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Those who know the two dedicatees and their diversely excellent work as critics and scholars may be surprised to find their names in tandem at the beginning of this book. But over many years I have learned to rely on both to keep me seriously alert to the proper tasks of critical scholarship, as I have learned also to pick their brains for clues and fresh solutions; and I have thought that a book which might, on balance, be acceptable to each of them would be a book very much worth trying to write. In a way I have conceived of Leo Marx and Bill Pritchard as this project's supervisory angels, one over each shoulder, and can only hope that in the main each will be tolerant of what he finds here. It would not be the first time they have accepted lodging in the same drafty house.

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