilishly celebrates his murderous handiwork: "With every infernal emotion, playing over his chaos of a face, mingled with the gleams of human feeling, for the space of fifteen minutes, dancing, hooting, yelling, or standing like a block of stone, with his arms folded over his breast, Devil-Bug watched the progress of the fire."<sup>79</sup> With Livingstone out of the way, Mabel's identity as Livingstone's daughter established, and the police closing in on Monk-Hall, Devil-Bug performs the ultimate self-sacrifice by standing in the path of a rock he has ordered his two henchmen to roll onto Von Gelt's corpse. Despite the death of the socially ostracized host of Monk-Hall, Devil-Bug has duped all of the city's wealthy citizens by placing his daughter Mabel among them. Just prior to his suicide, Devil-Bug reflects with relish: "Ha! The g-a-l shall roll in wealth, dress in silks an' satin's, and be a lady all her life, old Devil-Bug's daughter, with the mark o' the red snake on her right temple! It's all settled. . . .ho, hoo! Old Devil-Bug's daughter among the grandees o' th' Quaker City!"<sup>80</sup> Like Poe's ostracized Hop-Frog who exacts revenge upon the aristocratic ministers who have insulted his lone love Trippetta, Devil-Bug has the last laugh.

The figure of Devil-Bug points to Lippard's yoking together of anti-slavery and labor reform rhetoric, and also to the gargantuan task Lippard faced in allying the two. Though Devil-Bug is successful in ensuring a future free of racial and economic oppression for his daughter, he does so only through subversion and in the process must deny his daughter her true identity. Despite Lippard's idealistic belief that racial and economic oppression are inextricably linked, his novels are still at times marked by the caricatures and biases propagated by the mainstream antebellum press. And yet unlike many antebellum labor advocates' invocation of "white slavery" that ignored the plight of black slaves, Lippard's appropriation of slavery tropes could lead to sympathetic representations of blacks and sharp denunciations of the Fugitive Slave Law. Stalwart black male heroes do not merely complement their white working-class counterparts as second-class characters in Lippard's novels, but they mirror the white working-class characters in their virtue, in their defense of the weakest members of society, and in their commitment to the value of labor.

## Notes

1. George Lippard, *New York: Its Upper Ten and Lower Million* (1853; reprint, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Literature House/Gregg Press, 1970), 111.
2. *Ibid.*, 111.
3. *Ibid.*, 107.
4. *Ibid.*, 107-108.
5. *Ibid.*, 108.
6. Matthew Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 41-42.

7. *Ibid.*, 41.
8. Lippard, *New York*, 109.
9. *Ibid.*, 118-119.
10. *Ibid.*, 119.
11. *Ibid.*, 120.
12. *Ibid.*, 111.
13. *Ibid.*, 163.
14. David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Gary Ashwill, "The Mysteries of Capitalism in George Lippard's City Novels," *ESQ* 40.4 (1994): 293-317; Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working Class Culture in America*, Revised Edition (Orig. 1987; London and New York: Verso, 1998), 87.
15. Michael Denning reports that approximately 89 percent of northern artisans and 70 percent of northern farmers and laborers were literate between 1830 and 1895. See Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 31.
16. The capacity figure of Day's steam press comes from Hans Bergmann's *God in the Street: New York Writing From the Penny Press to Melville* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 21. The circulation figure for Bennett's *New York Herald* comes from Isabelle Lehuu's *Carnival on the Page: Popular Print Media in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 44.
17. Lehuu, *Carnival on the Page*, 16.
18. See Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (London and New York: Verso, 1990). Saxton locates the working-class politics of the penny press with Jacksonian democracy and white egalitarianism. "Pioneered by artisan printers, these dailies remained predominantly urban artisan in both their readership and their ideological responses" (96).
19. See David S. Reynolds, "Introduction," *The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall*, by George Lippard (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995). "When [*The Quaker City*] appeared in 1845, it sold 60,000 copies in its first year and 10,000 copies annually during the next decade. The most popular American novel before the appearance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), it went through twenty-seven American printings in four years and was pirated in Germany and England, where it appeared under different titles" (vii).
20. Beth Mann, "George Lippard: Germantown Romanticized," *Germantown Crier* 40.4 (Fall 1998): 79.
21. George Lippard, *The White Banner: A Quarterly Miscellany* (Philadelphia: George Lippard Publisher, 1851), 148.
22. Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 97.
23. Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 80.
24. Shelley Streeby, "Opening Up the Story Paper: George Lippard and the Construction of Class," *boundary2* 24.1 (1997): 202.
25. Reynolds, "Introduction," *The Quaker City*, xxxix.
26. Lippard, *The Quaker City*, 389.
27. *Ibid.*, 407; Lippard, *New York*, 80; George Lippard, *The Nazarene; or, The Last of the Washingtons. A Revelation of Philadelphia, New York, and Washington in the Year 1844* (Philadelphia: George Lippard and Co., 1846), 68.
28. For more information about the Brotherhood of the Union and its role in the antebellum land reform movement, see Mark A. Lause, *Young America: Land, Labor, and the Republican Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).
29. David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 73.
30. *Ibid.*, 68.
31. Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 60-61.
32. My claim that "wage slavery" appears twice as often as "white slavery" is based upon an unscientific survey of all extant copies of *Quaker City Weekly* available at the American Antiquarian Society and the Library Company of Philadelphia. Together, these two research sites have a nearly complete run of the newspaper.
33. David Roediger, *Colored White: Transcending the Racial Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 110.
34. George Lippard, "Wages vs. Chattel Slavery," *Quaker City Weekly*, January 19, 1850, 2.
35. George Lippard, *Quaker City Weekly*, September 15, 1849, 2.
36. George Lippard, *Quaker City Weekly*, January 13, 1849, 3.

37. Lott, *Love and Theft*, 79. The suggestion that blacks are scarce in city-mysteries can also be inferred from Michael Denning's claims in *Mechanic Accents* that "no dime novels [were] aimed at Blacks" and that there is "no evidence of any Black readership" (30).
38. George Lippard, *Adonai: The Pilgrim of Eternity* (Philadelphia: published by the author, 1851), 7.
39. George Lippard, *Quaker City Weekly*, June 2, 1849, 2. At the end of his first announcement of the Brotherhood of the Union, Lippard writes: "It has no vague and bombastic titles. It proscribes no race, no sect."
40. Lippard, *The Nazarene*, 138.
41. *Ibid.*, 142.
42. *Ibid.*, 144.
43. *Ibid.*, 143.
44. Harry Hazel, *Big Dick, the King of the Negroes; or, Virtue and Vice Contrasted* (Boston: "Star Spangled Banner" Office, 1846), i.
45. *Ibid.*, 60.
46. David S. Reynolds, "Introduction," *The Quaker City*, xxxviii-xxxix.
47. *Ibid.*, xxxix.
48. Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 263.
49. George Lippard, *The Legends of the Revolution, "1776"; or, Washington and His Generals* (1847; reprint, Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson and Brothers, 1876), 362.
50. *Ibid.*, 361.
51. *Ibid.*, 372.
52. *Ibid.*, 373-374.
53. George Lippard, *Memoirs of a Preacher* (1849; reprint, Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson and Brothers, 1864), 23.
54. George Lippard, "Eleanor; or, Slave Catching in the Quaker City," *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury*, March 5, 1854, 1.
55. *Ibid.*, 44.
56. George Lippard, "Eleanor; or, Slave Catching in the Quaker City," *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury*, February 12, 1854, 1.
57. *Ibid.*
58. Lippard, *The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall*, 2.
59. Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents*, 106.
60. *Ibid.*, 40.
61. George Lippard, "Key to *The Quaker City; or, the Monks of Monk-Hall*," (Philadelphia: Published by the Author, 1845).
62. Lippard, *The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall*, 23.
63. *Ibid.*, 404.
64. *Ibid.*, 37-38.
65. David Anthony, "Banking on Emotion: Financial Panic and the Logic of Male Submission in the Jacksonian Gothic," *American Literature* 76.4 (December 2004): 719-747.
66. Lippard, *The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall*, 155.
67. *Ibid.*, 218.
68. *Ibid.*, 55-56.
69. Dana Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 148.
70. Lippard, *The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall*, 227.
71. *Ibid.*, 105-106.
72. *Ibid.*, 52.
73. *Ibid.*, 227.
74. *Ibid.*, 51.
75. Paul Gilmore, *The Genuine Article: Race, Mass Culture, and American Literary Manhood* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 106.
76. Lippard, *The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall*, 51.
77. *Ibid.*, 367-368.
78. *Ibid.*, 307.
79. *Ibid.*, 521.
80. *Ibid.*, 556.