

# Domestic Troubles: White Mistresses and “Black” Irish Servants in Antebellum Housekeeping Tales

MASUDA Kumiko

## Introduction

In Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1839 short story “Trials of a Housekeeper,” an American housewife laments the incompetence of her Irish cook and Dutch servant girl. They are portrayed as comical and uncultivated creatures; the Irish “experienced cook” has never seen a tin oven, sitting “a-la-Turk in front of it, [and] contemplating the roast meat, with full as puzzled an air as in the morning”; the young Dutch chambermaid, who is also mystified by the modern doorbell, is incapable of bed-making and sweeping correctly.<sup>1</sup> This so-called “servant problem” was obviously a constant thorn of exasperation to many middle-class American housewives of her generation.<sup>2</sup>

As the servant problem piqued these white housewives, depictions of domestic servants appeared in antebellum women’s magazines with increasing frequency. Typically, Irish-born women with stereotyped names such as Bridget or Norah, were described as lacking in intelligence, manners, and common sense.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Northern, middle-class mistresses regarded their Irish domestic servants as “plagues of housekeeping” who were forever inflicting “trials” upon their employers, as the title of Stowe’s short story clearly infers.<sup>4</sup>

According to Blaine McKinley, who focuses his attention on the “housekeeping tales” published between the mid-1830s and early 1850s, these stories were intended not simply to entertain but to teach young middle-class housewives how to obtain, train, and manage faithful servants.<sup>5</sup> While the practical details of housework and servant management were presented by the didactic writers, however, these tales were also laced with discriminatory representations of Irish immigrant women who were forced to endure the ignominy of being “blackened.” Like the enslaved African Americans, the

denigration of Irish servants exaggerated their plight; they were, the writers remarked, extremely impoverished, poorly educated, and different physically and sometimes even racially from white Protestant Americans. All this served to conform the Northern, white middle-class woman to an icon of the antebellum era: the so-called “good housekeeper,” a figure who successfully integrated republican motherhood with Victorian ladyship.<sup>6</sup> Actually a “mistress” as an employer was considered traditionally unfeminine and ideologically anti-republican, but by denigrating the Irish woman, she was able to contrive a self-fulfilling role that transcended the distasteful political ideologies and gender connotations that the mistress-servant relationship implied.

This paper examines two aspects of the housekeeping tales: the depiction of the Irish domestic servant in a racial context, and the gradual establishment of a self-identity for the middle-class mistress. Texts in this literary genre vary from didactic novels to brief magazine sketches. Focusing on their conventional but influential narratives of the “blackening,” the paper concludes by arguing that the rhetoric of their racial profiling might blur the categories of class in the antebellum domestic service and justify middle-class housewives engaged in hiring practice without appearing unfeminine, anti-republican mistresses.

## I

The antebellum housekeeping tales have a standard plot. The characters are each allotted the lucid roles: the young wife as a novice housekeeper, domestic servants as troublemakers, the husband as a “sage advisor” to the wife as well as a “spokesman for the author,” and an older woman as a mentor.<sup>7</sup> This section gives an outline of the standard plot structure of housekeeping tales and the social background of domestic service in antebellum America.

According to the standard plot, in the urban setting, the heroine, a newly married, middle-class white woman who can neither do home management nor see the necessity of it, is the main cause of domestic chaos. The wife’s ignorance or negligence of housekeeping aggravates indolence and unfaithfulness of her servants. Husband, whose message is usually the main theme that didactic writers expect to convey, tries to reason with his wife on the hallowed duties of

women to protect and maintain the home. But the key person is an elderly woman who actually teaches his wife the art and “pleasant effects” of housekeeping. Under her guidance, the young wife is transformed into a good housewife and the family eventually gains domestic tranquility and happiness.

Domestic service was in fact the most common and the largest paid occupation for working women throughout nineteenth-century America. According to Faye E. Dudden, women engaged in the service of domestic labor were often explained as two distinct forms in terms of the shift from one to the other: helps and domestics. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, “helps,” or hired girls having rural virtues of New England, meant young white women who provided their assistance in performing household tasks in a family not their own. This practice offered the girls “good training” for their own eventual household management. Helps, usually nieces or farmer’s daughters in the neighborhood, were regarded not as employees but often as members of the family. They were also considered respectable, faithful, and independent.<sup>8</sup>

Helps lapsed after the market revolution, however. The simple agrarian republic experienced the radical social change and the transition into industrial capitalism in the Jackson years. There emerged a labor market, on which domestic servants were increasingly hired for wages in cash. As the help system was replaced with the wage relationship within a household, domestic service became “degraded, degrading, and unfit” for the native-born white women.<sup>9</sup>

Live-in domestic service nonetheless attracted immigrant women, especially the Irish flooding into the United States after the 1820s. It offered the advantages to those women who had come over mostly alone and needed housing as well as employment.<sup>10</sup> By midcentury the servant class in the Northern cities was largely composed of young Irish women in their teens and early twenties.<sup>11</sup> Hence the new employment relationship formed: mistresses (Northern, urban, middle-class housewives) and domestics (working-class immigrant women). Supervision of servants became, for Victorian ladies whose domicile was supposedly separated from the world of economy and commerce, a “woman’s business.”<sup>12</sup>

## II

In the stories of housekeeping tales, the readers often witnessed fictional mistresses struggling with their “ignorant, careless, impertinent and sometimes dishonest” servants. Because of their responsibility as employers and presumably their cultural and social advantages, heroines, or their mindless behavior itself, were more criticized for their failure in servant management than servants themselves.<sup>13</sup> Wife’s irresponsibility for housework was, of course, inconsistent flagrantly with the “true womanhood,” a predominant value system among the middle classes during the Victorian America.

In terms of the antebellum mistress-servant relationship, housekeeping tales also reflect the fact that Northern, middle-class white women had a fear of committing infidelity to their espousal of the republican ideals as well as the “cult of true womanhood.” Even though domestic service was indispensable for the bourgeois standard of living,<sup>14</sup> hiring a stranger in the household meant an intrusion of the market economy into the “sacred” home. Besides, for those ladies, hiring practice—to become a someone’s “boss”—was not only traditionally unfeminine in attitudes but also ideologically anti-republican in acting as employers.<sup>15</sup> Since republicanism emphasized “equal citizenship [...] and the benefits of economic autonomy,” servitude, or wage labor, was a very threat to the republic. Republican egalitarianism and autonomy of every citizen made many white Americans unwilling or unable to admit class difference in their society.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, white mistresses living in the realm of “bourgeois republic” had to legitimate their employment practice.<sup>17</sup>

As for a contradiction in the domestic wage relationship, didactic writers such as Catherine Maria Sedgwick and Harriet Beecher Stowe found a solution in the “contract.” They believed that the labor contract resolved domestic inequality of the served and the serving roles between the two; for Sedgwick and Stowe, it signified respect for the dignity of labor, and ensured legal autonomy of each party.<sup>18</sup> Yet the contract was thought to be impersonal and heartless, and thus many writers often inscribed “family-like” warmth or sentimentally maternal affection onto such a “cold” contractual relationship in their texts.<sup>19</sup> In presenting what Barbara Ryan calls “sentimental visions of servitude,” fictional

mistresses were vindicated from being an unfeminine and anti-republican employer, but instead could become a benevolent Victorian mother.<sup>20</sup>

If such benevolent motherhood was one of the processes in which middle-class women could make their self-construction, those mistresses also tried to “blacken” their non-native servants, Irish women in particular, and mediated or justified their own status. Mary Cathryn Cain argues that a true republican, who should make her own home a classless space in principle, replaced class difference in a household with race function in the domestic space, by deploying “a New World tradition of racial exploitation.” For Christian women, their leadership over Irish immigrants who were “notionally non-white” meant civilizing black people as their own missionary work. In so doing, antebellum housewives could claim that their hiring practice affirmed their political identification of white citizenry without relinquishing their republicanism and womanliness.<sup>21</sup>

In the antebellum housekeeping tales, the Irish domestic servants were presented generally as “lovable” and humorous despite (or because of) their “uncivilized” blunders.<sup>22</sup> When the middle-class housewives gathered, their conversation often focused on “half a dozen more laughable stories” about Irish cooks, and the followings are only a few examples among many: a Bidy who never learn “the difference between a bean and a pumpkin”; or a Madge, “a short, fat, vulgar-looking girl, with brown hair” who does not understand what her mistress says (“We’ll have some sausages with the tea”), and serves the tea “blended with half-boiled sausages.”<sup>23</sup> Their domestic failures surely evoked laughter. Sarah Josepha Hale’s “Bidy” the Irish cook in *Keeping House and Housekeeping* (1845), too, is typically portrayed. The middle-class couple, the protagonists of her novel, hires Bridget, “a stout Irish woman who counted her beads, made confession of her sins (which were many), and attended mass regularly, and all the wakes to which she was invited.”<sup>24</sup> This cook’s coarse evening meal makes her master-employer run into the kitchen:

There was a pan of bread standing uncovered upon the hearth, mixed neither with buttermilk, yeast, nor water. Its appearance was dingy in the extreme, and its

flavour evinced that coffee or the grounds of coffee were not wanting to give it consistency. What treatise of cookery Bridget had studied, no one could tell. (34-35)

Domestic disorder of Bridget's kitchen perfectly parallels Dinah's chaotic kitchen in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). As Gillian Brown argues, the antebellum kitchens displayed the systems of political economy intersected with domestic economy, and thus the responsible housekeepers observed the significance of kitchen things and sought the best governing system for orderly domesticity.<sup>25</sup> Here the Irish cook produces the same kind of disorderly kitchen as the enslaved black cook Dinah does.

Bridget's blunders—crude manners and cookery, secret drinking from her employer, and “a bit of spree” with some Irish comrades in her employer's house (35)—certainly emphasize her “lovable” savageness as her stereotyped cultural background. When it comes to alcoholism among Irish servants, however, they are bitterly criticized. Not only criticized, but they are literally “erased” from their kitchens. When her master finds Bridget inadmissibly drunk in the kitchen where she has raised the “dreadful havoc,” he sends her away to the police court and thereafter to “the House of Correction for six month” (43). Another “Biddy” in T. S. Arthur's *Tired of Housekeeping* is also discarded after the “second lapse” of drunkenness despite her “good-tempered and obliging” nature.<sup>26</sup> The Irish domestic servants and their traces in the kitchens are obliterated from the texts, and this might allude to an anxiety of middle-class mistresses that they would not like to accept the Irish women as the citizens of the republic. If the Irish immigrant women had participated in the citizenry of the United States, unlike the enslaved African Americans, white mistresses could not have done their hiring practice. Again, their role of acting as bosses to dependent laborers was quite unfeminine, and dependence on hired servants who worked for the mistresses jeopardized their republican identity. By blackening the Irish servants, therefore, writers of housekeeping tales figuratively erased their citizenship. This justified the employment practice and self-identities of middle-class housewives with no relinquishment of their republican sensibilities and Victorian womanliness. Thus in the texts of

housekeeping tales and in the readers’ imagination, Irish domestic servants became “black.”

### III

How then could white mistresses effectively direct servant management without forfeiting their republican sensibilities and Victorian femininity? Sarah Josepha Hale answered this question and instructed her readers in her housekeeping novel. *Keeping House and House Keeping* promised them to be a modern, “good housekeeper.”<sup>27</sup> The novel, which treats the theme of the profession of middle-class wife, follows the plotline very typical of housekeeping tales.

Mary Harley, the fashionably raised, urban middle-class heroine, who leaves her domestic duties entirely to her servants, repeats hiring and firing of domestics. When home life comes to deteriorate due to the wife’s avoiding “drudgery” of housework as well as her servants’ dishonesty and incompetence, William Harley lectures to the wife: “Every married woman in good health should keep her own house: it is a sacred office, from which she has no right to shrink; it is a part of her marriage covenant—it gives dignity to her character” (39). Despite his message, her love of fashion, dislike for domestic economy, and her unsupervised servants lead them to face almost bankruptcy. In order to reform their home life, William entreats Aunt Ruth, a rural New England native, to come and teach his wife. Under her generous tutelage, Mary turns her attention to her own domestic role as a household manager, fully perceiving how foolish she has been a “slave” in the fashionable world (141). She is no longer a former frivolous young bride, but now a woman of “mental and moral graces” (139). Consequently, the story ends in domestic happiness.

The purpose of the novel is clear. As the didactic message addressed by the husband shows, a middle-class housewife should fulfill her domestic obligations to do housework and servant management; otherwise, she might be disrobed of her honorable appellation, the “good housekeeper.” A person who jeopardizes Mary’s place is Mrs. Hopkins, the most peculiar woman among many servants in the Harleys, whose “appearance was masculine in the extreme; she looked competent to navigate a ship, to say nothing of managing a house” (45). She is

neither a type of faithful help nor of blundering immigrant domestic, but a highly paid, malicious housekeeper who entangles the Harleys into a financial corruption. What she does as a housekeeper is, as she boldly declares to her employer, simply to “see to the arrangements of your table, give directions as to the quality and quantity of the food” (47). Mary, totally indulged in the fashionable world and incapable of supervising her servants, loses her control over Mrs. Hopkins. The whole household immediately gives way to the new housekeeper:

*Mistress Hopkins’s place was in the parlour, Dorcas [a servant girl] was to do as she dictated, and Mrs. Harley was indeed to relinquish housekeeping.* (48, italics mine)

The parlor, the most important locale from which a mistress could exert her domestic authority, is taken over by “Mistress Hopkins,” the mannish, blatant stranger. As her unfeminine and extravagant features (“glittering rings on her fingers” [46]) allude to an infringement of “true womanhood” and the republican simplicity, Mrs. Hopkins represents a horror that a housewife can dispossess her of her own domestic “empire” unless she performs her duties.

In order for a novice housewife to learn the domestic lesson, Hale models a figure of ideal white womanhood, by showing that even the most mindless wife such as Mary Harley can be a “good housekeeper”; she can be a good wife, if an elderly woman who possesses traditional republican virtues helps her. Aunt Ruth, who gently begins to teach Mary the “pleasant effects of good housekeeping” to set the house in order (119), discerns the cause of domestic disorder in Mary’s fundamental misunderstanding of housekeeping. Ladies, Mary insists, should “go out a great deal, and be dressed to receive company.” She pleads with Aunt Ruth not to “make [her] a drudge” (110-111). The wise aunt points out against the young wife’s plea, “you confound all good management with labour: this is not correct” (111). She is right, because being a lady “meant *not* doing certain kinds of housework” in the antebellum middle-class society.<sup>28</sup> For Aunt Ruth, household government is precisely management of the servants. She sweeps away the unuseful servants and keeps



good ones (115), “thoroughly [cleans] from the garret to the cellar” with “the aid of a woman who was hired daily” (116), and serves simple but tasty meals (117). These “reforms” cannot be done without a few excellent servants. She teaches Mary, saying, “if you would first learn to direct [Dorcas], I thought she would make you an *excellent servant*”(118, italics mine).

Turning to Bible reading, breaking off her connections with the fashionable society, and taking care of her little son instead of leaving him to her nurse as she did before, Mary drastically changes her whole life style. Now “simply with the assistance” of two faithful helps, Mary is recognized as a “good housekeeper”:

And it was acknowledged, even by her fashionable friends, that Mrs. Harley dressed with elegant simplicity. [Mr. and Mrs. Harley] became quite celebrated, too, for their delightful little parties, which were characterized by liberality without useless profusion. (139)

Citing this passage, Dudden argues Hale’s conclusion that proper servant management promises to combine the two visions of “elegant simplicity” and “liberality without useless profusion”; Hale shows the readers that the “great appeal of managing domestics” is to “enjoy the moral superiority of diligence and the palpable delights of acquisition and display.”<sup>29</sup> I would add, then, that this “simplicity” has a particularly republican sense which populates Hale’s writings. Republican simplicity, as a heritage of New Englanders, was nostalgically celebrated when juxtaposed against fashionable and bourgeois consumption.<sup>30</sup> Hale herself was a Calvinist New Hampshire native, whose religious ideal was associated with egalitarian republicanism.<sup>31</sup> She exalted those provincial values for its simplicity (as embodied in Aunt Ruth, whose domesticity is linked to the rural past and tradition of the early republic), while assailing the “fashionable dissipation” (112) as an excess of conspicuous consumption. Conflating republican simplicity and the “discreet” bourgeois liberality into a compromised yet ideal white womanhood, the novel presents an integrated female figure of Republican mother and Victorian lady: Mrs. Harley as a modern, “good

housekeeper.” As the word “elegant simplicity” connotes the doubleness of femininity and republicanism, supervision of domestics the novel implies is neither unfeminine nor anti-republican. Moreover, with her moral progress, Mary sends Dorcas to the Sunday school and treats this servant girl as her own adopted daughter (134). The woman’s business of housekeeping, therefore, can even be benevolently maternal and moralistic when the family-like domestic service blurs their wage relationship.

### Conclusion

In the age of the “cult of domesticity” during the antebellum era, white middle-class housewives in the North faced the fundamental conflicts. They had to open their home to the forces of economy and commercialism, hire “others” to make them perform the domestic labor, and position themselves in the unaccustomed role as employers, while at the same time protecting their “sacred” domestic sphere. How could they do, upholding republican values and maintaining their own womanliness? White mistresses answered this challenge by racializing the relations of domestic service, in other words, by blackening the Irish servants.

If the antebellum home was the arena for the most immediate contact between women across the class lines, white mistresses tenaciously insisted that class difference was racial one. Thus cultivating the servants in the middle-class household could be viewed as a social mission for white women. But the antebellum middle classes shared another idea that they did not completely negate the class difference but admitted class mobility in their society. According to the Laurie Ousley’s reading of Sedgwick’s 1837 housekeeping novel *Live and Let Live*, household service of the working-class domestics in the middle-class families was considered an apprenticeship. Working-class servants should be “upwardly mobile” in American democratic society where the class was not fixed, and were expected to become good housewives after leaving their service. Mistresses, therefore, were recommended to be adequately trained themselves to teach their servants, and sympathize them, as if they had been their mothers, in their physical and intellectual wants.<sup>32</sup>

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This sentimental vision of maternalism toward working-class women is also evident in Sarah Josepha Hale’s domestic manual and her articles in *Godey’s Lady’s Book*. In the January and March 1858 issues of her magazine, she presented a scheme to help “industrious women” in the Eastern cities and to transport them to the West, where they were wanted as domestic servants, and suggested a nationwide system of “Homes for Domestic Training” in every city where immigrant girls could learn to do housework.<sup>33</sup> What she tried to enunciate was, of course, necessity of their training:

The great fault of the Irish *help* is, that they undertake to do what they have never learned. They will not acknowledge their ignorance; if they would do this, and patiently try to learn, they would soon, with their natural quickness, become good cooks—if they have good teachers. And what privilege and blessing it is to a poor Irish girl, who has only lived in a hovel, with scarcely an article of furniture, save the pot “to boil the praties,” to be instructed in household work! It is really a fortune to her; she can then always have good places and good pay, and soon clothe herself well and lay up money.<sup>34</sup>

Hale articulately tells the possibility that the “industrious” Irish women can be “capable, faithful and affectionate domestics”(123). Nevertheless, the more Hale vindicates “a poor Irish girl” or “the raw Irish girl” with an uncivilized background, the more her ingrained prejudice against them seems to manifest itself in her language. It could be concluded, therefore, that as long as a good education of domestic service for Irish women is “surest proofs that a lady is a good housekeeper”(124), the white woman’s burden discloses its rhetoricity of blackening.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, “Trials of A Housekeeper,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* 18 (January 1839): 4-6.

<sup>2</sup> For the antebellum “servant problem,” see Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1983), 44-71; Hasia R. Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth-Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1983), 88-89.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see the stories in *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, a popular nineteenth-century magazine for middle-class women: Virginia De Forest, “Biddy’s Blunders,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* 50 (April 1855): 329-330; Kate Harrington, “Irish Blunders,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* 51 (September 1855): 247-248; Kate Sutherland, “Cooks,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* 47 (May 1852): 392-395.

<sup>4</sup> See the following “caution,” an actual verbal assault on Irish women, in a housekeeping manual for the readers: “I am aware that it is the fashion with many ladies to disparage Irish domestics, call them stupid, ignorant, imprudent, ungrateful, the plagues of housekeeping. That they are ignorant is true enough; [...] but they are neither stupid nor ungrateful, and if they are taught in the right manner, they prove very capable, and are most faithful and affectionate domestics.” Sarah Josepha Hale, *The Good Housekeeper; Or the Way to Live Well, and to be Well While We Live* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan and Company, 1839), 122-123.

<sup>5</sup> Blaine McKinley, “Troublesome Comforts: The Housekeeper-Servant Relationship in Antebellum Didactic Fiction,” *Journal of American Culture* 5.2 (1982): 36. See also Stacy A. Steinberg, “‘Unexpected and Inconvenient Notice’: Domestic Entrapment and Servant Infidelity in *The Coopers and Live and Let Live*,” *Legacy* 15.1 (1998): 87.

<sup>6</sup> Sarah Josepha Hale, an influential editor of *Godey’s Lady’s Book* and an domestic ideologue, explicates in her domestic manual that “the term *housekeeper* [...] in its American signification” is “the same as Mistress of the family, or Lady of the house”; “the name of a good housekeeper” is bestowed on the woman who learns “Domestic Economy” well and gains the “real knowledge [...] of morals, philosophy and human happiness.” Hale, *The Good Housekeeper*, 117-118 (italics in the original).

<sup>7</sup> McKinley, 39, 40.

<sup>8</sup> Dudden, 4-8; Catherine E. Kelly, *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women’s Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999), 27-28.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Cathryn Cain, “Race, Republicanism, and Domestic Service in the Antebellum United States,” *Left History* 12.2 (2007): 64; Dudden, 7-8; Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 157.

<sup>10</sup> Carol Lasser, “The Domestic Balance of Power: Relations Between Mistress and Maid in Nineteenth-Century New England,” *Domestic Ideology and*

*Domestic Work*, Part 1, Nancy F. Cott, ed. (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1992), 123.

<sup>11</sup> In 1850 Boston, for example, almost 72 percent of domestic servants were from Ireland. Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-1930* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2009), 84; Stansell, 156-157.

<sup>12</sup> Dudden, 155.

<sup>13</sup> McKinley, 36, 39.

<sup>14</sup> Domestic service was almost the only possible help for middle-class housekeeping to make Victorian homes clean, “comfortable,” and ornate. Also, servants in such households functioned as an important icon for bourgeois families to attain social respectability. Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 162; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 42. Because of the removal of work from the home, to “bring up a family in respectability and comfort” was a new concept of domesticity for middle classes. Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of The Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), 155.

<sup>15</sup> Cain, 64-65.

<sup>16</sup> Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*, With a New Introductory Essay (New York: Oxford UP, 1995), xiii; Anna Engle, “Depictions of the Irish in Frank Webb’s *The Garies and Their Friends* and Frances E. W. Harper’s *Trial and Triumph*,” *MELUS* 26.1 (2001): 156.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Sellers uses the term “bourgeois republic” to suggest bourgeois ethos, politics, and culture in the nineteenth century. The confusion of bourgeois “gilded” traits with stoical republicanism is well represented in this oxymoronic term. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford UP, 1991), 364.

Middle-class white men, too, feared for their own identity both as republican citizens and as men when they became wage laborers themselves. In the early republic years, those who sold their labor were regarded as dependent, and thus as not fully autonomous or capable of possessing virtues required of citizens. Because the “dependency” was associated with the status of housewives (who were in legal subordination to husbands), the spread of wage labor in the early nineteenth century threatened men to become “more like women.” But in the tradition “[from] Tom Paine to Abraham Lincoln,” there appeared a powerful discourse that wage labor itself was not degrading; for, a white man held “property in his own labor.” Furthermore, since the idea of separate spheres distinguished women’s “dependent” housework from men’s “independent” free labor, it saved white men from their insecurity of the gender-political identity. David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Revised Edition (London: Verso, 1999), 45; Amy Dru Stanley, “Market Life and the Morality of the Market,” Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and*

*Religious Expressions, 1880-1880* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1996), 84-85.

<sup>18</sup> See Ousley for the analysis of Sedgwick's solution to the class conflict in the housekeeping novel *Live and Let Live* (1837). For Stowe's view on the contract, see Klein. Laurie Ousley, "The Business of Housekeeping: The Mistress, the Domestic Worker, and the Construction of Class," *Legacy* 23.2 (2006): 132-147; Rachel Naomi Klein, "Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Domestication of Free Labor Ideology," *Legacy* 18.2 (2001): 135-152.

<sup>19</sup> McKinley, 37; Barbara Ryan, *Love, Wages, Slavery: The Literature of Servitude in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 1-2.

<sup>20</sup> Ryan, 21.

<sup>21</sup> Cain 66-68. Also, as Anna Engle amply demonstrates, nineteenth-century literary writers contributed substantially to the idea that Irish people were physically, ethnically, and "racially" inferior. From the canonical writers to the sentimental novelists—James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Susan Warner, Maria Cummins, Louisa May Alcott, and so on—did their part. Engle, 52-154.

<sup>22</sup> Diner, 71-72.

<sup>23</sup> De Forest, 329; Sutherland, 395.

<sup>24</sup> Sarah Josepha Hale, *Keeping House and House Keeping: A Story of Domestic Life* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1845), 29. Subsequent references to this novel are cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>25</sup> Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imaging Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 15.

<sup>26</sup> T. S. Arthur, *Tired of Housekeeping* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1842), 71.

<sup>27</sup> For the term "modern" here, I am indebted to Thomas M. Allen's argument that the middle-class home in the antebellum United States was "a place where tradition and modernity intersect in moments of present time." Thomas M. Allen, *A Republic in Time: Temporality and Social Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 122.

<sup>28</sup> Stansell, 159.

<sup>29</sup> Dudden, 163.

<sup>30</sup> American "country girls," or women with rural virtues, were believed to maintain the endowments such as "their truth, household knowledge and economy, health, [...] simplicity, affection, and freshness of impulse and thought." Kelly, 229.

<sup>31</sup> Granville Ganter, "The Unexceptional Eloquence of Sarah Josepha Hale's *Lectress*," *Proceedings* 112.2 (2002): 277; Isabelle Webb Entrikin, *Sarah Josepha Hale and Godey's Lady's Book* (Philadelphia: Lancaster Press, 1946), 1-16.

<sup>32</sup> Ousley, 135.

<sup>33</sup> Sarah Josepha Hale, "The Industrial Women's Aid Association. A Good Work. Who Will Aid?," *Godey's Lady's Book* 56 (January 1858): 82; "The Industrial Women's Aid Association," *Godey's Lady's Book* 56 (March 1858): 276-277.

<sup>34</sup> Hale, *The Good Housekeeper*, 115. Subsequent references to this manual are cited parenthetically in the text.