Introduction
Elevate the Masses

In the volatile society of mid-nineteenth-century Scotland new formats and platforms of criticism and dissent empowered everyday citizens to enter the public arena. Alexander Gardner (1821–1882), born in Paisley to a local grocer, was one of them. After cofounding a utopian community in Iowa in 1849, in 1851 Gardner purchased the "whole stock and copyright" of a paper known as the *Glasgow Sentinel*, "a liberal newspaper, having a large and increasing circulation" at auction.[1] Yet most scholarship overlooks these and other facts as mere biographical detail rather than vital insights through which to understand Gardner's worldview and the production of his photographic studio during the American Civil War, instead using his arrival in New York as a starting point from which to assess his career and the historic value of his oeuvre.[2] By 1856, the thirty-five-year-old Gardner had settled in lower Manhattan, identified his profession as "artist," and probably worked for the famed photographer Mathew Brady, who was known for his business acumen and for his brilliantly intuitive understanding of how the photographic likeness could serve the young republic.[3] Such a vantage point offers a convenient gap for inserting Gardner into the now-canonical narrative of the American photographic community at midcentury, and for understanding its trends and its economic and cultural concerns as the driving forces of his career path and pictorial interests. In early 1858, he moved his family to Washington, DC, where he continued to work as a photographer for Brady and as the manager of Brady's new satellite studio on Pennsylvania Avenue, before eventually opening a hugely successful studio in his own name.

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Gardner's production of photographs, including images of dead soldiers following the 1862 Battle of Antietam and portraits of President Abraham Lincoln, encouraged generations of previous scholars to closely link Gardner to American cultural history in the Civil War era. I shift and widen the focus to conjoin his transatlantic reform activities and his American photographic production in order to reveal how he used photographs of the Civil War as a means by which to present nineteenth-century social and political reform ideologies. The reform and workers' rights community in which Gardner immersed himself in Scotland used both creative and didactic texts, visualizations, and graphics to promote its political and social platform. With this international context in mind, Gardner's visionary Civil War–era production yields an additional and different narrative that integrates his ideological devotion to reform causes—for example, the rights of laborers—with these photographs, reassessing them in light of his reform-minded views. I argue that we need to view his work in Scotland as a reformer and in the United States as a photographer and studio owner as continuous, rather than separate and unrelated. Gardner's work as a Civil War documentarian was integral to his involvement with the transatlantic reform struggle on behalf of what in 1851 he called "the People's Cause."[4]

Spanning the United Kingdom, continental Europe, and the United States, a number of reform movements organized in response to economic and technical changes in the first decades of the century. The momentous events of 1848—a series of popular uprisings against monarchical rule that occurred throughout Europe, beginning in Paris and eventually erupting in cities like Munich, Vienna, Krakow, and Budapest—were major catalysts for Gardner's political involvement. In London, at the Great Chartist Meeting in Kennington Common on April 10, 1848 (fig. 1), Parliament was expected finally to empower the working classes and agree to a series of reforms known as the People's Charter (or the Charter). Chartists, whose supporters came from across the United Kingdom and continental Europe, identified and sought to reform specific mechanisms of government in order to bring about broader equality and economic fairness. With great hope, the working class, its leaders, and their allies turned out in Kennington Common to witness historic change. Although the movement's main leader, Feargus O'Connor, claimed the petitions in support of the reforms contained nearly six million signatures, the clerks at the House of Commons rejected it, claiming that it contained fraudulent signatures and that the actual number was insufficient. This petition, the third in a series of attempts at Chartist reform, failed, like earlier efforts in 1839 and 1842. In the surviving daguerreotype of the event, the air of anticipation and the stillness of those who came to support the reform uncannily capture what many perceived as the end of a movement and the uncertainty its supporters felt.

Despite what occurred that day, Gardner told his countrymen three years later that the cause of workers' rights that had led marchers to Kennington Common endured.

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FIGURE 1 | William Edward Kilburn, *The Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common*, April 10, 1848. Photo: Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2019.

"Civilization has, as yet, but half performed its mission," he and his team of coeditors wrote to readers of the *Sentinel* on October 4, 1851, its first anniversary of publication.[5] In fact, when the *Sentinel* was founded in 1850—in a small office above a Socialist bookshop, owned by a local activist named William Love that was also a gathering place for Chartists and followers of the Welsh industrialist-turned-social-theorist Robert Owen—its founders proclaimed boldly that the *Sentinel*'s mission was that of the Chartist O'Connor, and they endorsed broader Owen-inspired policies to improve the lives of working people. They believed their platform to be the most effective response to a range of social conditions that they linked to industrialization. "Our policy," Gardner and his editors wrote, "is briefly summed up—the enfranchisement of labor, the elevation of the masses, the rendering of civilization a great fact and not a heartless fiction, to bring home to the hearth of the poor man as well as the parlor of the rich, the blessings of plenty, and soul enabling influence of knowledge."[6]

Gardner and his *Sentinel* editorial team called on the newspaper's growing readership to continue to address the imbalance of power achieved by "the aristocracy of land and money . . . [that] has, by exclusive laws and institutions, directed channels of distribution

for its own benefit, and left the masses nearly as they were before."[7] Despite the setback at Kennington Common, Gardner's editorial team asserted that "the cause of democracy, notwithstanding the difficulties and failures of its previous exertion, had still enthusiastic supporters."[8] In that same address to readers, Gardner, who would become known internationally as one of the principal visual artists of the American Civil War, described himself as a longtime supporter of the "independent Democratic voice," indicating that his decision to purchase the newspaper the preceding spring had been impelled by that advocacy.

Growing up in the major Scottish cities of Paisley and Glasgow, Gardner witnessed a government failing to address (and a nation increasingly polarized by) differing levels of income, education, and access to stable work and housing. The speedy rise of the cotton industry in Scotland distinguished its pattern of growth and its process of industrialization from those of other nations. Gardner's parents, James Gardner and Jean Glen, were born during the Napoleonic Wars; the paths and patterns of life for their generation and the generations following bore little resemblance to the lives of those who came before them. Paisley, in western Scotland—where Gardner was born and where his ancestors had lived—felt the effects of the era early and profoundly. The textile production for which Paisley became known transformed the local economy by the early decades of the nineteenth century, upending livelihoods and community networks that had been in place for centuries. When fickle crop yields and the introduction of new specialized farm management techniques and land-leasing systems made small farming less viable as a means of survival, many abandoned the agricultural sector for work in urban areas. Thousands of Scots moved in search of economic stability, and the Gardner family joined them in migrating to one of the nation's growing city centers.

Mobility defined Gardner's generation. By 1828, the Gardner family had relocated to Glasgow, roughly seven miles east of Paisley, where they resumed their grocery business.[9] The same year, Gardner's younger brother, James, was born. A sister, Agnes was born in 1823, and another sister, Catherine, in 1826.[10] Most migrants to Glasgow in this period came from Renfrewshire, the county seat of the city of Paisley. With the city's new economic opportunities, the population of Glasgow—once a small rural town— grew dramatically, from 77,000 in 1801 to 275,000 in 1841.[11] By the 1850s, when the city's population surpassed three hundred thousand, Glasgow became the United Kingdom's second-largest population center. As was common for young middle-class men, Gardner entered the trades as an apprentice.[12] Even though the Gardner family had some economic means as shopkeepers, new forms of employment, the rise of heavy industry, economic depressions, migration, and urbanization had a broad impact on all classes of society. The Gardners' work as grocers no doubt offered them an expansive perspective on the changes in society. Prior to purchasing the *Sentinel*, Gardner had his own shop through which he offered his services as a jeweler and watchmaker.[13]

Outside of the growing radical agitation, the ethos of Gardner's Glasgow celebrated the potential of its citizens. A broad spectrum of Scottish society embraced the belief—a legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment—that the intellectual growth of the citizenry was the prerequisite for a just, moral, and prosperous society. The goal of the Glasgow Athenaeum, where Gardner took classes, was to attract men "who impressed with the immoral condition of society, are anxious to do what they can in hastening its removal."[14]

The core of Gardner's socially minded beliefs were the philosophies of Chartism and Owenism. He became attracted to the movements at a pivotal moment in their history. At midcentury, both Owenites and Chartists struggled to retain followers and to assert the movements' ongoing relevance amid internal divisions, movement failures, weariness among followers, and changing political and social realities. Chartism arose in Great Britain around 1837, during a severe economic depression. Scottish workers, already struggling with unprecedented under- and unemployment, responded forcefully, organizing and demanding political enfranchisement. The Chartists' parliamentary platform resembled the social and moral reforms promoted by Robert Owen and his followers. Owen's proposed alternative to the capricious free market—what he called a "moral economy"—appealed to workers' rights advocates and critics of industrialization. Prior to the emergence of Chartism, Owen's widely read essays predicted that rapid industrialization following the Napoleonic wars would introduce fundamental social and economic changes. In 1812, Owen published the first of his landmark works, outlining a series of practical social reforms to improve the current state of humanity.[15] These writings offered a compelling critique of industrial capitalism along with a detailed plan for regenerating society. The issue of labor reform played a significant role in Owen's theories, due to his belief in the potentially degrading powers of one's environment—corruption that ultimately hastened the wider erosion of human capital. He advocated a "social system" that combined general benevolence and self-love, and opposed what he called the "individual system": a competitive structure of values that only produced greed, anger, and selfishness. Owen's social system, based on common ownership of resources and production, made him, along with Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier, one of the forerunners of Socialism.

For Gardner, Owenism and Chartism were more than just theories; they moved him to change the course of his life. In early April, around the anniversary of the political disaster at Kennington Common, Gardner took action that demonstrated his faith in reform theories and his commitment to see the ideals of Chartists and Owenites realized. First, while still living in Scotland, he cofounded a cooperative colony in the United States. On April 4, 1849, Gardner and his younger brother James joined with others to establish the Clydesdale Joint-Stock Agricultural and Commercial Company in Scotland,

with the goal of acquiring land in the United States upon which to build a community that would live largely according to Owen's ideas.[16] The Clydesdale Community, as it came to be known, was located in Clayton County, Iowa, along the Mississippi River, north of Dubuque. Because of its liberal constitution, Iowa was an attractive state to immigrants who held similar beliefs. In addition to shared profits, the group sought shared government and "recognize[d] the validity only of unanimous resolutions."[17] The fertile soil and other geologic features seemed to promise an ideal location for farming, mining, and other activities.

The Iowa community's founding principles drew mainly from Owen's writings and ideas about communitarian living. Owen had founded his own model cooperative community, New Harmony, in Indiana (1825–27), which served as the laboratory for Owen's theory of a "new world order"—a society free of poverty and ignorance. The Clydesdale community shared his belief that communitarian living would help counteract industrialization's debasement of society; the stated mission of the community was to "establish, by means of the united capital and industry of its partners, a comfortable home for themselves and families where they may follow a more simple, useful and rational mode of life than is found practicable in the complex and competitive state of society, from which they have been anxious to retire."[18] In his *Book of the New Moral World* (1836), Owen argued that human happiness was possible only through communal living. He held America in special esteem. He believed America to be ideal for experiments in collective living and labor because of the availability of land, the intellectual climate, and the republican values.[19] The country's unsettled western regions in particular offered an opportunity to design and create wholly new social institutions and financial relationships to foster a better world.[20] For Owen, communal living was more than just a system of common property: it was a means to bring about social change, to restore harmony in a fractured and alienated world. Other utopian communities—Communia, Guttenberg, Community Colony, and Liberty Colony—were founded in the same lush region of northeastern Iowa where Gardner and his associates had purchased land.

Gardner's active involvement in the transatlantic reform movement, which stemmed from his Owenite and Chartist interests, was furthered by his work with the *Sentinel* and its leaders. Owenism and Chartism both promoted self-learning through printed matter. Chartism in particular used its platforms to impart technical and editorial know-how to its readers so that they might do just as Gardner did—either join an existing paper or start their own.[21] The *Sentinel* staff included two of Owen's eight specially chosen national "missionaries," Robert Buchanan and Alexander Campbell, who lectured throughout the country promoting Owenism. The paper's senior staff, forged at the moment when the two groups joined forces, also included the prominent Chartist William Pattison. Newspapers had historically played a pivotal role in shaping the movement, and Pattison

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had helped instigate a publishing revival among labor reformers when he argued that the publishing of writing that communicated the movement's principles to a broad audience would be a service "to truth, to freedom, and to humanity."[22] Chartist journals like the *Northern Star* and Chartist-leaning papers like the *Poor Man's Guardian* enjoyed circulations that rivaled that of well-funded traditional news outlets. Between 1815 and 1848, dozens of newspapers were founded—some by only one person—in the cause of political agitation rather than for profit. The media historian Henry Weisser lists the reasons why the press became an influential vehicle: newspapers were cheap to produce, broadly accessible, and did not require a large capital investment.[23] Though young, the *Sentinel* enjoyed a favorable reputation among reformers as the nation's "truly democratic journal."[24]

Beyond his duties as a publisher, Gardner contributed to the newspaper as a writer and as member of the editorial team. The paper served as an outlet for his "views and opinions on social problems, science, and art."[25] Introducing Gardner as the *Sentinel*'s new publisher on May 13, 1951, the previous publisher (who no longer had the funds to continue) assured readers that Gardner would uphold the paper's policy of "uncompromising warfare against existing social arrangements and the political serfdom of the industrious classes."[26] Gardner himself communicated his intentions to his readers in an editorial in which he claimed to have no intention of using the paper for financial gain. He had bought it not "as a mere speculation . . . but as a means of enlightening the public on the great political, educational, and social questions of the times, and of guiding aright the popular mind of this country on all matters of state policy, whenever advice was necessary or important."[27] He promised that he and the *Sentinel* team would shape the newspaper's content: "News will be copious and well digested . . . [and] no expense will be spared to obtain, for the readers of the *Sentinel*, early, ample, and authentic information."[28] His mission, he stated, was to support "the establishment of Democracy" and the principle that "*the People is the source of all political and social power*."[29]

Gardner's letter to *Sentinel* readers exhibits a keen awareness of the power of print media to influence audiences. He promised to introduce a "variety of contents and literary talent," recognizing that by doing so the newspaper could effectively engage a diverse audience. He also adopted a curatorial approach to production. Instead of merely presenting the record of the day, he identified ongoing thematic concerns like education, set the paper's presentation of the contemporary workers' rights movement in its geographic and historical contexts, presented a variety of voices through columns written by everyday people and known authors, and used different literary styles—such as poetry—to intensify the reader's experience of arguments. Responding to the urgency of the moment, the *Sentinel* rejected concessions on universal suffrage for men, demanded a national system of secular education, praised cooperative production, and called forcefully for

labor rights.[30] Alterations in the format and the addition of a section of letters to the editor humanized the dense political and economic debates in other parts of the paper.

The *Sentinel* highlighted domestic problems and placed them in their historical and international context. For example, in his second issue, Gardner published an English translation of the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (1793) in order to provide textual evidence for the contemporary ideas printed alongside it, and he also printed a long editorial about the failings of Scottish schools, which cited the system of public education in Massachusetts as an effective model.[31] As part of a new mission to present only "authentic" information, the paper increased its publication of eyewitness reports and ended the practice of printing items from other news outlets without citation. Gardner's supervision of the *Sentinel's* content and format represents his work on behalf of the core interests of Owenites and Chartists: the education and mobilization of the reading public to support the cause of human rights and the formation of a more just society.

The *Sentinel's* engagement with the reading public was possible because of the foresight of reformers when it came to new technologies. Most important, the steam-powered press supported the production of cheaper print and gave reformers a means of flooding the public sphere with their messages. By 1850, the transatlantic abolitionist movement had greatly increased the volume of print material it issued, which notably included many more illustrations.[32] The quality of living conditions, a frequent topic, were depicted in the coarse woodcuts of the *Poor Man's Guardian* (fig. 2), which served to heighten the reformers' portrayal of despair. Robert Perry's illustrated report *Facts and Observations on the Sanitary State of Glasgow* (1844) exemplified the mid-nineteenth-century reform projects that used graphic means to relate written arguments and statistics to social ills. Perry used colors on a schematic map to convey the statistical links between poor sanitation, disease, and poverty in the city, visualizing the monumental crisis in public health (fig. 3). Instead of representing neighborhoods and districts, his maps disclosed the absence of both political will and a social safety net. These reform works presented an image of society that directly contradicted the central message of Allan and Ferguson's *Views in Glasgow* (1843), which offered a triumphant depiction of the city's historical landmarks, cultural institutions, and developing infrastructure (fig. 4). *Views in Glasgow* suggested a marked improvement of society brought about by industrialization. The portfolio featured historical monuments and newer structures side by side, a format that underscored the visual and philosophical continuity of the city's origins (and its ideals as represented by its structures), its present, and its future. The prints portraying Glasgow's rich architectural details depicted an airy and open city. Because of the predominantly low vantage points, the structures towered over human figures and trees. Medallions engraved with the name of the city framed individual engravings on the page, creating both the illusion of three-dimensional space and a unified message.
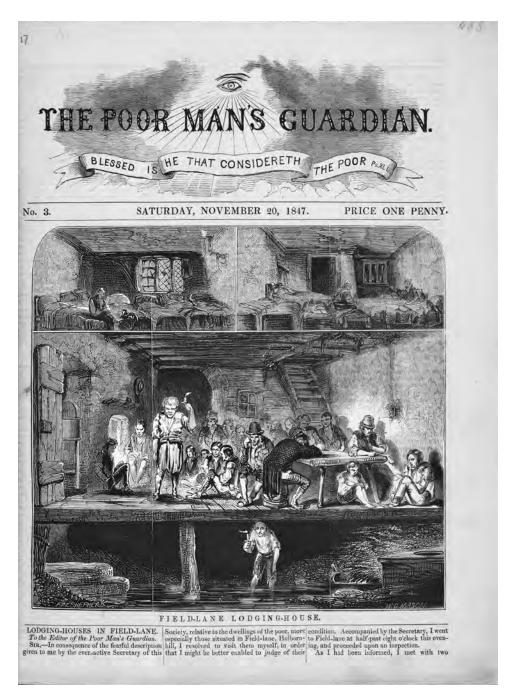
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FIGURE 2 | *Field-Lane Lodging-House*, from the *Poor Man's Guardian*, November 20, 1847. © British Library Board.

FIGURE 3 | Map of Glasgow from Robert Perry, *Facts and Observations on the Sanitary State of Glasgow*, 1844. University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections.

Scholars of nineteenth-century Britain have noted how social problems, as they became more visible, came to the attention of visual culture.[33] According to the British cultural historian A. Susan Williams, by the mid-nineteenth century the "astounding spectacle" of economic disparity, and landscape features such as mills, with their "huge edifices which loom like gigantic shadows in a smoky, dense atmosphere," became the subject of both a new form of sociological journalism and the visual works that accompanied them.[34] Moreover, the increase in the physical scale of urban areas and in the number of their inhabitants compounded the effects of unprecedented social challenges. British historian Asa Briggs has written that "[Victorians] were aware—either with fear or with pride—that they were living through a period of change of scale—change in the size of the industrial plant, change in the size of social organization, change, above all, in the size of towns and cities."[35] Reformers created their own change of scale by isolating and magnifying social problems in the data they presented and the visual works they produced. As they had in the eighteenth century, they targeted readers by appealing to moral and religious duty, but now added to such emotional appeals the results of their own study of social phenomena and their discussion of the statistics they had gathered.

Through his work at the *Sentinel*, Gardner participated in the transatlantic reform community's vast proliferation of printed matter, which included broadsides, letters,

FIGURE 4 | Allan and Ferguson, *Illustrated Letter Paper Comprising a Series of Views in Glasgow*, 1843, plate 20. University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections.

pamphlets, tracts, and other ephemera. Historian of visual culture and media Andrea Korda has argued persuasively that British audiences, failing to see themselves in the grand manner that characterized history painting, preferred popular media like newspapers and chapbooks, where they were the principal actors.[36] In print, Gardner's *Sentinel* recognized that preference in its broad audience, which included working-class readers. The newspaper's pages spoke to them, portraying them as actors in a grand story of the international people's revolution. Korda writes that this new model of newspaper illustration encouraged readers to see and experience events for themselves.[37] Although the *Sentinel* had no illustrations, Gardner replicated experiences by introducing the firsthand account to situate readers more actively in a story and an issue.

Most important to this study is the fact that the British nineteenth-century reform community, as well as Owenism and Chartism, provided Gardner with models for joining political and visual creative expression. Leaders understood that creative forms could help them reach their audience more effectively. John Harrison distinguishes Owenism from the artistic socialists of the 1880s such as the Pre-Raphaelites as primarily a literary movement; the goal of Owenite literature was to explain and proclaim as effectively as possible Owen's prescription for a new society.[38] Owen himself favored popular platforms, including pamphlets and public meetings, for the dissemination of his ideas. As one Owenite publication stated: "Language is the vehicle by which our ideas are communicated to each other."[39]

Harrison describes Owenite literature as characteristic in tone and form of the reform writing of the first half of the nineteenth century; by contrast, scholars have explored

the literary production of Chartists as a rich and original contribution. Chartists linked political change to cultural change. "Peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must," claimed the Chartist motto. Their chief "peaceable" tactic, contemporary scholars now recognize, was their extensive literature.[40] In their creative writing in particular, Chartists developed a didactic literary form that attracted a broad audience.[41] Of the Chartists, literary historian Martha Vicinus writes that, in their search to create a class-based literature, they were "deeply concerned with the relationship between politics and art—whether literature should describe conditions in need of change, or the future brotherhood of man, resulting from changed conditions; whether it should give readers a soothing escape from this life or a foretaste of a better life."[42] Poetry was a form that allowed Chartist texts to perform these dual functions of vivid description and inspiration. Chartist poetry affirmed the movement's principles, shaped group identity, and encouraged a sense of a common purpose.[43] Distributed weekly through newspapers like the *Northern Star*, Chartists translated their political ideas into a radical poetic tradition. Ulrike Schwab, a scholar of Chartist literature, characterizes Chartist poetry as representing "artistic language expression as well as historical statement."[44] She further explains that it was neither "esoteric or escapist" but closely linked to the "social reality."[45] Complementing this literary culture was the Chartist attention to visual communication: Chartists frequently donned the red cap of liberty in reference to the French revolution, or green, the traditional English radical color.

Exploring how Gardner's oeuvre outlines photography's capacity to fuse the literary, the aesthetic, and the political constitutes a driving interest of this inquiry. Photography—with its power to "seize" and give ideas "a permanent form," as one Scottish observer noted in 1848[46]—could aid in creating a "we-consciousness" (that is, a merging of the individual position with that of the collective), offer an active as opposed to a passive form of communication in which speakers and addressees could communicate both rationally and emotionally, and present both immediate and long-term objectives and issues.[47] Further, photography could perform another vital and active function of Chartist poetry, which was to organize thoughts and emotions, and to create new modes of thinking or consciousness.

New York may have been the center for American photography at midcentury, but the move to Washington, DC, was immeasurably beneficial to Gardner's career. It was there that he was able to connect with and find support among a likeminded community. The District's small but prominent and wealthy number of Scottish and European immigrants (in particular, Franklin Philp and Adolphus Simeon Solomons) quickly embraced and promoted Gardner and later his studio, and he became an active member of various local cultural and social clubs. His circle included Gilbert Cameron, the builder of the United States Military Asylum, the Smithsonian, the Washington Asylum and Workhouse, and

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Trinity Church, among other projects. Gardner eventually—and notoriously—severed ties with Mathew Brady, taking with him some of Brady's talented photographic corps, including Timothy O'Sullivan, another important figure in nineteenth-century American photography. General George McClellan appointed Gardner official photographer of the Army of the Potomac in 1862, and Gardner published his first studio advertisement in 1863, in the May 28 edition of the *Daily National Intelligencer*. The *Intelligencer* became the main supporter of Gardner's work, which was not surprising, considering that copublisher William Winston Seaton was part of Gardner's circle.

Works made or produced by Gardner or his studio both before and during the Civil War years comprise portraiture, documentation, and landscape. These works include stereographs, cartes de viste, imperial photographs, several photographic and stereographic series, and three photographically illustrated books. Gardner's name seldom appeared without the names of Philp and Solomons. The Philp & Solomons firm, already established in the District as influential members of the art and cultural scene, was involved in nearly every aspect of publishing the Gardner Studio productions, including Gardner's photographic books, stereographs, signature photographic series "Photographic Incidents of the War," and other special projects and portfolios. It was at their well-known bookstore and gallery (opened by Philp in 1858) that Gardner sold his portraits of Union generals, among his other photographs. In the Civil War years, he worked mostly in and around Washington, DC, completing his war-related projects before turning his attention exclusively to the American West and Native American subject matter. Long before contemporary scholars set about assessing Gardner's enormous contribution, this unparalleled production resonated with his own contemporaries. As one enthusiastic reviewer wrote, Gardner "construct[ed] a truly exact and living history of our time."[48] Another wrote frankly of Gardner's photograph of Burnside's Bridge at Antietam battlefield, "Artistically speaking, the picture is one of the most beautiful and perfect photograph landscapes that we have ever seen."[49]

This book examines how trends in Gardner's social world expanded and informed his understanding of photography as a tool for reform, for the presentation of reform ideas, and as a documentary, communicative, and educational medium. I use Gardner's writing as the broader "rhetorical framework" of his artistic oeuvre.[50] Gardner's prefaces to *Rays of Sunlight from South America* (1865) and to *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War* (1865) constitute his only direct writings on photography or aesthetics.[51] Moreover, little is known about the public reception of his photographic work in the United States, except what is provided in gallery reviews in Washington, DC, newspapers. But Gardner's editorial writing in 1850 and 1851—when he was associated with the *Sentinel*—and his studio reviews and advertisements once he had established himself in Washington provide additional insight, revealing that his work interacted directly with contemporary

political and cultural life, including the various reform discussions. Sometimes Gardner expressed a wish to change the structure of society; at other times he championed the improvement of existing social, economic, and political institutions.[52] The ideas that drove his advocacy also guided his photography. Locating them gives some sense of the audience he imagined for his work and its function in society.

His photographs are inextricable from his professional and personal dedication to reforms to prevent the adverse effects of nondemocratic government and capitalism on the economy and the social fabric. In considering the Civil War–era photographic production of Gardner vis-à-vis the international reform movements for which he worked, this study is less concerned with his nuanced choice of subjects from the war, his contributions to the history of photojournalism, his distinctive formal interpretations, or his technique of photographic storytelling, in single works or in series and in his photographically illustrated books—all subjects that other scholars have considered. Unlike some published writings on Civil War–era photography, I do not treat particular photographs of dead soldiers and portraits of President Abraham Lincoln as epitomes of the conflict.[53] Situating Gardner within the context of transnational reform movements expands the contribution of Civil War photography beyond the immediate narrative of the war to comprehend its relation to the vigorous international debates about democracy and the rights of citizens.

Through new and original research, this book emphasizes the transnational context of American art, including Civil War photography. In the introduction to *American Photography: Local and Global Contexts* (2012), editors Bettina Gockel and Patrizia Munforte call for an approach to the history of photography that resurrects an "atlas of photography" and demonstrates how "photography was and continues to be a visual medium that connects, spans, and networks the spaces of our heterogeneous world."[54] My reinterpretation of Gardner's oeuvre places Civil War photography squarely within international debates about the meaning of democracy and the role of government in the lives of its citizens. Though "American photography" does not emerge until the twentieth century, the Civil War arguably contributed to the scholarly construction of the term, and to the idea that the nation's identity—and thus its sense of historical aspiration and memory—are uniquely entwined with the medium and expressed through its material and formal particularities. When the early twentieth-century photography historian Robert Taft presented his influential thesis on the role of photography in America, the Civil War functioned as a significant catalyst for the socially minded documentation of the 1930s he sought to champion and to culturally distinguish. Through my study of Gardner, I take the position that social reform photography's foundational motivations and theories of function have their origins in a transnational dialogue. With its focus on reception and the original audiences for these works, what Stott's formulation leaves out

(like many studies that followed) is attention to artistic community, artistic practice, and artistic formation, not to mention non-American audiences. In calling for a history of photography that emphasizes connectivity, Gockel and Munforte inspire us to look beyond the myth of the singular artist, and to look at the communities from which artists emerged and within which they worked. These are issues I foreground.

Gardner, like his contemporaries, explored the Civil War within a wide geographical frame of reference in an era when visual culture was steeped in topics of international economics and imperialism.[55] The production of these artists mirrored the international sentiment that—as historian Don Doyle writes in *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the Civil War*—"the American question mattered greatly to the world and to the future."[56] The meticulous scholarship on French painter Édouard Manet's works (such as 1864's *The Battle of the USS "Kearsage" and the CSS "Alabama"*), constructed largely through international media reports, provides a European example of the extent to which this was true.[57] Building on the work of twenty-first-century scholars who have demonstrated the value of expanding the geographical context of American art, this book examines the dialogue about Civil War artistic production from that vantage point.[58] Similar to new scholarship on the work of American Pre-Raphaelites, I position Gardner as an artistic innovator whose work included a rich political subtext.[59] Like painter and fellow expatriate Thomas Cole, whose experience of an industrializing England impacted his view of nature, Scotland's own particular path of industrialization and its effects shaped Gardner's views on social relations. Although Civil War photography was an inherently national project, the dialogues about Civil War art were also implicitly internationalist. Authors of the era's popular literature, especially during the early years of the Civil War, repeatedly discussed it in relation to international politics and history.[60] However, Civil War photography has not been considered heretofore from such an international perspective. Analyzing Gardner in an international context provides new insight into his work and brings thematic and theoretical developments in mid-nineteenth-century American photography into clearer focus.

Technically, conceptually, and thematically, the American photographic community in which Gardner produced his work was ready for such direction. Technical improvements in paper-based photography made possible the expansive Civil War era production of the Gardner studio. Unlike European audiences, most of its practitioners did not yet see the possibilities of paper-based photography. One American critic, writing in a photography journal, complained about fellow Americans' response to photography that they "neglect the higher and nobler uses it is now available for."[61] Audiences were neither accustomed to nor enthusiastic about paper-based photography, and this new format had to establish itself in the social fabric and find ways of shaping Americans' understanding of social realities. By exploiting formats and platforms newly available in

the era, and by calling attention to the "photographic" aspect of their contribution to its visual culture, Gardner and his studio production promoted a changed understanding of the difference between photographic and other kinds of information. Concurrently, his work illustrated the primary knowledge to be gained from photographs and the possibilities of viewer interaction that only photographs could offer. The photograph could stimulate an "enduring interest," as he wrote, and it could also simultaneously summarize an event.[62] His imaginative photography encouraged audiences to supplement that experience with what they knew or learned from other sources. This artistic project worked synchronically with an ideological project above all others: to promote democracy as a political and social good, and the laborer as the foundation of society.

Chapter 1 presents *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War* (Philp & Solomons, 1865) as a politically motivated project, rooted in the photographer's Chartist and Owenite beliefs and offering a visually based, modern interpretation of reform literary culture. In the *Sentinel*, Gardner outlines his ideas about American democracy and, like others in the transatlantic reform community (in particular Scottish intellectuals and radicals), embraces the American political model.[63] Gardner first presents this vision in his *Rays of Sunlight from South America* (1865). Illustrated with photographs, like *Sketch Book*, *Rays* addresses political models and historical change in Peru.[64] In it, Gardner lays out themes and techniques similar to those he later would refine in *Sketch Book*. While Peru is a case study in how countries that fail to change stagnate, *Sketch Book* portrays a post–Civil War America able to pursue its true destiny, now free of the corrupting force of slavery. The North has triumphed over the political, social, and economic ideas of the South. In *Sketch Book* Gardner expresses a political philosophy in the format of the photographic book and also references a reform literary genre: the travelogue. In his photographically illustrated work, texts and images work together to provide context, persuade viewers, and explain the distinct knowledge about the world available in photography. The form and content of both books visualize ideas Gardner and his colleagues had first elaborated more than a decade earlier in printed texts.

Although slavery factors into Gardner's Civil War narrative, African Americans themselves play no active role in his postwar landscape. Chapter 2 analyzes his treatment of the institution of chattel slavery (as opposed to his representation of individual African American figures) and demonstrates how Gardner relates slavery to the history of the United States. Gardner, in his treatment of William Pywell's *Slave Pen, Alexandria, Virginia* (1862), the second plate in *Sketch Book*, condemns slavery as a social and economic corruption that undermined American ideals and weakened the nation's status as a social and political model for the world. His presentation of *Slave Pen* reveals his fear that chattel slavery would do more harm to social relations and the moral economy than to the fate of any individual African American. Gardner maintained that the legacy

of slavery would ultimately require a legislative response that would itself exemplify the triumph of American ideals and the potential of American institutions.

Sketch Book and Gardner's other photographic projects make it clear that the photographer saw no resemblance between slave labor and the labor of the white immigrant working class. A similar failure to see any connection between these populations permeated Northern society, where hard labor was deemed "nigger work."[65] Chapter 3 elaborates on Gardner's praise for Northern labor. In his encyclopedic portrait project documenting Union personnel, he celebrates labor communities, elevates workers degraded by industrialization, and offers an alternative model to the display of nation and labor highlighted by the monumental Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations (or the Crystal Palace Exhibition). The historic 1851 London event formed the core part of Gardner's early critiques at the *Sentinel*. In these editorials, Gardner and his *Sentinel* editors demanded a correction to the presentation in Hyde Park with its promotion of wealth over labor; over a decade later, the Civil War offered him just such an opportunity. His photographs of the era, grounded in his communitarian beliefs, envision men working on behalf of a new society. He engaged this project at the time when a newly radicalized labor community was emerging in the United States, and he depicts communities and human connections in formation, in a representational project that insistently seeks to refute the philosophies behind the market forces that were dismantling such relationships and communities.

In chapter 4, I return to the discussion of democracy presented in chapter 1. American political institutions and the national infrastructure they supported as organs and conduits of the federal government and its values were the foundation of Gardner's conception of the democratic ideal and the model he sought to telegraph to the world. Democracy is achieved when "all men of sane mind and of self-supporting means are equally respect worthy, in a political sense," he wrote, and when each, "having an equal interest in the well-working of the state," does "his part, by thought and action, toward that well-working."[66] Like the American poet and author Walt Whitman and the wartime president Abraham Lincoln, both of whom were an inspiration to him, Gardner extolled the national infrastructure because it represented the work of a nation to make manifest its vision in the physical world. Chapter 4 addresses his postwar scenes of Washington, DC, and his symbolic representation of the city (and the nation) in its infrastructure, to which, for him, photographers and photography were integral. The modern world at large, he argued, required the knowledge made available in photography and by artists attuned to modern social life. Gardner's combination of political references and creative production suggests that the photographic dialogue between Great Britain and the United States encompassed not just technical knowledge, but also broader social interests, aesthetic tendencies, thematic trends, and pictorial concerns that remained

current well into the twentieth century. The symbolic, narrative, didactic, and material qualities of the photographic works examined in the chapters that follow reveal the layers of transatlantic social, historical, and political meaning in Gardner's production and add to a growing scholarly recognition of artistic transatlantic exchange.