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What We Do Expect the People Legislatively to Effect

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Women

and the

Unstable

State in

Nineteenth-Century

America

Edited by Alison M. Parker and Stephanie Cole

Introduction by Sarah Barringer Gordon

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Chapter 3

“What We Do Expect the People Legislatively to Effect”

Frances Wright, Moral Reform, and State Legislation

ALISON M. PARKER

From the 1820s through the 1840s, Frances Wright explored the relationship between individual conscience, legislation, and the effort to create a better society. Wright's solutions for American social problems were bold: she created a radical antislavery commune and supported mandatory boarding schools for all children. Her critiques of the institution of marriage, rejection of organized religion, support for racial miscegenation, and arguments against stigmatizing children born outside of marriages as “illegitimate” were even more disruptive and unconventional.

Yet her ideas did not simply challenge mainstream values, for she also drew on popular concerns and priorities of the Jacksonian era. Her interest in utopian experiments, for instance, reflects their wider popularity; there were more than one hundred secular and religious utopian communitarian living experiments in the first half of the nineteenth century. Her own antislavery commune at Nashoba, Tennessee (1825–29), moreover, was based in part on a Christian, perfectionist model of reform whereby individuals' values would be transformed by moral example. Experiments like Nashoba, she believed, would lead Americans to ensure social justice by eventually passing new antislavery laws at the state level.¹

Wright's career as an antebellum female moral reformer illustrates the instability of the political moment and the development of a unique social vision. Her embrace of state legislation and the Working Men's Party in New York shows one woman's comfort with political debates and campaigns. But Wright's ideas about government (both state and national) were complicated. She was persuaded by the Jacksonian vision of a democratic state that

represents and is formed by the people. Viewing the federal government as more distant and less responsive to the average citizen, Wright supported legislation at the state rather than national level. Other antebellum activists, such as perfectionists and many women reformers, began their careers ignoring the state as much as possible, believing that moral suasion would change society; by the 1840s they had generally shifted toward advocacy of *national* legislation to promote their goals. Although Wright was attracted to perfectionist ideas whereby superior leaders would determine what was morally right—what the people need—and then set a moral example that would produce change, for Wright this process did not translate into support for national legislation that could mandate change before the people were ready for it.

Wright's ideas about reform, legislation, and state power can tell us much about the Jacksonian era. But neither Wright's ideas about the use of state legislation nor her similarities and connections to her world have been fully analyzed. Ignoring her pragmatism and popularity, most historians have dismissed her ideas as too radical to be of any broader historical relevance. Her biographers have focused on the drama of Wright's volatile relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners. They have also lamented the discontinuity between her public speeches against marriage and male tyranny and her own unsuccessful marriage leading to her loss of property rights and legal autonomy.²

Although many of her ideas were indeed radical, I argue that Wright was less of an aberration of the antebellum era and Jacksonianism than has been thought.³ In fact, Wright embodied the spirit of boundlessness and the volatility that characterized antebellum America. She embraced, exploited, and sometimes personified the Jacksonian era's weak federal government, its stronger state and local governments, its political conflicts and social turmoil, as well as its democratization and visionary plans. Her emphasis on state rather than national legislation found a sympathetic audience with Jacksonian democrats who wanted to limit the power of the federal government. Widespread utopian ideals and communes, along with a radical working-class movement, inspired Wright's plans for Nashoba and her subsequent career as a lecturer. Wright's plans reflect the openness of her time. In particular, her calls for universal equal education were given serious consideration by the working classes and reformers during the Jacksonian era. Even her ideas about race were embedded in her time. Although she supported miscegenation, Wright's language and actions betrayed her commonality with most white Americans who believed in a racial hierarchy in which whites were, in

her words, "the master race."⁴ The social turmoil of the 1820s and 1830s gave her the opportunity and encouragement to plan her utopian society at Nashoba, promote education reform legislation at the state level, launch lecture tours, and openly participate in the political struggles of the era.⁵

Wright's political ideas about the centrality of the Constitution and the meaning of nationhood were shared by other antebellum Americans.⁶ Moreover, her notions about moral suasion and the role of legislative reform reflect the nature of governmental power, at both the state and federal level, as it evolved. Specifically, during the early and mid-nineteenth century, the federal government was not as large, bureaucratic, or pervasive as it became by the twentieth century but was still new and decentralized.⁷ After the American Revolution, rather than creating an administratively centralized state, the founders of the New Republic set up a system whereby politics and legislation became the means by which public welfare was debated and decided: "U.S. citizens refuse[d] to designate any concrete body as sovereign, but instead attribute[d] sovereignty to the law and the Constitution."⁸ Thus, the Constitution allowed power to be located in politics and state laws rather than in a strong central state.⁹ For these reasons, Wright consistently invoked the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence as her models for significant change.

Although Wright never met with approval from traditionalists, it was not until the tenor of the age became more ordered and conservative that she was finally marginalized.¹⁰ A consolidation of Protestant conservatism began in the 1830s; the 1840s and 1850s brought a decline in utopian socialism, a new concentration by workers on "pure and simple" unionism, and increased immigration and urbanization. As the nature of American society and politics began to change, more Americans joined with the already alarmed conservatives to push for governmental intervention and assistance at the national level.¹¹ Significant moves toward consolidation and ordering of the central government occurred during these decades.¹² As radical and reform movements declined, and as the central state gained greater stability, the possibilities for someone like Frances Wright diminished. Wright drifted into obscurity as early as the late 1830s, finding it impossible to attract large audiences or attention from the public and media.

Wright's challenges to America's laws and politics derived from her profound faith in their potential to represent the will of the people. The structural flexibility and democratic potential inherent in the Revolution and its founding documents inspired Wright. *Views of Society and Manners in America*, a travel account of Wright's first visit from Scotland to the United States

in 1818, lauded America's revolutionary possibilities. From her original vantage point as a European intellectual and radical, and because of her sympathy for the democratic ideals of the French Revolution of 1789, Wright was deeply impressed by the promise of the American Constitution. She adopted America as her country because it had the necessary elements to make up a successful government by and for the people: "[W]e should distinguish the advantage we possess over other nations, to be—not that our form of government is republican, or democratic, or federative, but that it possesses the power of silent adaptation to the altering views of the governing and the governed people."¹³ Wright understood a main tenet of the constitution: the central and state governments existed purely as the representatives of the will of the people, acting only on their behalf and in their interest.¹⁴

In a later speech of 1836, Wright elaborated on what she saw as the crucial differences between England and the United States. In England, Parliament had too much power and control over the people. In contrast, the American Congress was limited by the constitutional principle of states' rights. The citizens of each state could determine the laws that would effect them. (Taking this further, Wright agreed with Jacksonian political activists who wanted United States senators to be selected directly by all citizens in each state in order to ensure that they represented state rather than national interests.) In contrast to England, she noted that the founders of the United States had devised a more balanced organization of their political system:

America's first political fathers had evidently deeply studied the machinery of British government, and distinguished where the shoe pinched. The Puritans of New England . . . determined to establish popular power in its substance; and to them we are indebted for that first organization or systematic division of the parts of government, together with the sectioning of the territory so as to facilitate the action of the population, which, in its whole, will constitute, in the progress of its development and sound action, the definitive state of human society.¹⁵

The division of the country into separate states, she argued, brilliantly ensured a balance of powers. The right to vote and participate in politics was a vital way to restrict the power of the central government. Wright celebrated Americans as "a people voluntarily submitting to laws of their own imposing, with arms in their hands respecting the voice of a government which their breath created, and which their breath could in a moment destroy!"¹⁶ The Constitution could become the basis for more profound and radical change

because it guaranteed that the people could both amend it and pass new laws in their own states.

When Wright returned to the United States in the company of her friend General Lafayette on his triumphal tour of 1824, her observations of conditions across the country left her disappointed with its failure to achieve its promise. In particular, she criticized those state laws that affected women and slaves. Most laws that affected women, she noted, were not the work of this newly liberated people but were instead based on English common law. Asking Americans to rid themselves of the evils of the English legal system, she implied it had been thoughtlessly adopted in full: "Every part and parcel of that absurd, cruel, ignorant, inconsistent, incomprehensible jumble, styled the common law of England . . . is at this hour the law of revolutionized America."¹⁷

An early proponent of the notion that marriage was a form of coercive bondage for women, Wright tried to create an ideology for and a language adapted to the needs of women.¹⁸ One of her principle objections was that married women were denied the right to inheritances, wages, and joint guardianship of their children. Like many antebellum reformers, Wright focused on marriage because it was simultaneously a legal institution, a religious commitment, and a powerful site of human emotions. Organized religion was irrational, she argued, and helped prop up the unfair legal institution of marriage. Wright favored replacing current laws on marriage and illegitimacy (equally biased against women, in her opinion) with what she termed nonlegalized bonds of "generous attachments."¹⁹ Partnerships based on mutual respect as well as love, she insisted, need not be officially regulated or sanctioned by either legal or religious authorities.²⁰ By attacking organized religion and the revivalism sweeping the United States, as well as by attacking marriage and prescribed sex roles, Wright epitomized to her critics the dangerous instability of her era.²¹

But marriage was not the only problem. Wright found that the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, its promises of equality and freedom, were blatantly denied to all black people, most glaringly to those who were enslaved. Like Christian perfectionists, Wright believed in moral suasion and did not seek the immediate legal emancipation of all slaves. Whereas more mainstream antislavery supporters used legislation and politics, antebellum radical perfectionists were convinced that they should end slavery through the tactics of education and persuasion rather than through force or legislation.²² Perfectionists argued that since individuals were free agents in the

deepest sense, they could immediately improve. They could virtually perfect themselves through an act of will and eventually make their society perfect as well. Based upon their Christian certainty in the possibility of individual perfection, they believed that by appealing to fellow Americans' moral consciences, they could convert those Americans (including slaveholders) into abolitionists who would free their slaves.

Wright was a part of this milieu and had much in common with these religious thinkers conceptually, for she drew on the perfectionist belief in the need for individual moral change before broader social change would be possible. Yet she departed from them substantially in ideology by opposing what she perceived to be the irrationality and emotionalism of the Second Great Awakening of the 1790s through the 1830s.²³ Wright separated the primacy of individual conscience from the process of religious conversion and, instead, appropriated moral certitude for secular causes. In this case, her secularism is what distinguishes her; nearly all other perfectionists were religious activists. Indeed, to her contemporaries, Wright was best known for her assaults against the "priestcraft" and her rejection of organized religion, which she considered a tool to subdue the mass of the population, particularly women.²⁴ She challenged conventional thought by arguing that religion was merely a belief, while virtue was a practice, and that the two were not inherently connected.

So like perfectionists, she pinned her hopes on the persuasive power of moral example, yet she applied it in a unique way—to an antislavery commune. Once white southerners objectively observed her antislavery experiment, they would see that slavery was unnecessary. She concluded that the only effective way to produce change was to act upon her moral beliefs and expect other citizens eventually to join her. Speaking of herself in the third person, Wright explained that she "had observed that the step between theory and practice is usually great . . . mankind must reasonably hesitate to receive as truths, theories, however ingenious, if unsupported by experiment. . . . She determined to apply all her energies . . . to the building up of an institution which should have those principles for its base, and whose destinies, she fondly hoped, might tend to convince mankind of their moral beauty and practical utility."²⁵ She admitted that such an experiment was "opposed to all existing opinions and practice," yet hoped that her antislavery ideas would seem less threatening and more of a real possibility for the future if she tried to enact rather than just assert them.²⁶

Although she insisted that "the founder of Nashoba looks not for the conversion of the existing generation; she looks not even for its sympathy," she

clearly anticipated that in spite of any initial resistance, people would follow her lead and move toward antislavery once they saw the success of her experiment. While not necessarily expecting sympathy, she explained that she expected tolerance from a country that guaranteed free speech. Nashoba, she insisted, was founded "not in a spirit of hostility to the practice of the world, but with a strong moral conviction of [its] superior truth and beauty."²⁷

During the 1820s, when Wright planned and established her experiment, most emancipation societies were still in the South, not the North, and attracted those white planters who questioned slavery as a permanent labor solution for the South. Colonization, or the removal of blacks from America, was promoted as the ultimate solution to the problem of slavery. Yet since the Revolution, southern antislavery ideas had not translated into widespread emancipation or colonization for slaves. In 1825, Jefferson Davis's older brother, Joseph, met Wright in Natchez, Mississippi. As she shared her vision of Nashoba with him, she attempted to learn how to run her commune as a farm with slave/farm workers who would earn their own freedom. Davis listened to Wright's antislavery ideas with interest; while he determined to keep plantation slavery, he aspired to make it both profitable and more humane. His paternalistic plantation was a financial success, yet he never once emancipated any of his slaves.²⁸

Wright had initially wanted to try her experiment in race relations with free blacks and whites, but since few free African Americans had joined her at Nashoba, she explained that she had decided to use enslaved African Americans instead. Wright shared the conviction of most white southern reformers that slaves could not immediately be freed because they needed to be schooled in liberty.²⁹ Even if some planters were ready, she claimed, slaves themselves were not prepared for freedom. "Human enfranchisement," she explained, "is but another name for civilization." Slaves, therefore, would have to be civilized before they were freed.³⁰ Freed slaves could not automatically be given political citizenship, in her estimation, because the first generation would lack moral and mental elevation. An "apprenticeship" like that at Nashoba would teach them to be civilized. They would be guided, Wright determined, by the white "master race" which was "superior in knowledge" and "therefore necessarily the sovereign disposer of their destinies."³¹ Since she agreed with slaveholders that slaves were "unfit" for free citizenship, even education and training at Nashoba could not significantly improve the existing generation. Once her slaves were ready to leave Nashoba, she acknowledged that they would have to be colonized: "the founder judged that she should best conciliate the laws of the southern states and the popular feeling

of the whole union, as well as the interests of the emancipated negro, by providing for the colonization of all slaves emancipated by the Society.”³²

Wright’s acceptance of and immersion in the political philosophies of her era shaped the expression of her radical hope for change. Americans could hear her critiques because she often spoke in terms they understood, using concepts they shared. In an article entitled “Nashoba: Explanatory Notes,” written in 1827, Wright outlined her vision of her antislavery experiment. Consistent with her support of states’ rights and in an overture to white southerners, Wright argued that slavery could only be abolished by “the future decision of our southern fellow-citizens themselves acting constitutionally within their own states’ jurisdictions.”³³ Significantly, Wright noted that southern slavery was (and should remain) “removed . . . by good sense and by compact” from the sphere of national legislation. Therefore, it would be impossible to impose antislavery on a section of the country. She explained: “I have stated southern slavery to be, at this existing point of time, without the pale of effective and beneficent legislation. . . . [B]efore legislation may be effective and beneficent in its action, public opinion must be in unison with its statutes. . . . Where and when constitutional law doth not speak, but the public mind is prepared to make it speak, the people have to supply its deficiencies or to rectify its errors.”³⁴ Because each slaveholder must come to understand that slavery is wrong, only legislative change at the state level would show that “human opinion” had changed and was now “righteous.”³⁵

Since the end to slavery was an issue that would be decided by white southerners, she believed that she herself had to become a “southern citizen, and, even, a slaveholder” in order to effect change.³⁶ Wright declared herself unwilling to violate existing state laws on slavery: “As it was the object of the founder to attempt the peaceful influence of example, and silently to correct the practice, and reach the laws through the feelings and the reason of the American people, she carefully forebore from outraging any of the legal provisions in the slave state in which she ventured to attempt her experiment, or those of any of the slave states with which she is acquainted.”³⁷ Before beginning her experiment, therefore, she carefully read “all the laws of the slave states, bearing directly upon the labor and the government of the negro.”³⁸

The suspicions of Wright (and other Americans) about the efficacy of federally mandated change twisted the radical possibilities of her Nashoba experiment. Because the “public mind” must make its own laws, a national emancipation imposed on the South, she believed, would lead to violence.³⁹ Indeed, the tensions Wright outlined between states’ rights and the central government were not fully resolved by the Constitution. As historian John

Murrin notes: “Vigorous policies by the central government always threatened to expose the underlying differences that could still tear America apart”⁴⁰ Wright herself “readily admitted” the “absurdity, the danger” of immediate emancipation.⁴¹

Wright’s own arguments sometimes implied that experiments like Nashoba could have little effect. Specifically, she suggested that slavery would not cease until the price of cotton dropped: “But when the bankrupt fortunes of the southern planters shall have put an end to the *internal slave trade of the United States*; and Maryland, Virginia, and Kentucky, the *Guinea* of the states farther south, shall have lost their *last staple commodity of profit*, the principles avowed at Nashoba may then attract the national attention.”⁴² Such contingencies—which depended on fundamental economic changes—left a fairly marginal role for the example of Nashoba and moral suasion more generally.

Once the profit motive for continuing slavery was removed, Wright predicted that southern planters would abandon colonization schemes and favor the emancipation of slaves within the borders of the United States. It would take this scenario, where colonization of blacks would be unnecessary, to make the example of Wright’s experiment at Nashoba truly useful. Thus, in the same 1827 “Explanatory Notes,” when Wright envisioned this future, she found it possible to step back from her contention that reformers should not offend the sensibilities and laws of the white South. Although she reiterated that “the emancipation of the colored population cannot be *progressive thro’ the laws*. It must and can only be *progressive through the feelings*,” she continued with a surprising conclusion that “through that medium [the feelings], be finally complete and entire, involving at once political equality and the amalgamation of the races.”⁴³

Whereas Wright’s ideas about immediate emancipation and colonization matched those of some southern slaveholders, her open advocacy of miscegenation makes Wright quite unique in her time. The great majority of whites were obsessed about maintaining clear distinctions between the races and insisted on labeling as “black” all children who were the products of interracial unions (often in the form of the rape of black female slaves by their white masters and overseers).⁴⁴ Wright’s support for racial amalgamation in her “Explanatory Notes” led to great public censure and attacks upon her sexual morality and upon Nashoba, but she did not flinch.⁴⁵ Insisting that the already large number of mixed-race children showed how easily miscegenation could take place, she believed that “the olive [branch] of peace and brotherhood [will] be embraced by the white man and the black, and their

children, approached in feeling and education, gradually blend into one their blood and their hue.”⁴⁶ Wright’s free-thought compatriot, Robert Dale Owen, continued this argument in a later article on Louisiana quadroons where he pointed to the hypocrisy of white Southern men who kept black mistresses (and had children with them) while also having white wives and owning slaves.⁴⁷ The eventual erasure of visible racial differences into one new race of “Americans” would, Wright claimed, finally end the divisive issue of race in the United States.

Wright further isolated herself from mainstream society and made it difficult for Nashoba to be accepted by declaring in her “Explanatory Notes” that “without disputing the established laws of the country, the institution recognizes *only within its bosom*, the force of its own principles.” Specifically, she announced that “the marriage law existing without the pale of the Institution, is of no force within that pale.”⁴⁸ Wright wanted to affirm sexual experience as a source of human happiness, even *outside* of marriage. By defying marriage laws, she most certainly disputed “the existing laws of the country.” Her willingness to defy state laws (while ultimately hoping to change them) drew on the intellectual tradition of Scottish common sense philosophy, which stressed that the only valid laws were those that upheld each individual’s moral sense.⁴⁹ Problematically, whereas she summarily rejected the arbitrary power of marriage laws at Nashoba, she accepted the arbitrary power of slavery laws. It is difficult to reconcile her uncompromising, assertive, and openly defiant stance on marriage with her explanations for why she became a slave owner and did not, for example, buy slaves and immediately free them. The difference seems to be that, in Wright’s mind, white women were already prepared for their freedom, whereas black slaves were not. Yet in practice, Wright found it difficult to flaunt laws affecting women—even those she disagreed with. When she found herself pregnant, she felt obliged to enter the institution of marriage although she understood clearly the risks involved for herself and her property.⁵⁰

Wright’s observation that the “step between theory and practice is usually great” certainly held true for her own experiment at Nashoba as well as her later decision to marry.⁵¹ Both practically and ideologically, Wright and Nashoba had many flaws. In practice, Wright was not prepared for the difficulties of setting up and maintaining a utopian experiment.⁵² Neither a farmer nor a businessperson, Wright had hoped to create a communal farm that would sell its excess crops. Neither her black slaves nor the white idealists who joined her at Nashoba were trained or prepared to do this work. Ill-

ness, malnutrition, and economic crisis were the results. More significantly, Wright exploited her slaves at Nashoba; whereas the white residents could exempt themselves from physical labor by contributing money, the labor of the slaves was required. Overworked, disciplined, and still enslaved, they were unconvinced by Wright’s utopian promises. Furthermore, she adopted some of the American slaveholders’ most damaging customs. Wright had agreed in principle that ostensibly intractable slaves could be punished by their white managers. When she and Robert Dale Owen exercised the privileges of their race and class by leaving for a trip to Europe to recover her health and gain more converts, two female slaves were whipped while they were away.⁵³ Wright’s free utopia became, in the words of one biographer, “deeply inhumane.”⁵⁴

Wright later identified her problems at Nashoba with her optimism and lack of information, claiming that she was “ever prone to underestimate difficulties . . . partly (and there I believe lay the main root of the error) to my then imperfect acquaintance with the character and condition of the American people, and to my ignorance of the immense distance between the theory of American government and its development in practice.”⁵⁵ The United States was farther from its revolutionary potential than she had hoped—in practice, her exploitation of her slaves demonstrates that she was as well. Furthermore, her white neighbors in nearby Memphis, Tennessee, were actively hostile and tried to sabotage Nashoba’s chance of success by publishing frequent attacks on it in the local newspapers. When a white man and a free black woman at Nashoba decided to live together openly as a couple, the fervor of the attacks against Wright and her community became overwhelming.⁵⁶ After only four years, Wright dissolved the experiment in 1829 and fulfilled her promise to colonize the former slaves; she accompanied thirty-one freed slaves to the new black republic of Haiti, where they were offered asylum and liberty, as well as cabins, gardens, water, tools, and provisions.⁵⁷

In retrospect, Wright decided that she had begun her experiment “at the wrong end.” It was the “degradation of [all] human labor” that was the real problem. Slavery was simply the institutionalization of that degradation; it would be eliminated once all labor was elevated and rewarded.⁵⁸ Wright’s support for colonization was connected to this idea. By the 1830s and 1840s, she imagined that the removal of black slaves could make way for the elevation of manual labor by white agricultural workers. The “African race” would be “leaving behind it a country prepared for facile cultivation by the white race.”⁵⁹ Less crowded conditions in the North would raise the status of

industrial laborers, while white workers who moved south would benefit from healthy farm work. Just as her support for miscegenation reflects both her radicalism and the experimentation and boundlessness of her age, Wright's acceptance of racial hierarchies reinforces her connection to racially divisive Jacksonian politics. Although she did not pursue this particular proposal, it shows how and why Wright could comfortably turn her attention from slavery towards the plight of white urban working classes as Nashoba fell apart.⁶⁰

Thus, in the late 1820s and then throughout the 1830s, the problems and needs of the white working classes were at the forefront of Wright's concerns.⁶¹ The Jacksonian era's political volatility, economic boom and bust, class conflict, and changing concepts of citizenship (especially those pertaining to race and to a broadening of democracy in the United States) were all fuel for her fire.⁶² Wright became the first woman in the United States to speak to large audiences of men and women on secular and political topics. Her public speeches were the most significant source of her fame; her most devoted followers were working-class men. Thousands of people came in part for the novel and "sensational" phenomenon of hearing a woman speaker and in part because of the attraction of her utopian rhetoric and free thought. Speaking to the fears and desires of those artisans and mechanics whose skilled jobs were threatened, Wright was rewarded by strong support from the working classes who often made up the majority of the audience at her speeches. Wright criticized lawyers and members of the clergy for undue influence. This critique was likely to be viewed favorably by her working-class audiences.⁶³

Placing her hopes in the process of democratization, she argued for a politically involved citizenry.⁶⁴ During her lectures, Wright would flourish a copy of the Declaration of Independence, maintaining that it and the Constitution provided a practical basis for changing the nation.⁶⁵ Her references to the Constitution enabled Wright to draw upon a long-established tradition. In the early republic, as historian John Murrin points out, both Federalists and Antifederalists "accepted the Constitution as their standard, a process that kept the system going and converted its architects into something like popular demigods within a generation."⁶⁶ Similarly, in her very first public address before a mixed audience of men and women at Robert Owen's New Harmony society on July 4, 1828, Wright reminded Americans of their revolutionary heritage.⁶⁷ Appropriating the meaning of the Fourth of July, the celebration of which many Americans considered "a reenactment

of republican faith," Wright warned that the Revolution had been left incomplete.⁶⁸ She encouraged her audiences to work for profound social change through constitutional means—the ballot box and, particularly, new state laws.⁶⁹

Legislation at the state level, always part of her antislavery solution, now became a more vital part of Wright's plans. Legislative reform was consistent with her continued insistence on the need for individual moral transformation. If legislation was passed in any state, she believed, it would be because the people had taken the necessity of change to heart. Enacted legislation directly reflected the changed beliefs of the citizens. She urged her audiences to "firmly [adhere] to the constitutional principle, of effecting wholesome changes *peacefully through their legislatures*, and that, not by hastily subverting the existing *forms* of society, however unwise or unjust, but by preparing a change in the *very soul* of society."⁷⁰ Thus, Wright embraced a conception of legislation as the embodiment of the will of the people.

Education reform was Wright's primary focus. If citizens supported legislation for equal education, this would prove they had already undergone the necessary moral changes and were simply enacting their will. For Wright, only education reform could guarantee equality for all: "What we *do expect the people legislatively to effect*, and what we do think, for the honor of the nation, for the realization of its republican professions and for the salvation of the human race, they *ought and must* so effect, is to organize a system of education as shall facilitate that universal correct training of the human mind from which all things may be expected, without which nothing."⁷¹ Individual independence and the common good would not be in conflict but rather in harmony: "*The American people shall present, in another generation, but one class, and, as it were but one family—each independent in his and her own thoughts, actions, rights, person, and possessions, and all cooperating, according to their individual taste and ability, to the promotion of the common weal.*"⁷² Equal education would produce citizens who could think more of the collectivity, rather than of their selfish interests: "a nation to be strong, must be united; to be united, must be equal in condition; to be equal in condition, must be similar in habits and in feeling; to be similar in habits and in feeling, *must be raised in national institutions, as the children of a common family, and citizens of a common country.*"⁷³ Education could reinforce the fundamental principles of the Declaration of Independence—that "all men are free and equal."⁷⁴

The "national" education advocated by Wright would be enacted by every

state legislature—not through national legislation. It was from this perspective that Wright argued in 1829 that the solution to society's ills: "IS NATIONAL, RATIONAL, REPUBLICAN EDUCATION; FREE FOR ALL, AT THE EXPENSE OF ALL; CONDUCTED UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF THE STATE, AT THE EXPENSE OF THE STATE, AND FOR THE HONOR, THE HAPPINESS, THE VIRTUE, THE SALVATION OF THE STATE."⁷⁵

Although language such as the "salvation of the state" suggests a focus on a strong central government, Wright did not seem to accept this equation, contending, when it suited her, that "the state" merely meant "the people." As she clarified in her own definition of a national education: "I understand a [national] education conducted at the expense, and under the protection of the people, acting through their fairly chosen and properly instructed representatives, [to be] the only safeguard of youth, and the only bulwark of a free constitution."⁷⁶

Wright proposed that the states set up boarding schools to replace all other schools or reformatories for youths: "I would suggest that the state legislatures be directed (after laying off the whole in townships or hundreds) to organize, at suitable distances, and in convenient and healthy situations, establishments for the general reception of all the children resident within the said school district."⁷⁷ From the age of two on, all children, boys and girls, rich and poor, would be educated together away from their parents, without reminders of their class- and sex-based disadvantages or advantages.⁷⁸ Citizen-taxpayers in each state would fund education reform through new state taxes. One would be a progressive tax on all incomes, with the wealthiest paying more, and one would be an extra tax to be paid by all parents. "When two years old," she proposed, "the parental tax should be payable, and the juvenile institution open for the child's reception; from which time forward it [the child] would be under the protective care and guardianship of the state, while it need never be removed from the daily, weekly, or frequent inspection of the parents."⁷⁹ For Wright, the state had intellectual properties, a consistency, and an ability to enforce equality that average people, including parents, did not have.

Intolerant of anything less than her perfect society, Wright imagined parents as obstacles to progress whose rights to determine or influence their children's futures would have to be limited. She imagined that "the parents who would necessarily be resident in their close neighborhood, could visit the children at suitable hours, but, in no case, interfere with or interrupt the rules of the institution."⁸⁰ Wright's plan was, as historian Sean Wilentz argues, "authoritarian and moralistic." Author Lewis Corey suggests that

Wright "attacked contemporary education and religion as authoritarian, yet she wanted to give the task of rearing and educating children exclusive to ONE authority, the state!"⁸¹ For Wright, authoritarianism was not an issue; although states, not parents, would be responsible for producing good citizens, the good citizens themselves made up the states and would collectively produce a better nation.⁸²

Although Wright endorsed the notion that state-run boarding schools could raise children better than their parents could, her comfort with this kind of authoritarian control was tempered by her concurrent dreams of a society with fewer rules and regulations: "The people who shall once organize and carry into universal effect, a system of enlightened, industrial and protective education may lay aside their penal and their civil codes, their statutes and enactments, and confine their legislative operations to the simple regulation of such matters as shall be found positively and immediately to regard the comforts and convenience of the whole mass of society."⁸³ Universal education, she believed, would lead to the gradual obsolescence of oppressive laws. Penal codes would no longer be necessary, for a better trained and classless populace would not turn to crime. Still, the absolute abolishment of government represented an untenable ideal. While punitive laws were undesirable, some functions would have to remain. First among them would be the law she championed most—that mandating free and universal education. Without it, a new society could not be created or perpetuated. Once the people passed universal education laws, "Let government do this, and, for aught we care, it may then wind up business."⁸⁴ Government was still an entity that would preferably be dismantled.⁸⁵

In a more pragmatic sense, Wright's vehement opposition to the Second Bank of the United States in the mid-1830s illustrates her opposition to strong centralized control as well as her sympathy with a major Democratic Party platform. Suspicious of the credit and national banking system, President Andrew Jackson decided against reissuing to the Bank the charter that gave it monopoly control of banking in exchange for handling federal deposits. Like many working-class Jacksonians, Wright condemned the arbitrary power of such a "consolidated national monopoly" which was "an enemy to the country."⁸⁶ Engaging in partisan politics, she linked the new Whig party to Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists, charging that "those leaders first tried their scheme of despotism under the form of one central strong government with obliteration of state divisions," had failed, and then turned to a national bank as their "Federal design."⁸⁷

Wright's last book, *England, the Civilizer* (1848), ambitiously outlined the

history of state formation from the ancient world to her contemporary era. Wright pointed to America and England as the countries with the most potential for immediate and radical change.⁸⁸ Her suspicion of limitless centralized power remained, for she optimistically asserted that existing governments, once reformed, would disappear completely: “[G]overnment will cease to be; and the human family, in its state of panocracy, will exhibit the world in federation, and all human affairs under administration.” In her final vision of a utopian society, Wright thus asserted that there would be no government. Yet her proposal of an all-encompassing centralized bureaucratic structure of communes was perhaps as oppressive. Ostensibly reduced to small administrative bodies, central control had in fact become omnipresent. No one was free from public scrutiny and evaluation.⁸⁹ In these communes, she suggested:

Lists, showing the standing of all the employed, [should] be made daily or weekly, and held open for inspection in the administrative office, of each occupation in every branch of the public service. The same to be passed to the administrative offices, under each head of occupation in the circle, and so on in the commune. By which means, the precise standing of each individual, with her or his positive value to society, may be at all times evident. And the question, *what is a man or a woman worth?* Be susceptible both of a definite and a righteous answer.⁹⁰

Work would be rewarded and honored, but also closely monitored and judged by committees set up to determine the value of an individual’s contribution to the community. No action would escape notice within the commune.⁹¹

Wright’s increasing reliance on concepts of collective good and the collective will of the people obstructed and belied her ideal of individual freedom. She held contradictory notions regarding the primacy of personal action on the one hand and the necessity for the collective good on the other.⁹² In addition to the disconcertingly coercive nature of universal guarantees of freedom, Wright fell into the quandary of how to establish a more just distribution of goods and power without violating guarantees of individual freedom.⁹³

The dilemmas and contradictions inherent in Wright’s conceptualizations of the means for reform highlight some of the difficulties of creating plans for change in an atmosphere of political and legal uncertainty.⁹⁴ Wright’s various attempts at radical reform illustrate the kinds of paradoxical choices Americans faced as the federal government and its correlative concept of citizenship gradually solidified. Wright’s insistence on the power of moral example to

transform society went hand-in-hand with an insistence that only the voters in southern states could legislate slavery out of existence. Wright shifted her ideas about the use of moral suasion and legislation in accordance with the causes she advocated and the likelihood that changes could be made through the ballot box and legislatures. In the case of slavery, she relied on moral suasion and rejected immediate legal emancipation, especially at the national level. In the case of education reform, she advocated the immediate passage of new state laws implementing equal education since that would prove that the people were ready for them. Thus, with Nashoba, Wright envisioned the eventual civilization of former slaves and a gradual reform of state laws through moral suasion. Education reform could be effected immediately but would be achieved through similar means—state legislation. Like other Jacksonians, Wright fought for decentralized institutions and for legislators who would truly represent the will of the people in each state.⁹⁵ The Second Bank of the United States or the domination of Congress by privileged, monied elites also represented the potentially dangerous strength of the central government. Wright was ambivalent: Even as she pushed for state-run boarding schools for all children, she expressed concerns about governments with too much power over citizens. At the same time that she imagined a new type of utopian commune with extensive supervisory capacities over its members, she also hoped that government as an oppressive entity would somehow be abolished or disappear.

Throughout her career as a reformer, Wright maintained a positive sense of the power invested in the government of the people by the Constitution. She saw “national” education reform as “the only bulwark of a free constitution.”⁹⁶ For Wright and for most average citizens of the Jacksonian era, as John Murrin explains, “the Constitution became a substitute for any deeper kind of national identity. American nationalism is distinct because, for nearly its first century, it was narrowly and peculiarly constitutional. People knew that without the Constitution there would be no America.”⁹⁷ Like Wright, most Americans idealized the founding documents and the corresponding concept of “the nation” even as they suspected increased powers for the central government.

Other antebellum activists eventually changed their reform strategy; they began to hope that a strong federal government might enforce their reform agendas and approached this prospect with a combination of excitement and fear. Antislavery perfectionists, for instance, turned from a purely moral stance of avoiding interaction with a tainted government that condoned slavery toward urging the federal government to repeal the Fugitive Slave Acts,

keep slavery out of the territories, or abolish slavery altogether. Abandoning their earlier strategy of boycotting the system by not voting or holding political office, perfectionists later sought to make these changes by participating in party politics.⁹⁸ Similarly, women reformers of the late 1840s and 1850s found that previous attempts to use moral suasion for social reform had not been successful. Temperance pledges had not eliminated alcoholism, and strong moral arguments against the sins of slavery had not emancipated the slaves. They turned, therefore, to partisan party politics, national legislation, and demands for woman suffrage.⁹⁹ Although these reformers moved tentatively toward a greater acceptance of federal solutions to societal ills, antebellum Americans were generally uncomfortable with a visibly strong central government. Wright participated in a shift toward legislative solutions; her advocacy of *state* legislation captured the interests of moral reformers as well as of those skeptical of strong central authority.

Like other Jacksonian reformers, Frances Wright believed that she could profoundly shape the direction and the character of the nation. Wright presented serious and often radical alternatives to the values or practices of mainstream antebellum America, yet her ideas were also entirely within the tradition of revolutionary America and its founding documents. Wright's faith in communitarian experimentation as a means to effect change epitomizes the hopes of numerous Americans who entered utopian communes or were sympathetic to their ideals during the antebellum era. Proclaiming her patriotism and the mainstream nature of her demands, Wright championed the Constitution's recognition of states' rights. Ultimately, the enactment of state legislation would demonstrate that people's values had changed. Wright's advocacy of state laws such as equal education reflected her confidence that "the people" could transform their nation.

Notes

I would like to thank Stephanie Cole, Lori Ginzberg, Sarah Barringer Gordon, Geoffrey Hale, and Kathleen Underwood for their perceptive and patient critiques of this essay.

1. For discussions of utopian communitarianism, see Priscilla J. Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (Hanover, Conn.: University Press of New England, 1986), p. 203; and Donald Pitzer, ed., *America's Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
2. For discussions of Wright, see Celia Morris, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America* (1982; rpt., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 3–4, 174, 180, 282–83; William Randall Waterman, *Frances Wright* (New York: AMS Press, 1967), pp. 222, 255–56; Helen Heine-

man, *Restless Angels: The Friendship of Six Victorian Women, Frances Wright, Camilla Wright, Harriet Garnett, Frances Garnett, Julia Garnett Perz, Frances Trollope* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), pp. 26, 59; Lori D. Ginzberg, "The Hearts of Your Readers Will Shudder": Fanny Wright, Infidelity, and American Freethought," *American Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (June, 1994): 196, 200; and Susan Kissel, *In Common Cause: The "Conservative" Frances Trollope and the "Radical" Frances Wright* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993), pp. 94, 145.

3. Wright's status as a woman who insisted on radical equality was indeed threatening. See Robert Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 189, 204–205, 228; John Higham, *From Boundlessness to Consolidation: The Transformation of American Culture, 1848–1860* (Ann Arbor: William Clements Library, 1969), p. 14; and Ginzberg, "Hearts of Your Readers," pp. 196, 202.
4. Frances Wright, "Biography and Notes of Frances Wright D'Arusmont," (1844), reprinted in *Life, Letters and Lectures: Frances Wright D'Arusmont* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), pp. 28–30.
5. See Heineman, *Restless Angels*, p. 23.
6. For a discussion of state activism, see Charles Bright, "The State in the United States During the Nineteenth Century," in *Statemaking and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory*, ed. Charles Bright and Susan Harding (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), pp. 123, 138; and Richard Franklin Bense, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859–1877* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 2. Also see John M. Murrin, "A Roof Without Walls: The Dilemma of American National Identity," in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 333–48.
7. On the instability of the New Republic, see Richard B. Morris, *The Forging of the Union, 1781–1789* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987); and David Szatmary, *Shay's Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).
8. Ira Katznelson and Kenneth Prewitt, "Limits of Choice," in *Capitalism and the State*, ed. Richard Fagen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1979), pp. 31–33, quoted in Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 22.
9. For debates about the strength of the nineteenth-century state, see Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 19; Bense, *Yankee Leviathan*, 17; Bright, "State in the United States," pp. 125–26; and William J. Novak, *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 24.
10. Some scholars see more significant changes occurring during and after the Civil War. George Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).
11. See Higham, *From Boundlessness to Consolidation*, pp. 15–16, 21–23, 26–27.
12. See Bense, *Yankee Leviathan*, p. 192.

13. Frances Wright, "Delivered in the Walnut Street Theater, Philadelphia, on the Fourth of July, 1829," in *Life, Letters, and Lectures*, p. 133.
14. Frances Wright, "Letter XX," *Views of Society and Manners in America: In a Series of Letters from that Country to a Friend in England, During the Years 1818, 1819, and 1820, By An Englishwoman* (London, 1821), p. 358.
15. Frances Wright, "Geographical, Political, and Historical Sketch of the American United States," in *Course of Popular Lectures*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Published by the author, 1836), from the Celia Morris Eckhardt papers at the New Harmony Workingmen's Institute and Library, Folder 44, pp. 35–39.
16. Wright, "Letter XX," pp. 361, 372; and Wright, "Delivered in the New Harmony Hall, on the Fourth of July, 1828," in *Life, Letters, and Lectures*, pp. 119–20.
17. Frances Wright, "On Existing Evils and their Remedy, as delivered in Philadelphia, on June 2, 1829," in *Life, Letters and Lectures*, p. 104.
18. Lewis Perry argues that more women reformers made this connection in the 1850s. See Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1973), pp. 214, 228.
19. Wright's concerns with marriage in the 1820s reflects Ginzberg's argument in this volume about the ways in which marriage conveyed sexual respectability—a link and a priority that Wright denied. Wright, *New Harmony Gazette*, (later *Free Enquirer*, hereafter *NHG*), series 2, vol. 4, no. 207, p. 407.
20. Elizabeth Ann Bartlett, *Liberty, Equality, Sorority: The Origins and Interpretations of American Feminist Thought: Frances Wright, Sarah Grimke, and Margaret Fuller* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson, 1994), p. 41.
21. See also Kissel, *In Common Cause*, p. 145.
22. Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, *The Anti-Slavery Impulse, 1830–1844* (1933; rpt., New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), chs. 2 and 3.
23. Laurence Veysey, *The Perfectionists: Radical Social Thought in the North, 1815–1860* (1973; rpt., New York: Wiley Press, 1980), pp. 5, 10.
24. For the position and role of antebellum white women, see, Ginzberg, "Hearts of Your Readers," 195–226; Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1800–1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (summer, 1966): 151–74; Nancy A. Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822–1872* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), chaps. 1 and 2; and Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chaps. 2, 3. Also see Morris, *Fanny Wright*, pp. 184, 195; and Alice Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer: The Study of a Temperament*, (New York: Harper Brothers, 1939), p. 227.
25. Frances Wright, "Nashoba: Explanatory Notes, respecting the Nature and Objects of the Institution of Nashoba, and of the Principles upon which it is founded. Addressed to the Friends of Human Improvement, in all Countries and of all Nations," *NHG*, Jan. 30, 1828, p. 124.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
28. See Janet Sharp Hermann, *Joseph E. Davis: Pioneer Patriarch* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), pp. 38–45; and Janet Sharp Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 8–12.
29. Morris, *Fanny Wright*, pp. 100–104.
30. Wright, "Biography and Notes," pp. 24–25.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–30.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
33. Frances Wright, "Origin and History of the Federal Party; With a General View of the Hamilton Financial Scheme," (Lecture 2, 1836), in *Course of Popular Lectures Historical and Political*, vol. 2, p. 53.
34. Frances Wright, "On the Sectional Question—Southern Slavery," (Lecture 3, 1836), in *Course of Popular Lectures*, vol. 2, pp. 74–75.
35. Wright, "Origin and History of the Federal Party," p. 53.
36. Wright, "On the Sectional Question," pp. 77–78.
37. Wright, "Nashoba," p. 133.
38. Wright, "Biography and Notes," pp. 24–25.
39. See Wright, "On the Sectional Question," pp. 74–76, 90.
40. Murrin, "Roof Without Walls," p. 346.
41. Wright, "Biography and Notes," pp. 24–25.
42. Wright, "Nashoba," p. 133.
43. *Ibid.*
44. See Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth Century South* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997), introduction.
45. Most frequently, Wright was charged by newspaper editors with being a free lover, a loose woman, and a "priestess of Beelzebub." Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 176.
46. Wright, "Nashoba," p. 133.
47. Robert Dale Owen, "Address to the Inhabitants of New Orleans," *NHG*, Apr. 9, 1828, pp. 186–87.
48. Wright, "Nashoba," p. 132.
49. Bartlett, *Liberty, Equality, Sorority*, pp. 15–16. Frances Wright, *A Few Days in Athens*, excerpted in *NHG*, Apr. 11, 1827, p. 220.
50. Morris, *Fanny Wright*, ch. 8.
51. Wright, "Nashoba," p. 124.
52. See Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).
53. Communitarianism could lead to, Perry claims, "systems of totalitarianism" (*Radical Abolitionism*, pp. 150, 212).
54. Morris, *Fanny Wright*, pp. 141–45.
55. Wright, "Address, Delivered at the New York Hall of Science on Sunday the 18th October 1829," *NHG*, Oct. 31, 1829, p. 1.
56. Morris, *Fanny Wright*, ch. 6.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 207–208.
58. Wright, "On the Sectional Question," pp. 77–78.

59. Wright reiterated her support for colonization: "The African race, trained and civilized by its American guardian . . . would necessarily supply to tropical climates, colonists fitted by organization no less than experience, to vanquish their dangers and sanify [*sic*] the richest, though now the most deleterious regions of the globe." Colonization would effect "simultaneously the civilization and removal of its slave population, and the introduction of free, enlightened, and, as it ever should be, honorable and honored labor, by immigration from the northern states." See Frances Wright; "Biography and Notes," pp. 28–30; and "On the Sectional Question," pp. 80, 88.
60. As Wright directed her attention away from Nashoba, she began contributing to a journal edited by Robert Dale Owen, the son of Robert Owen. Read by urban workers and middle-class intellectuals, the *New Harmony Gazette*, later renamed the *Free Enquirer*, was a free-thought periodical of which Wright soon became the co-owner and coeditor. Robert Dale Owen and Frances Wright, "Prospectus of the New-Harmony and Nashoba Gazette, in Continuation of the New-Harmony Gazette," *NHG*, July 30, 1828, p. 318.
61. See Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1945), pp. 132–43; and Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, pp. 182, 200.
62. Schlesinger, *Age of Jackson*, pp. 30–35, 67–71. Also see Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Harry Watson *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Noonday Press, 1990).
63. Frances Wright, "Editorial: Jefferson Institute," *NHG*, Apr. 8, 1829, p. 190. For a discussion of labor's suspicion of lawyers, see Skowronek, *Building a New American State*, p. 33. For her appeal to (and among) the working classes, see Wright, "To the Intelligent among the Working Classes; and Generally to All Honest Reformers," *NHG*, Dec. 5, 1829, pp. 46–47.
64. For a discussion of democratization, see Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In," p. 26.
65. Morris, *Fanny Wright*, p. 197.
66. John Murrin, "Roof Without Walls," p. 346.
67. Morris, *Fanny Wright*, p. 171.
68. Higham, *From Boundlessness to Consolidation*, p. 17.
69. Frances Wright, "State of the Public Mind [1829]," in *Supplement Course of Lectures, Containing the Last Four Lectures Delivered in the United States* (London, 1834), p. 178.
70. Frances Wright, "Address, Containing a Review of the Times" (1830), reprinted in *Life, Letters and Lectures*, p. 196.
71. Frances Wright, "Wealth and Money, No. 5," *NHG*, Oct. 16, 1830, p. 405.
72. Frances Wright, "Parting Address" (1830), in *Life, Letters and Lectures*, p. 216.
73. Wright, "On Existing Evils," pp. 109–10.
74. Frances Wright, "Plan of National Education," reprinted in Robert Dale Owen and Frances Wright, *Tracts on Republican Government and National Education: Addressed to the Inhabitants of the United States of America* (London: James Watson/Holyoake and Company, 1857), p. 15.
75. Frances Wright, "To the Intelligent among the Working Classes," *NHG*, Dec. 5, 1829, pp. 46–47.
76. Wright, "State of the Public Mind," p. 179.
77. Wright, "On Existing Evils," p. 114.
78. Wright, "Address, Containing a Review of the Times," p. 196.
79. Wright, "On Existing Evils," pp. 114–15.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
81. See Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, p. 180; and Lewis Corey papers—Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Box 5, "Outline of Last 12 Chapters," ch. II. "Education for the People," (unpublished manuscript on Frances Wright, ca. 1950), p. 7, Corey papers.
82. Wright, "State of the Public Mind," pp. 178–81.
83. Wright, "The Nature of True Civilization: The Third and Best Age of Man," *NHG*, Oct. 30, 1830, p. 7.
84. Wright, "Wealth and Money, No. 5," *NHG*, Oct. 16, 1830, p. 405.
85. Wright, "Address: Containing a Review of the Times," *NHG*, Aug. 14, 1830, pp. 329–30. Also see, Wright, "Parting Address," p. 218; and Wright, "Nashoba: Explanatory Notes," p. 124.
86. Wright, "Origin and History of the Federal Party," pp. 62, 70.
87. Wright, "Origin and History of the Federal Party," pp. 65, 68.
88. Wright ignored her own earlier assault on English common law as holding back the United States.
89. Wright, *England, the Civilizer: Her History Developed in Its Principles* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1848), p. 415.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 460.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 463.
92. Bartlett, *Liberty, Equality, Sorority*, pp. 36–37.
93. For a discussion of utopian socialism, see *ibid.*, p. 21.
94. See Higham, *From Boundlessness to Consolidation*, pp. 15–16, 21–23, 27.
95. Wright, "Geographical, Political, and Historical Sketch," pp. 39–40.
96. Wright, "State of the Public Mind," p. 179.
97. Murrin, "Roof Without Walls," pp. 346–47.
98. See Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, eds., *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); and Perry, *Radical Abolitionism*, ch. 8.
99. See Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), ch. 4; Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873–1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981); and Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).