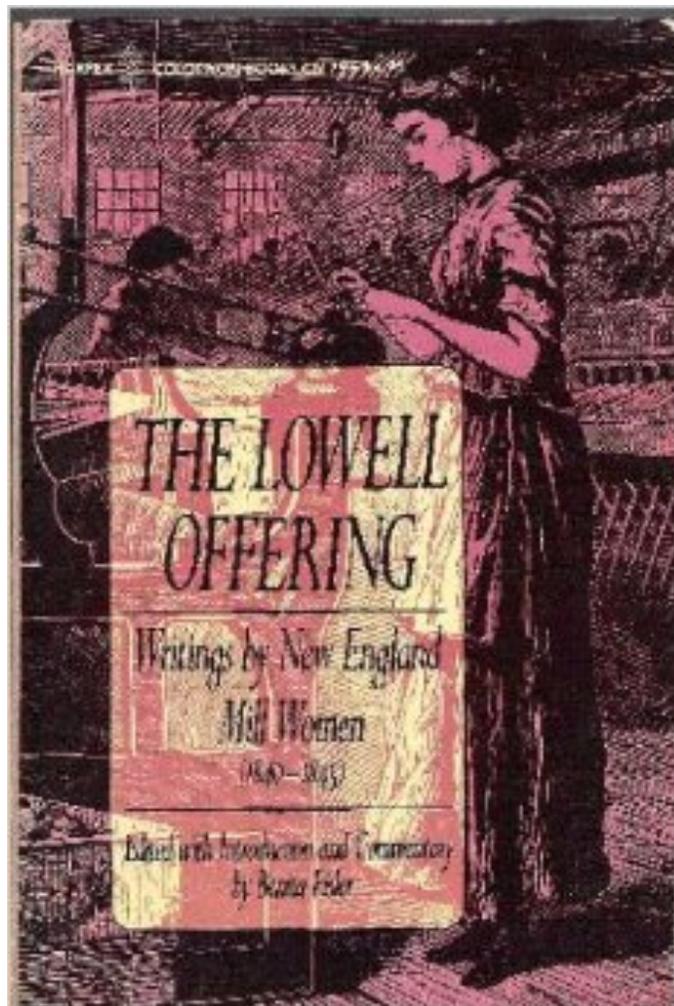


# RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

## Post-Feminist Puritanism: Teaching (and Learning from) *The Lowell Offering* in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

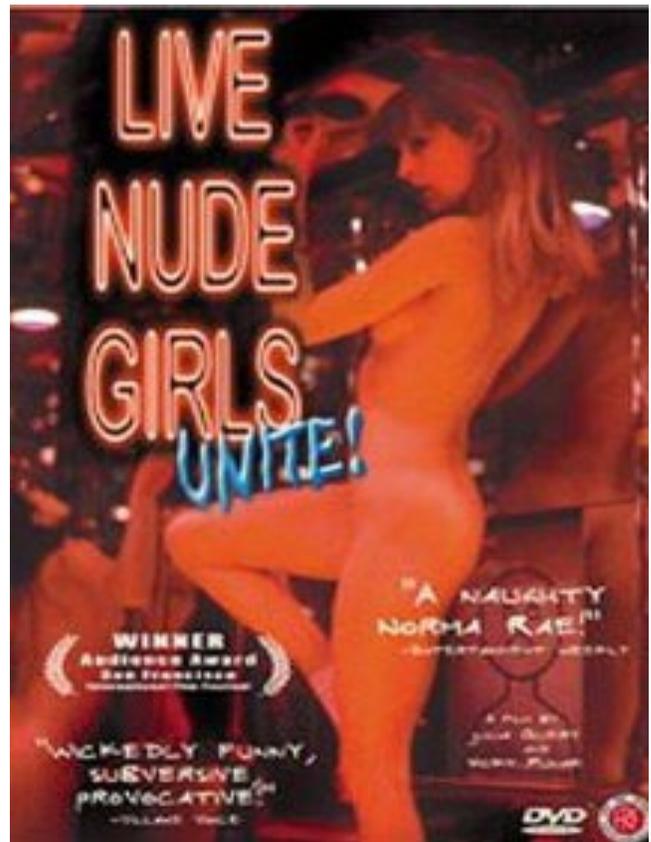
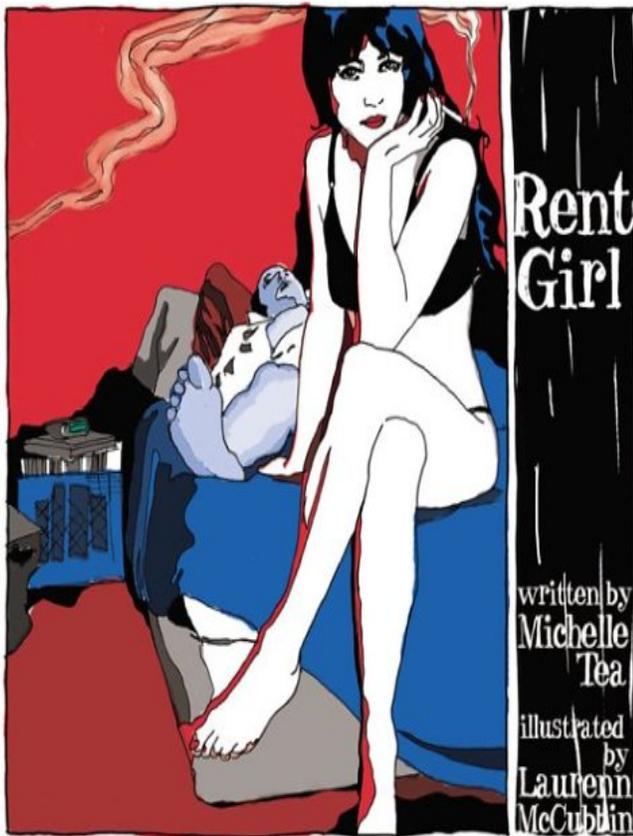
by Sara Appel



In my first semester as a postdoc in the English department at the University of Pittsburgh, I taught an elective course called Women's Work: Gender and Labor in U.S. Literature and Culture to a group of 21 women undergraduates. Apparently the inclusion of both "women" and "gender" in the title was enough to scare off any potential male takers of a class that, inspired by texts like Josephine L. Baker's "A Second Peep at Factory Life" and Herman Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," I'd designed as a literary-conceptual "walking tour" of places where women work. A unit called "In the Office" featured episodes of *Mad Men* as well as Tess Slesinger's "The Mouse-Trap," a 1935 short story about a secretary torn between an office affair

raised college students had in mind for themselves—a science-oriented bunch, at least half were planning on careers in medicine, dentistry, engineering, and environmental studies—they were nonetheless able to relate, in an intimate way, to what volume editor and historian Benita Eisler calls the "transformation of farm girl into factory operative" that grants the *Offering* its narrative momentum and literary-historical importance (43).

Considering the kind of transformations that *Offering* writers focused on in their accounts of mill work and everyday life in the city, perhaps it isn't so surprising that my students felt a sense of transhistorical kinship with a cohort of New England farm girls drawn to the mills by as much as \$3.00 a week—wages that, when the Lowell "experiment" in feminized factory labor began its brief run,



and a strike; in my unit on sex work, "In the Club, Between the Sheets," we read *Rent Girl*, Michele Tea's memoir about working as a prostitute in the early 1990's, and watched *Live Nude Girls Unite!*, which documents the unionization of San Francisco's Lusty Lady peep show club.

Given such provocative tourist destinations, I was a bit surprised by my students' especially enthusiastic reception of *The Lowell Offering: Writings by New England Mill Women*, the primary text I'd assigned for "In the Factory." This volume compiles a number of the most significant contributions to *The Lowell Offering*, a grassroots monthly magazine featuring short stories, opinion pieces, and other literary "offerings" by women who worked in the Lowell, Massachusetts textile mills in the 1840's. Though factory work was not an occupation that my (mostly) middle class-

were the highest paid to women workers anywhere in the United States (15). The excitement of encountering a sea of potential new friends, who "thickened and swarmed around me, until I was almost dizzy," in the dining hall or dorms; hitting the streets for shopping, meetings, or simply to size up the latest fashion trends; resenting the work itself, when socializing seems like a far more compelling way to spend one's time: my 18-22 year-old female college students easily saw their own lives reflected in such experiences, and admired the factory operatives all the more for the proto-feminist "breaking away" from farm fathers that granted their mass pilgrimage to the mills a subversive edge.

Indeed, the Lowell workers *were* impressive, perhaps especially so to young women who tend to emphasize

socioeconomic independence and “self-improvement” goals in their contemporary sense of what it means to be a feminist. With traveling Lyceum lectures featuring speakers as distinguished as Ralph Waldo Emerson, regular evening and Sunday School classes, and access to as many novels as they could stomach—not to mention the international literary acclaim showered on *The Lowell Offering* and its respected editors, including the especially shrewd, business-minded Harriett Farley (herself a former factory girl)—the mill women arguably exhibited a “Lean In” style feminist ethos more characteristic of ambitious 21<sup>st</sup> century college students than most other laboring classes of the time.<sup>1</sup> As one of my students admired in class, “Being a woman, I view these women as courageous, to break the norms of society in order to do something more ‘successful’.”

Consciously capitalist or not, several other students made statements equating progress in women’s rights with the individual right to “make something of oneself,” or feel “productive.” Indeed, so strong was my students’ assumption that social productivity and self-worth go hand-in-hand that, when I asked them to reflect on the relationship between work and dignity in light of Herman Melville’s thoughts on the issue—“They talk of the dignity of work. Bosh... the true dignity is in leisure,” he once quipped<sup>2</sup>—they appeared to channel Ben Franklin’s ghost. Several expressed a strong belief that there is a right and wrong way to spend one’s leisure time, and that the relative dignity of leisure depends on how work-time is spent. “Free time is not dignified if you’re not working hard enough at work,” one commented—an assumption that many immaterial and information-oriented professions, including academia, rely on to guarantee workers’ self-policing of their on and off-the-clock time. Another student was especially vehement on this issue: “There is nothing dignified about a (woman) spending her leisure time drinking or daydreaming, for she has to put her skills into something productive,” she insisted. Yet another felt that leisure time was best spent “volunteering, or enjoying friends and family,” committing one’s time to more-or-less selfless pursuits.

But it wasn’t so much this kind of predictable worship at the altar of neoliberal productivity that caused me to feel a few pangs of disappointment in my students; it was more that most of them took an individualistic rather than social approach to our discussion of dignity. Even while studying a text concerned with legions of women who were compelled to work 12-hour days with only Sundays off—many of whom voiced their desire to be treated more equitably as *group* of laborers—my students appeared to exhibit little sense of either these women or *themselves* as a collective entity. In that respect, their reactions readily exemplified what sociologist Kathi Weeks has discussed as the relationship between the privatization of work (where a job becomes a task to be performed for a wage or salary according to private corporate imperatives) and the internalization of work as an individual, depoliticized experience (3-4). Due further, I would argue, to the emphasis throughout college on readying oneself for entry into the “work force” through personally chosen majors, classes, and professionalizing opportunities, my students’

imagination of work rarely extends beyond a consideration of their own futures. They see themselves as individuals doing or not doing things “successfully” according to the capitalist status quo, not a group inclined to question the desirability and viability of a system that they tend to view in as ahistorical of terms as their admiration for hard-working, industrious 19<sup>th</sup> century women.

Be that as it may, however, it was less difficult than one might expect for my students to take a critically reflective step back from such myopia. Several readily brought a class-conscious eye to their analyses—notably a few women of color, and two white women who openly claimed working-class backgrounds—and they could generally provoke the rest of the class to consider our texts and topics from more systemic perspectives. In her discussion board response to our conversation about dignity, one student zeroed in on the perhaps disproportionate gratitude with which an *Offering* short-story character announces that the three hours between the end of the work day and the girls’ boarding house curfew are “all our own.” “(The girl) puts those three hours on a pedestal,” she commented, “as though they are a gift, not a right.” Another student defined dignity, in light of the mill women’s reality, as “the feeling of worth one gets after receiving a paycheck.” She easily saw the materialist connection between the dignity of work and compensation for the labor expended; moreover, she elaborated, “The only dignity (the women) truly possess lies in the opportunity for a wage provided by these grueling factories, away from the unpaid and mandatory gender labor they already perform on a daily basis.”

***Indeed, the Lowell workers were impressive, perhaps especially so to young women who tend to emphasize socioeconomic independence and “self-improvement” goals in their contemporary sense of what it means to be a feminist.***

This last, especially astute point further complicates what I perceived to be my students’ general sense of *The Lowell Offering* as a proto-feminist text with a “post-feminist” vibe that they found familiar. Considering the “unpaid and mandatory gender labor” that was indeed the quiet backdrop of a mill girl’s working life, I found it especially curious that my 21<sup>st</sup> century students—young women who, in their near-universal disdain for “slut-shaming” and other contemporary anti-woman sentiments, would hardly seem to harbor values one might call puritan—so often reserved their deepest respect for the women represented as especially “virtuous” by *Offering* writers. Heavily influenced by a corporate rhetorical machine intent on convincing farmers that their daughters would be safe and remain “unsullied” when exposed to city life, the image of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century mill girl was the ultimate amalgamation of puritanical norms that dictated what it meant to be both the ideal woman *and* wage laborer. Preferring to hire women culled from what Eisler

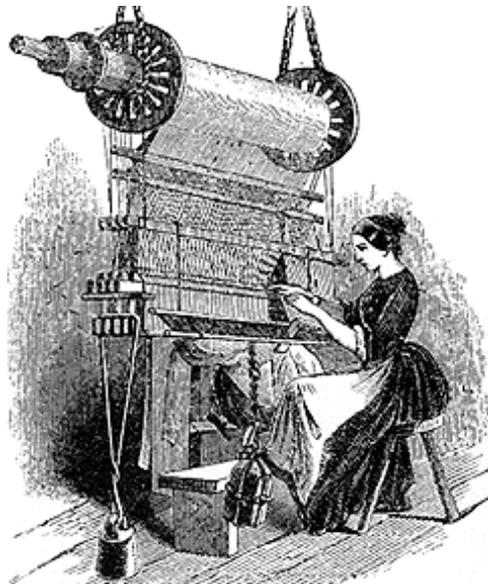
describes as “the dismally paid ranks of rural schoolteachers,” factory owners were quick to portray themselves as benevolent paternalists dedicated to “making a contribution to public morality” by assembling, as one mill owner put it, “a fund of labor, well-educated and virtuous” (16). A worthy operative would not only exhibit qualities associated with explicitly feminine virtue—chastity, meekness, a devotion to family, etc.—but qualities that I would argue rendered the Lowell women, as women, an especially vulnerable version of the “good,” properly exploitable wage laborer to which Max Weber has ascribed a range of characteristics known as the Protestant work ethic: a commitment to relentless, duty-bound work; an ascetic rejection of worldly pleasures and desires; a disdain for idleness; and, as the quality most often celebrated by both *Offering* writers and my students, a spirit of uncomplaining self-sacrifice.

Ever aware that any significant disruption of this image could result in a loss of corporate and public support for their magazine, *Offering* editors and writers took pains to protect it in their literary fashioning of factory operative “characters” (whether fictional or journalistic); yet they also pushed the envelope where they could, with writers like Sarah Bagley and Josephine L. Baker producing exposé-style descriptions of factory life containing both subtly sardonic and (less often) direct critiques of, as Baker put it, “the present system of labor” (Eisler 81).<sup>3</sup> But despite the important political work being done by these and other women labor agitators (including Bagley’s involvement in the Ten Hour Movement, the national campaign for a maximum ten-hour work day), the majority of my students remained less interested than I’d hoped they would be in exploring such aspects of the workers’ experiences in their engagement with the *Offering* defaulting in the final analysis to praising the “positive attitudes” they saw reflected in melodramatic representations of weary yet ever-cheerful girls slaving away at the mills to pay the mortgage on an imperiled family home or keep a younger brother in school.<sup>4</sup>

For sure, factory owners’ initial interest in acquiring a female labor force involved nothing more benevolent than the bottom line. Fearing that the waves of proletarian revolt consuming European factories might tsunami across the Atlantic (and inflict damage on profit margins), Lowell entrepreneurs saw the acquisition of women workers as a way to circumvent having to raise wages and improve working conditions for men. They could pay women half as much, and package their innovative approach to labor as an exciting new opportunity for both independence-minded women and their struggling farm families—a move that additionally provided fresh faces and eager, ready-to-work attitudes when the increasingly questionable “character” of

U.S. industrial capitalism required some damage control. Lowell therefore emerges as a moment where an especially ironic light can be cast on the bitter coupling of feminism with capitalism. A desire for agency, self-sufficiency, and escape from the yoke of farm and fathers led industrious young women straight into the arms of factory fathers who would insist every bit as much, if not more, on a one-to-one correlation between feminine virtue and sacrifice for the “greater good” of corporate enterprise.

Considering this, the celebration of self-sacrifice as virtue by my women students raises questions about the nature of women’s work, voiced from a distant yet palpably present past, in a so-called post-feminist present that many of them take to be a given. How do my students, themselves on the verge of entering the “work force,” view their own relationship to the self-sacrificial spirit demanded of those who would perform “unpaid and mandatory gendered labor” as a 19<sup>th</sup>-century prerequisite to being a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman worker—whatever her wages, salary, or lack thereof? Drawing from the perhaps perverse coupling of two texts that I also assigned in my Women’s Work class—Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg’s bestseller *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* and bell hooks’ classic essay “Rethinking the Nature of Work”—I will spend the remainder of this essay exploring how my students’ ambivalent reactions to *The Lowell Offering* can help us better understand the concept of post-feminism in a world where capitalist productivity imperatives remain intrinsically tied to conservative gender norms. How might the “vibe” of familiarity that my students picked up on between their own experiences and those of the Lowell women speak to the difficulty of defining post-feminism and assessing its value as an idea that assumes we are now “beyond” the need for a social justice framework to address gender inequality? Despite a lived and felt understanding of the ways that women have been exploited within our own patriarchal-capitalist reality and realities of the past, the young women of Women’s Work exhibited a lingering ideological investment in the same traditionally feminine “virtues” that render women workers especially in danger of unjust use as laborers.



DRAWING OF A MILL GIRL AT WORK COURTESY OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

## To What Must We “Get Accustomed”?

One of our most provocative classroom discussions of *The Lowell Offering* involved thinking about what it might mean for women to “get accustomed” to exploitative working conditions. In the second of four fictionalized “Letters from Susan,” recently hired factory operative Susan describes the immediate, damaging effects of mill work on her own body. “When I went out into the night,

the sound of the mill was in my ears, as of crickets," she writes to a friend back home, also mentioning more long-term damage inflicted on other girls: "The right hand, which is the one used in starting and stopping the loom, becomes larger than the left" (Eisler 52). That said, after complaining about her swollen, aching feet and how most workers have to "procure shoes a size or two larger than when they came" after a year or two in the mill, Susan quickly adds, "but I suppose I shall get accustomed to that, too." My students cringed at seeing the deforming nature of this work described in such plain prose. However, in a move that exemplifies what Eisler has called "the peculiarly American desire to ignore the unpleasant" (215), they were more inclined to praise the girls for their resilience and positive attitude in the face of the need to grow "accustomed" to such conditions than interrogate *why* the sacrifice of workers' bodily integrity was integral to the factory system.

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One student characterized Susan's tendency to point out the disadvantages of factory work as a form of "self-pity," emphasizing instead the sunnier side of her letters: "She is proud and happy when she remembers her hard work will pay off in the end." In her discussion board response to "The Affectations of Factory Life," a short story that leaves its mill worker protagonist on her death bed presumably due to the emotional stress involved in covering for her brother's secret class-passing behavior (he's in love with a rich girl) and subjecting herself to suspicion of being a "wicked girl" during his covert visits to her boarding house (Eisler 92), another student praised the sister's behavior as "self-sacrificial and commendable"; she added, "(This story) could be used to demonstrate the strength of women." Considering such sentiments, I had to wonder: were my students locating the mill women's "strength" in their ability to adapt to less-than-ideal working conditions *in spite of* the exploitative conditions to which they were continually subject—to endure work that was nonetheless often essential for their survival and that of their families? Or did they find more inspiration in the women's willingness to smile through *rather than* confront various forms of everyday violence—to not only take on the "unpaid and mandatory gender labor" involved in protecting a lying brother's reputation, but to do so happily, at the behest of the virtue that was a less-than-wealthy 19<sup>th</sup> century woman's only real form of currency?

Though her self-proclaimed "feminist manifesto" encouraging careerist women to "Lean In" to the male-dominated corporate business world may seem to share little generic affinity with a deathbed eulogy to the "sweet silent influence" of a consumptive sister (Eisler 92), Sheryl Sandberg ultimately sacrifices her own critique of the sexist culture she experiences, advising women that

getting "accustomed" or accommodating themselves to dehumanization is still a necessary prerequisite to the success they seek. Sandberg, like my students, is outraged over the "double-bind" many women find themselves in regarding the issue of career success and likability. Successful (read: self-interested) women are not well liked, it seems, while women who "care too much about being liked" are not seen as strong leaders (Sandberg 40-44). And yet, Sandberg's advice to women attempting to "negotiate" higher salaries and more senior positions sounds like something out of a charm school textbook. In addition to advising women to downplay their agency in seeking promotions—going so far as to tell them to "suggest that someone more senior encouraged the negotiation" so as not to give the impression that she came up with the idea *all on her own*—Sandberg, allegedly at the behest of University of Michigan president Mary Sue Coleman, recommends a "relentlessly pleasant" negotiating formula: "This method requires smiling frequently, expressing appreciation and concern, invoking common interests, emphasizing larger goals . . . (Women) need to stay focused . . . and smile" (47-48).

Sandberg advocates a performance of the kind of "mandatory" gendered labor that both my keen student and sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild understand to be an essentialized component of women's on-the-job success. Whether attached to a wage or not, smiling is a form of affective labor that women have been historically conditioned to perform as purveyors of pleasantries.<sup>5</sup> Sandberg's advice additionally underscores how self-sacrificial behavior is assimilated to capitalist imperatives that have little to do with whether or not a woman worker benefits. "Common interests" and "larger goals" comprise a success that, Sandberg continues, "feels better when shared with others" (48). Just as patriarchal norms turned the Lowell sister's sacrifice of her virtue into (ironically) a virtuous act on behalf of the "greater good" of a family in which her brother's humanity assumes a privileged status, capitalism realizes that it can extract more surplus labor when a woman's other-orientation is co-opted on behalf of its own interests, under the guise of high praise for caring more about "the team" than oneself. Aware of the anti-feminist core of what she advises, Sandberg nevertheless forces herself to assume a literary "smile," projecting a front of empty positivity in her writing: "My hope, of course, is that we won't have to play by these archaic rules forever and that eventually we can all just be ourselves," she offers blandly, with no genuine attempt to flesh out changes that may be necessary for such a hope to be realized (49). Sandberg's complacent acceptance of the "women's work" required of her to be successful in corporate business raises further concerns as I think about what awaits my ambitious, millennial women students in their quest for career "success"—a vague concept that they, like Sandberg, throw around with aplomb, assuming its definition to be self-evident. Whether expressed in plastered-on smiles or deformed hands, to what forms of everyday discrimination and damage will they, like Sandberg and the Lowell women, find themselves "getting accustomed" in order to weather the systemic abuses of contemporary capitalism? And will such adaptability be worth it?

Never one for false positivity, bell hooks has also taken Sandberg to task for peddling a brand of “neoliberal feminism” or “faux feminism” that both refrains from challenging the patriarchal capitalist status quo in any meaningful way and elides issues of race, class, and education in its presentation of a careerist “corporate fantasy world” as accessible to all women who want it badly enough. hooks’ October 2008 blog discussion of Sandberg’s influence on contemporary feminism is especially relevant to a consideration of how women’s “unpaid and mandatory gender labor” continues to serve as an insidious means to ensure that paternalistic corporate brotherhood remains as in tact as ever (<http://thefeministwire.com/2013/10/17973/>). Confirming hooks’ insistence that the author of *Lean In* “comes across . . . as a lovable younger sister who just wants to play on the big brother’s team” rather than a “manifesto” instigator capable of motivating “white males in a corporate environment to change their belief system,” part of Sandberg’s project (like that of the consumptive Lowell sister) also involves insulating her many male “mentors”—including Mark Zuckerberg and Larry Summers—from complicity in their maintenance of the same heterosexist business culture that she claims women can change by just “leaning in” more deeply. Summers is never portrayed as anything other than a fatherly, generous advisor; and Zuckerberg, despite being years her junior, is treated with further cringe-inducing deference by Sandberg, who perhaps does practice what she preaches (*act like someone else suggested it!*) by ascribing a number of her most significant “Aha!” moments to his wizened advice rather than her own reflections.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, if Sandberg’s project reveals anything, it’s that her brand of “neoliberal feminism” and what millennials have come to think of as post-feminism are one and the same beast. As hooks points out, Sandberg assumes no responsibility to understand or even acknowledge the entire history of visionary feminist thinking and collective struggle preceding her adoption of the term (*feminist*), a move allowing her to re-brand feminism as merely a project whereby individual women with the will to “rise” adopt strategies to insinuate themselves into the ever-in-tact boy’s club of worldly power and influence. Feminist liberation, for Sandberg, is nothing more than a woman’s ability to actualize “personal fulfillment”—an issue that recalls my students’ tendency to reserve more admiration for the Lowell women who expressed accounts of such fulfillment rather than those inclined to lodge complaints against the factory system (the sullen “self-pitiers”).

But despite her more sophisticated understanding of feminism as a project that ends only with the dismantling of the “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy,” essentialized assumptions about feminine virtue have crept their way into hooks’ discussion of work as well. In “Rethinking the Nature of Work,” hooks asserts that the uncoupling of work from wages is a necessary part of rendering work a more liberatory activity. Her discussion of why a “wages for housework” campaign will never increase the social value of service jobs remains convincing: if care and service work performed for a wage *outside* the home is already treated as all but valueless in capitalist societies, she provokes us to ask, why would we assume that such

work performed for pay *inside* the home would be any more valued? (102) However, her insistence (via the anonymous authors of *Women and the New World*) that we should not “put a price on activities which should fulfill human needs” requires examination in light of my students’ admiration for literary characters who are depicted as the *best* kind of women workers when they put “human needs” before any selfish (or *masculine*) concerns with “price.”

Significantly, perhaps the best place to turn to flesh out such observations—especially in light of Sandberg’s suggested negotiating strategies for women attempting to “get ahead” in male-dominated careers—is to the fourth of fictional Lowell operative Susan’s letters to Mary, her friend back home. The voice of this letter is remarkably different from Susan’s second, where she acquiesces to “getting accustomed” to the aforementioned bodily deformities and other damages of factory life with as much positivity as she can muster. With a few months of factory work under her belt, Susan now addresses Mary with a tone of detached, discerning wisdom in her evaluation of whether several of their friends—including Mary herself—should consider leaving their farm lives for the factory. The gist of Susan’s advice involves the adoption of a negotiating formula that, though spoken from a time when feminist impulses were assumed to be in their infancy, puts Sandberg’s self-effacing faux feminism to shame. Susan instructs each of her friends (Mary, Hester, Lydia, Miriam and Nancy) to measure, with as much accuracy as possible, whether the situation she has going at home will grant her a higher quality of life than what she could get at the factory—with the determinate of this quality of life being whether the conditions inherent to either place afford her more or less agency, respect, and, ultimately, *dignity* as a person in command of her own destiny (Eisler 60-63).

In an especially intriguing departure from hooks’ sense that capitalist wage labor cannot provide a compelling platform for women’s empowerment, one “negotiating strategy” that Susan suggests for her friend Lydia involves using the very existence of Lowell as an *option* for girls like them as leverage with her father: “(Tell Lydia) to consider all things, and before she decides to leave home, to request her father pay her a standard sum as wages. If he will give her a dollar a week I should advise her to stay with him and her mother” (Eisler 62). For better or worse, Susan’s advice to Lydia—an especially subversive request for “wages for housework” in that it involves a daughter standing up to a father with a viable back-up plan already in place if he denies her what she’s asking—would never have come to pass had Susan not experienced the wage she earned in the factory as significant to her self-becoming. As inadequate a symbol of feminist progress as it may have been in terms of “the powerful’s estimation of the value of (women’s) labor” (hooks 104), this wage nonetheless provoked Susan to contemplate what she and her friends might be worth—that they’re worth, at minimum, *more than nothing*, and more on their *own* terms than what their fathers might claim were the factory option not part of negotiations. Though its opportunities remained firmly entrenched within the limitations of the capitalist system, Lowell presented these young women

with a set of terms that they could call their own; and though the tentacles of factory fathers would exercise their broad, suffocating reach as well, one cannot fail to appreciate the effect that the existence of a wage had on these women's awareness that they were, in fact, worth something. To again borrow my smart student's language, earning a wage clued Susan in to the possibility that the "unpaid and mandatory gendered labor" to which she as well as women like Sandberg had "grown accustomed" need remain neither uncompensated nor mandatory.

Far from representing such a radically progressive turn from the world in which Susan underwent her transformation from naïve farm girl to self-assured negotiator, contemporary discourse around gender, work, and the meaning of feminism continues to be dogged by a puritanical celebration of smiling, selfless women and the sacrifices they make on behalf of paternalistic socioeconomic systems. *Teaching*, today and yesterday, is a perfect example of a profession where selflessness-as-virtue has been incorporated into the exploitation of teachers; those who ask for fair compensation are depicted as degrading a form of work that ideally shouldn't have a "price" attached. Though I'm light on solutions to such problems, I think the best direction for innovative thought on these subjects is in work being done by those like Kathi Weeks, who prods us to question why even the most radically anti-capitalist among us, like hooks, still tend to hold work *itself* up as the most righteous form of human activity. Whether coming at the issue from a political position aligned with dismantling or further entrenching the power of the capitalist patriarchy, both hooks and Sandberg romanticize work as the ultimate force through which their respective vision of feminist empowerment will be accomplished. Yet there may be more of a threat to the capitalist status quo contained in Susan's unsentimental recognition that the various forms of manual, care, and service work she and her friends perform on the farm, as well as the more standardized factory work available in Lowell, are *just work*—an activity with a worth that can be measured and compensated for, not the end-all-be-all of personal satisfaction and creative expression. We may never find liberation in "women's work" unless we are willing to question whether *any* work is truly liberating—or at least uncouple our celebration of work from a moralism *about* work that still pervades.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Though many of the Lowell women came to the mills from chronically poor farm families, the backgrounds of a significant number of the farm-girl turned factory-operative workers might better be characterized as petty bourgeoisie than proletariat. To emphasize both real and perceived class differences between the mill women and other working-class laborers—differences that also appear to have something to do with the conflation of U.S. regionalism with gendered and racialized assumptions about certain kinds of "gentile" women—Eisler focuses on the public praise heaped on the women for their New England "refinement," noting how the "first generation of Lowell mill girls was also the last WASP labor force in America" (referring to the girls' eventual replacement by immigrant labor). On marriages that sometimes occurred between woman workers and their male overseers, an operative character from one *Offering* short story concurs with Eisler: "Indeed, in almost all matches here the woman is superior in education and manner, if not in intellect, to her partner" (Eisler 29, 58).
- <sup>2</sup> This quote allegedly came from a letter Melville wrote to his cousin Catherine G. Lansing on Sept. 5, 1877. From *Correspondence: The Writings of Herman Melville*. Chicago: Northwestern University Library, 1993. 602-671. Print.
- <sup>3</sup> A few such works by individual *Offering* writers include: Baker's "A Second Peep at Factory Life" (Vol. V, 1845); Bagley's "Pleasures of Factory Life" (Series I, 1840—which snarkily begins, "Pleasures, did you say? What! Pleasures in *factory* life?"); Betsey Chamberlain's "A New Society," an especially powerful manifesto-style, almost utopian call for conditions like an 8-hour work day and "that every father . . . who neglects to give his daughters the same advantages for an education as his sons should be expelled from this society, and be considered a heathen" (Vol. I, 1841); and even some of editor Farley's later writings, where she becomes increasingly frustrated with corporate mistreatment of women operatives, including editorials on "The Ten Hour Movement" and "Two Suicides" (the latter being a scathing indictment of the factory system's culpability in the suicide deaths of two operatives—"Are we guilty?," she asks. Vol. V, 1845; Vol. IV, 1844).
- <sup>4</sup> A few stories of this disposition being: Bagley's "Tales of Factory Life, No. 2" (Vol. I, 1841); Farley's "The Affections Illustrated in Factory Life" (Vol. IV, 1843); and an unknown author's "Susan Miller" (Vol. I, 1841).
- <sup>5</sup> For more of Hochschild's thoughts on smiling as affective or emotional labor, see "Exploring the Managed Heart," the first chapter of *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1983. 3-23. Print.
- <sup>6</sup> In perhaps the most unforgivable of these moments of deference, Sandberg allows Zuckerberg the last words in her chapter on "Success and Likeability," with her own final contribution being little more than a head-nod accompanied by, I'm sure, a pleasant smile: "He said that when you want to change things, you can't please everyone. If you do please everyone, you aren't making progress. Mark was right."



LOWELL, MASS. MILLS  
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