INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

DISORDERLY CONDUCT: THE FIGURE OF THE GIRL IN THREE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN'S NOVELS

by

LISA E. GREEN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2002

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

9/17/02
Date

Neal Tolchin nw
Chair of Examining Committee

Date

Anne Humphreys
Executive Officer

Professor William P. Kelly

Professor David S. Reynolds

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Neal Tolchin, whose enthusiasm for nineteenth-century American women writers sparked my own interest in the field and who served as a perceptive and always encouraging dissertation advisor. Bill Kelly and David Reynolds were thoughtful and generous readers; I much appreciate their insights and encouragement. I also wish to thank Linda Sherwin, former English Program Assistant, for her indispensable help and guidance.

I owe many thanks to Peter Taback, my brutally honest writing partner, who challenged me to sharpen my ideas over breakfasts at the Galaxy Diner on Ninth Avenue. Thanks also to Stephanie Oppenheim, Becky Greene, Liz Albert, and Julie Post, whose friendship has meant so much during my years in graduate school.

I am grateful to my colleagues, past and present, at Hunter College and The Masters School. Most especially, I would like to thank Alan Brick and Louise De Salvo at Hunter and David Lehner, former English Department Chair at Masters and fellow CUNY English Program graduate, for their support.

Finally, I would like to thank my family: Emily Williams, my sister and best friend, was unfailingly positive and encouraging. My favorite brother Frank Green and Carla Green, my littlest sister and favorite "disorderly girl," inspired me. My father Mark Green kept urging me to finish, even when I was convinced that I wouldn't, and Anne Flourney Green was a gracious and loving friend. I especially want to thank my mother Vivian Green, who supported me in every way imaginable during this process and whose advice to "do a workmanlike job" rescued me from many a bout with writer's block. Lastly, my husband Steve Fink listened, read, challenged, and encouraged. His love, warmth, and humor made this work possible.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

In 1841, Nathaniel Hawthorne published a children's magazine tale that included a special warning for girls. Entitled "Biographical Stories for Children," Hawthorne's tale centered on an ailing little boy who listens as his father reads him inspirational stories about the childhoods of great men like Ben Franklin and Samuel Johnson. Because the boy's young friend, Emily Robinson, is listening, his father also decides to include a biography of one famous woman, Queen Christina of Sweden. In summing up the story of Queen Christina's life, the well-meaning father leaves his young listeners with the following moral:

> She grew up, I am very sorry to say, a very unamiable person, ill-tempered, proud, stubborn, and in short, unfit to make those around her happy or to be happy herself. Let every little girl, who has been taught self-control, and a due regard for others, thank Heaven that she has better instruction than this poor little Queen of Sweden. (Hawthorne, Centenary 252)

In sharp contrast to the inspirational biographies of great men, the story of the sad, lonely life of a powerful woman, told here for the benefit of a young girl, is meant to underscore the importance of self-control in countering girls' "disorderly" traits -- ill-temperedness, pride, and stubbornness -- traits which are deemed acceptable in boys.

The didactic story for girls that Hawthorne tells in "Biographical Stories for Children" was told and retold in many different versions during the mid-nineteenth century by men and women alike. It was rehearsed not only in fiction, but also in the proliferation of mid-century conduct manuals that spoke to middle-class Americans' growing concern with controlling strong-willed, rebellious, or, in nineteenth-century parlance, "disorderly" girls. While the advent of industrialism required boys to internalize qualities such as ambition and competitiveness, which were considered essential for success in the "public sphere," it was believed that girls had to inculcate the traits needed to preside over the domestic realm of home and family, which, in the words of the historian Carl Degler, was "but the state writ small" (97).

Since, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the mother was at the head of this microcosm of the state, the proper rearing of girls, who would eventually become mothers themselves, became the focus of increasing attention and anxiety. In her study of a nineteenth-century Massachusetts reform school for "wayward girls," Barbara Brenzel notes that an education in domestic skills was prescribed as a key antidote for girls who committed such crimes as staying out late and running away, transgressions which were "considered morally threatening to social stability" (203). As the first superintendent of the school proclaimed in 1857, the purpose of reforming such girls was "to redeem the erring mothers of the next generation" (qtd. in Brenzel 196).

Many mid-nineteenth-century literary portrayals of the disorderly girl similarly sought to domesticate, educate, reform, or otherwise contain this dangerously uncontrolled female figure. Indeed, the education of the disorderly girl is at the center of a type of popular mid-nineteenth-century American fiction that has been variously labeled "woman's fiction," "sentimental fiction," "domestic fiction," and "the didactic novel."[1]

---

[1]While the term "sentimental" was used disparagingly by many pre-feminist critics, it has since been redefined as

In a description of the standard plot and characterization of novels of this type, one scholar notes that they always center on a "child heroine" who must learn the virtues of self-control:

> The novelists' main concern is the girl's "moral education," her development of Good Good traits. This development turns out to be an education in submission . . . . [I]n novel after novel young heroines must learn to conquer their pride and become humble, docile, and obedient. Any spirit or resistance against injustice is considered a "sickness" that must be cured by strong doses of religion. (White 26)

Scholars have found that, while the "disorderly girl" novel was superseded in terms of output during the mid-nineteenth-century by other popular genres, such as the sensation and adventure tale, many of the period's

---

a legitimate description, one that recent critics such as Jane Tompkins, Gillian Brown, Shirley Samuels, and others have used in studies that take into account theories such as new historicism and cultural criticism. Although the terms "domestic," "didactic" and "woman's fiction" would seem to stress different aspects of this type of fiction, recent critics such as Nina Baym, Jane Tompkins, Barbara White, and others have employed them somewhat interchangeably.

bestsellers were novels with girl-centered plots.[2] A large percentage of these bestsellers were written by women, but, as David Reynolds has noted, there were also male-authored works of "woman's fiction" produced during the period. While Reynolds describes the now forgotten male authors, Timothy Shay Arthur and Charles J. Peterson as prolific creators of domestic fiction, he might also have included Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose romance The Scarlet Letter shares many of the key elements of woman's fiction (338).

Despite Hawthorne's oft-quoted 1855 complaint that "America is now wholly given over to a d---d mob of scribbling women"(qtd. in Wallace 204) such as Maria Cummins, The Scarlet Letter (1850) actually has much in common with Cummins' best-selling sentimental novel The Lamplighter.[3] Indeed, Nina Baym writes that she decided

---

[2]David Reynolds demonstrates that fewer novels categorized as "sentimental-domestic" fiction were published during the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries than were those in other popular categories (338-339). Nina Baym argues that this fact makes it "all the more striking" that such girl-centered novels became bestsellers (xi).

[3]Hawthorne's complex relationship to women writers of his day has been explored by a number of scholars. See especially T. Walker Herbert, "Nathaniel Hawthorne, Una Hawthorne, and The Scarlet Letter: Interactive Selfhoods and the Cultural Construction of Gender"; David Leverenz, "Mrs. Hawthorne's Headache: Reading The Scarlet Letter,"

to include The Lamplighter in a 1991 undergraduate American Renaissance course (which is normally limited to canonical texts such as Walden, Moby Dick, Leaves of Grass and, of course, The Scarlet Letter), in order to show students how much Hawthorne "was engaging with the ideologies expressed in woman's fiction" (xix). But while Baym focuses solely upon Hawthorne's concern with themes of domesticity and motherhood, one might also note his use of the figure at the center of the woman's fiction novel -- the disorderly girl.

Embodied in The Scarlet Letter by Pearl, the uncontrolled, and even seemingly demonic, young daughter of the adulterous lovers, Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale, Hawthorne's portrayal of disorderly girlhood is remarkably similar to that of the conventional women novelists of his day. While Pearl's transformation from wild child to conforming woman is allegorical rather than sentimental (her plot symbolizes the transgression and later penitence of her sinning parents), this transformation nevertheless enacts the same sort of girlhood metamorphosis dramatized by girl heroines such as Cummins' Gertie Flint and Ellen Montgomery of Susan

---

in Manhood and the American Renaissance ; and James D. Wallace, "Hawthorne and the Scribbling Women Reconsidered."

Warner's The Wide, Wide World. For Hawthorne the disorderly girl's transformation is a containment of female power, while for Warner and Cummins it is a necessary prescription for female survival and success in the world. But for all of these writers, the disorderly speech and antics of the young girl pose a threat to a society that had increasingly come to idealize women's role as moral and domestic exemplar.

This study considers how the "disorderly girl" -- a pervasive mid-nineteenth-century fictional type portrayed in the works of countless authors of the period, including Cummins, Warner and Hawthorne -- is re-imagined and re-worked by three women authors just before the start of the Civil War. As many scholars have demonstrated, the Civil War marked the beginning of the shift in the history of gender roles in America that would lead to new opportunities for women outside of the home during the last third of the century. Reaching its peak during the 1850s, conventional woman's fiction was designed to give female readers a sense of their importance within the realm of home and family and to allow them to envision this realm -- which some may have deemed a narrow one -- as a "wide, wide world." As Nina Baym demonstrates, however, the Civil War marked a shift

not only in women's history, but also in women's literature. Women who began writing after the war, she notes, "found the redemptive possibilities of enlightened domesticity to be no longer credible . . . . Home now became a retreat, a restraint and a constraint, as it had not appeared to be earlier"(50).

Writing at the height of the popularity of woman's fiction, the three authors in this study -- Harriet E. Wilson (Our Nig, 1859), E.D.E.N. Southworth (The Hidden Hand, 1859), and Harriet Beecher Stowe (The Pearl of Orr's Island, 1862) -- exploit the genre's plot and themes, but rework its ideology in a way that anticipates this later loss of faith in its "enlightened domesticity." Most importantly, each writer exploits the character at the heart of this established genre -- the undomesticated female child -- by transforming her from a negative character into a powerful figure of truth telling, dissent, and possibility. With her unbridled voice and trickster-like antics, the disorderly girl is, for each of these authors, a self-reflexive and, at times, subversive figure: a stand-in for the author herself. Speaking in ways that the authors themselves could not, the outspoken and questioning voice of this fictive female character allows them to tell stories

about storytelling itself, stories rooted in the authors' personal experiences of race and gender in mid-century America.

The three novels chosen for this study -- Wilson's Our Nig, Southworth's The Hidden Hand and Stowe's The Pearl of Orr's Island -- were composed during the watershed period which led to the Civil War and share a standard plot of girlhood development, but they were selected as much for their differences as for their commonalities. In particular, these three novels suggest a diversity of genres and styles even as each features a re-envisioning of the standard woman's fiction plot. A primarily self-educated free black woman, Wilson brought to her reworking of this standard story elements from the traditions of African-American oral storytelling and the slave narrative as well as such "white" genres as the eighteenth-century seduction plot. As a white southern writer, Southworth drew heavily upon the plantation novel tradition in The Hidden Hand even as she rejected the tradition's conservative political and social agendas. At the same time, Southworth employed aspects of the comic burlesque genre to satirize the more maudlin approach of the sentimental novel. By contrast, Stowe wrote The Pearl of Orr's Island as a realistic and

understated work of New England "local color" fiction featuring regionalist dialect and characterizations. The differences of genre that these three works represent thus reflect some of the range of women's literary voices from the period even as the novels suggest a shared concern with voice and gender.

The first chapter, "Telling Tales Out of School: Girlhood and the Risks of Storytelling in Harriet E. Wilson's Our Nig," focuses upon what was believed to be, until recently, the first African-American-authored novel, a fictionalized autobiography that exploits the white, middle-class genre of woman's fiction as a strategy not only to make marketable but also to safely represent the true story of racism and abuse the author suffered while working as an indentured servant for a white family in the antebellum North. The second chapter, "Countering 'The Iron Car of Literal Law': The Girl as Trickster in E.D.E.N. Southworth's The Hidden Hand" looks at a best-selling comic novel in which a fearless and outspoken girl-heroine, who is linked to the wily trickster and silver-tongued confidence man, exposes the inadequacies of both the masculine rule of law and the conventional women's novel as tools for revealing truth and effecting social change and asserts instead the

power of moral language. The third chapter, "Portrait of the Woman Artist as a Young Boy: Harriet Beecher Stowe's The Pearl of Orr's Island" draws upon biography and current psychological theory to argue that Stowe constructs the young heroine of her most overtly autobiographical novel as a self-portrait of conforming femininity, while investing the "disorderly" side of her self in a male character, the heroine's willful, ambitious and risk-taking younger brother.

The dissertation concludes with an epilogue, "Louisa May Alcott's Jo March and the Disorderly Girl Legacy," which argues that the "disorderly energy" that the girl represents in some mid-nineteenth-century American women's writing led to the proliferation of the figure of the artist in later writing by American women. The epilogue further suggests that this disorderly energy may still be discerned in diverse multicultural and ethnic literature by both women and men in which figures of boundary breaking and voice are used to represent the writer's struggle against enforced silences of other kinds.

* * *

Before looking more closely at nineteenth-century re-workings of the disorderly girl type, it is important to acknowledge competing literary girl types of the period. Perhaps most prominent among these was the figure of the "dying maiden," an ideal of self-abnegation and submissiveness that was often used in sentimental fiction as the disorderly girl's foil. Harriet Beecher Stowe's Little Eva, Louisa May Alcott's Beth March, and Edgar Allan Poe's Annabel Lee are three fictional representations of this ideal, which tended to glorify girlhood death. While the transcendent love of young Annabel Lee is so pure that it causes jealousy among the angels in heaven, who come to take the girl away, Little Eva and Beth March are each transformed into Christ-figures who dispense love and grace while suffering on their death-beds. Historian Barbara Welter has attributed the development of the ideal of the dying maiden to a combination of historical reality (the fact of girls' greater susceptibility to consumption and other illnesses), nineteenth-century religious beliefs, and cultural notions of feminine purity:

> The death of a young girl was so celebrated as a triumph of beauty and innocence that a whole

> ritual grew up around it. The poetry of doomed young maidens . . . enjoyed a certain vogue. It was believed that a progressive spiritualization occurred, edifying to those who remained behind, and sanctifying to those who went ahead. (11)

But the nineteenth-century literary good girl did not have to die to be an angel. A number of Hawthorne's girl characters, among them the eponymous young heroine of "Little Annie's Ramble" (1835), Phoebe of The House of the Seven Gables (1851), and Priscilla of The Blithedale Romance (1852), are characterized as living angels whose very presence brings a sense of spiritual awareness to the other lives they touch, whether it is through their sprightly sweetness, domestic cheer, or hopeful innocence. Clearly, though, the good girl in her various guises is merely the flip side of the disorderly girl; she is the girl that the wayward young heroine is meant to strive to become.

Antebellum conduct books provide an important historical gloss on the ways in which middle-class Americans construed the disorderly girl on the one hand

and the good girl on the other. In these popular "how to" books, girls were instructed to counter their bad impulses -- including usually such traits as selfishness and a bad temper -- with proper behavior and moral principle, and to mold themselves according to the standard feminine ideal. This ideal, according to the author of The Young Lady's Counsellor (1852), is a woman who will "fashion herself and others after the model character of Christ" and whose "power" is exhibited through "gentleness, sweetness, loveliness, and purity" (Wise 88).

Mid-nineteenth-century conduct authors make clear that the traits of the ideal woman are not innate; girls must "conquer" their disorderly impulses before they may be transformed into "true" women. As one conduct writer warns in the preface to her book for girls: "As the girl is, the woman will be, unless some powerful counteraction has intervened" (Graves). In the preface to another girls' conduct book from the period, the author states that his object is to assist girls "in forming their characters upon the best model; that they may become well-bred, intelligent, refined, and good; and then they will be LADIES, in the highest sense (Newcombe).

As a predominantly white, middle-class genre, the conduct book often reveals the anxiety prevalent among members of this class concerning their status and security in a changing and economically unstable society.[4] In Advice to Young Ladies (1848), for example, T. S. Arthur writes that "[i]n this country, more than any other, mutability is stamped upon the form and features of society. The rich man of to-day is the poor man of to-morrow, and the poor man of to-day is the rich man of to-morrow"(24). In addressing the young wives and daughters of these precariously rich (or at least comfortable) men, Arthur advises that the skills of a genteel education may be useful in acquiring a livelihood "should necessity ever require it to be done"(27). In another chapter of his book, Arthur calls upon the ideal woman of the middle class to help to reform society by

---

[4]By the middle of the nineteenth century, many among the middle class expressed anxiety about the threats posed by this changing economy and emphasized the importance of instilling middle-class values in the young as a response to these threats. Historian Mary Ryan has observed that the lengthening of the number of years that children remained under the surveillance of their parents after the 1830s was seen as an opportunity to inculcate the young with the "values and traits of character deemed essential to middle-class achievement and respectability" (184). Further justification for this lengthening of the period of childhood, however broadly defined, was a belief in the "crisis" that puberty was believed to have posed to "the putative innocence of childhood"(Kett 133).

"elevating" those of the lower classes, not to financial security, but "above what is rude, ignorant, and vulgar." These negative traits, Arthur asserts, "will prevail just so long as woman is kept down by the pressure of circumstances; for in her influence upon the other sex, but mainly upon her children, lies the all-potent principle of social reformation"(77).

Arthur's argument is representative of a prevalent middle-class belief in the mother's central role in effecting social stability during a period marked by a volatile economy and mass immigration. In speaking to middle class fears that working class mothers could not live up to this role, Arthur was not far off from reality. As historian Christine Stansell explains, women from all classes of society were the primary caretakers and nurturers of the young, but working-class mothers' competing responsibilities did not allow them to devote themselves to this task as completely as did their middle-class counterparts. Stansell writes that the unruly and wayward children, and particularly the "defiant" daughters, of these distracted working-class mothers thus became symbolic of other kinds of disorder -- social, economic, and moral -- during the period. But as the conduct books suggest, the potential for

"defiance" among middle class girls also provoked anxiety about social disorder during the period.

Antebellum beliefs about girlhood and the attendant risks it was believed to have posed must be understood in the context of the new attitudes towards childhood that emerged during the watershed period of the late eighteenth-century. Among the many changes the Revolution brought to American society was a new valuing of the child as a future citizen upon whom the survival of the young American republic would depend. Moreover, in an era that believed in an ideal of "republican motherhood," the moral and intellectual rearing of girls was seen as especially crucial to achieve this social and political stability.[5] As a result of these beliefs, the period witnessed a new emphasis on girlhood as a distinct stage of female development as well as new ideas concerning the necessity of girls' education. Although these ideas never challenged the prevailing view of women's nature as essentially domestic and maternal - a view that remained unquestioned until the end of the nineteenth century - they led to changes during the middle of the nineteenth century which allowed very young

[5]See Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America.

girls a freedom of movement and voice often deemed unacceptable for grown women.[6]

Historians of American childhood have shown that very young girls of the mid-nineteenth-century, irrespective of race or class, were raised similarly to their brothers. It was only as they approached adolescence that middle-class girls, in particular, were made to conform to the strictures of moral rectitude and domestic zeal that were deemed necessary to successfully assume their future roles as wives and mothers. In a study of the material history of American childhood, Karin Calvert notes that during the early nineteenth

---

[6]Given this historical context, it seems appropriate that Louisa May Alcott uses revolutionary language to describe nineteenth-century girlhood freedom and its loss in Little Women:

> In France the young girls have a dull time of it till they are married, when "Vive la Liberte" becomes their motto. In America, as every one knows, girls early sign a declaration of independence, and enjoy their freedom with republican zest; but the young matrons usually abdicate with their first heir to the throne, and go into a seclusion as close as a French nunnery . . . . (388).

Alcott's references here to the "freedom and independence" of the nineteenth-century American girl as compared to that of her French counterpart are highlighted by the notion that this freedom must be "abdicated" when the girl becomes a grown woman with children of her own.

century very young girls and boys were dressed very much alike in a standard muslin frock, but that by the age of fourteen girls were made to wear restrictive ladylike clothing that included such restraining devices as the whalebone stay (86). Other research has shown that while boys were allowed to exhibit anger, which could be positively utilized as they prepared to enter a public sphere defined by aggressiveness and competition, by the time of puberty girls' anger was not only deemed indelicate, it was also considered a potential threat to the sanctity of the future home and family.[7] Thus for middle-class girls during the mid-nineteenth century, growing up meant relinquishing very real freedoms of mobility and emotional expression as they prepared to assume womanly roles within the domestic realm.

In The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls, Joan Jacobs Brumberg explains that the onset of menarche had much to do with the loss of freedom girls experienced after puberty. Brumberg notes that during the nineteenth century girls typically began menstruating by the ages of fifteen or sixteen, much

---

[7]See Peter N. Stearns, "Girls, Boys, and Emotions: Redefinitions and Historical Change." Journal of American History 80:1 (June 1993): 36-74.

later than girls today, and that, because menarche was synonymous with sexuality, "it was considered a threat to the virtue of young girls" (5). But as other scholars argue, this threatened "virtue" was only one reason that girls' freedom was curtailed after puberty. Historian Caroll Smith-Rosenberg notes that while it was believed that puberty brought strength and vigor to boys, to girls it was thought to bring "increased bodily weakness, a new found and biologically rooted timidity and modesty, and the 'illness' of menstruation" ("Puberty to Menopause" 26).

Constance Nathanson sums up the "paradox" of nineteenth-century social attitudes towards female puberty in her study, Dangerous Passage: The Social Control of Women's Adolescence by noting that an "acute awareness" of the "perils" of girls' burgeoning sexuality was combined with "a social construction of these perils that minimized their sexual and maximized their reproductive connotations" (82). Whether it was because of the threat of pre-marital sexual encounters or because of the risks to the ovaries believed to be posed by physical and mental exertion, young women of the mid-nineteenth-century lost much of the freedom to romp,

play, speak, learn, and even feel that they enjoyed when they were young girls.

Fictive though she was, the undomesticated young girl on the pages of countless sentimental novels of the period had her basis in the historical reality of nineteenth-century girlhood. It is not surprising, then, to find that some women writers of this period saw in the unbridled speech and antics of the sentimental novel's young girl heroine not only a nostalgic reflection of their own repressed and forgotten voices, but also a highly marketable and appealing device for telling stories that could otherwise not be told.

* * *

The Masters School, an independent school in Westchester County, New York, where I have been a teacher for the past few years, was among the first girls' boarding schools in America. Founded in 1877, 12 years after the end of the Civil War, the school was created during a period when female education was no longer limited to preparing girls for domestic roles within the home. Despite this, however, many conservative educators still subscribed to the view evident in the following

graduation address, given by the founder of another girls' school, from just after the war:

> In conducting your education we have aimed to qualify you for the responsibilities of womanly duty, which you will ere long assume; for the world of man's ambition is not befitting your sphere. The clinging tendril is not intended to do the office of the sturdy oak . . . .(qtd. in Rouse 235)

At the same time as views such as this one were still common, educational reformers such as Eliza Masters, the founder of the Masters School, sought to prepare girls for a life beyond a prescribed domestic role by offering curricula that included traditionally "male" subjects like Latin, mathematics, and astronomy. In so doing these reformers found themselves at the center of the heated debate that was taking place during the period concerning the proper uses of female education.[8]

---

[8]It is important to note that only a minority of girls during this period was educated in private academies such as Miss Masters' school, or other such schools that are still well known today like the Emma Willard School and Miss Porter's. Furthermore, these academy-educated girls were primarily from only the upper classes. Most girls of the period were educated in public, or "common"

I joined the Masters School faculty at a time when another period of heightened interest in female education was just beginning to subside. In 1992 a research report put out by the U. S. Department of Education called for a reconsideration of gender-neutral education, citing the under-representation of women in science and math-related careers. Meanwhile, the American Association of University Women issued a study entitled "How Schools Shortchange Girls," which found that girls were lagging behind their male counterparts in academic confidence and called for moving girls "from the sidelines to the center of educational reform debate."[8] At the same time, girls became the focus of interest among feminist psychologists. Most prominent among these was Carol Gilligan, whose work on girls' moral development, self-esteem and voice gained wide circulation despite being

---

schools. See Vinovskis and Bernard, "Beyond Catharine Beecher: Female Education in the Antebellum Period."

[9]See Judith Kleinfeld, "The Myth That Schools Shortchange Girls: Social Science in the Service of Deception" for a critique of the AAUW report. Among the best-selling non-fiction books that emerged from this research are: Mary Pipher's Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls (1994) and Peggy Orenstein's Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap (1995).

subject to criticism by scholars who objected to its use of anecdotal evidence and, most importantly, to its essentialist feminism, which some felt harkened back to outdated notions of gender difference.[10]

Just as nineteenth-century debates about girlhood education, however broadly defined, sparked literary and cultural interest in the figure of the girl, so too has this most recent surge of interest generated a great deal of writing about girlhood. Interestingly, much of this work focuses upon earlier periods rather than on representations of the contemporary girl. Three such studies published in 1994 - 1995 are: The Girl's Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830-1915, edited by Lynne Vallone and Claudia Nelson; The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915, by Sally Mitchell; and Disciplines of Virtue: Girls' Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, by Lynne Vallone. Each of these works employs a combination of literary analyses and cultural criticism to elucidate what one author describes as "the way in which the Girl expressed her independence, as well as the ways in which she was

[10]For a sampling of Gilligan's critics' positions and Gilligan's response, see Kerber, "On In a Different Voice: An Interdisciplinary Forum.

imagined, presented, manufactured, and controlled" (Vallone Girl's).

When I first began this project, I found such current work on girls helpful to my thinking about portrayals of the girl in nineteenth century American fiction. Indeed, the wealth of new research on historical, psychological, and literary constructions of girlhood helped me to focus and refine my approach to American women's writing and led me to ask one of my first research questions: Why are mid-nineteenth-century women writers so interested in writing about unruly girls?

My first attempts to answer to this question employed the scholarship of early feminist critics of American women's writing, including Nina Baym, Mary Kelley, Jane Tompkins, and Judith Fetterley, all of whom had built their work upon the ideology of separate spheres -- the notion that, during the nineteenth-century, binaries such as private and public were divided according to gender lines. More recently, however, a second generation of feminist scholars has inaugurated an era of "post-separate-spheres" criticism, rightly warning that gender roles during the period cannot be reduced to a simple binary and must be complicated by questions of

race, class, religion, region, and the like. As Monika Elbert writes in the introduction to a newly published essay collection, Separate Spheres No More: Gender convergence in American Literature, 1830-1930, "the concept of separate spheres still applies to nineteenth-century literature to some degree, but recent critics have taken a more relaxed approach, especially in terms of the blurred or shifting boundaries between the spheres" (1). The title of a recent special edition of the journal, American Literature, "No More Separate Spheres!" sums up the view of its editor, Cathy Davidson, who takes an even stronger stand against the separate spheres ideology, which she sees as "metaphor" rather than historical fact (444).

These "post-separate-spheres" critics have also warned against the risk of designating Women Writers as a discrete category of literary analysis, set apart from the writings of their male contemporaries. As Davidson argues, the separate spheres binary "allows the contemporary literary historian to focus exclusively on women writers," but at the cost of perpetuating "binaric thinking" that continues to exclude women from the canon of American literature (444). And Elbert notes that by placing male and female writers in dialogue it is hoped

that the essays in her anthology will "make us question hard-and-fast definitions of literary genres and traditions" and that "as they collapse the gender spheres, they expand the canon"(16).

When I began this study, nineteenth-century American women's writing was a burgeoning field. The Rutgers' American Women Writers Series was reissuing forgotten works by authors like Louisa May Alcott, Lydia Maria Child, Fanny Fern and many others; nineteenth-century women authors were finding their way onto the syllabi of college and graduate school literature courses; and a 1996 symposium at Trinity College entitled, "19th Century American Women Writers in the 21st Century" seemed to bode well for continued interest in these formerly forgotten authors well into the next millennium.

I decided to become a secondary school English teacher in 1999 and temporarily left behind my dissertation and the world of nineteenth-century American women, thinking that I would return, Rip Van Winkle-like, to find a changed landscape, one enriched by more criticism, more dissertations, and new editions of other forgotten works by American women. I was surprised to discover when I surfaced each summer from the tide of

tenth-grade essay grading, softball coaching, and dance chaperoning, that the landscape had remained pretty much unaltered. Surveying the criticism produced on Wilson, Southworth, and Stowe as listed in the MLA International Bibliography since 1998, I discovered only a handful of new studies of Our Nig and The Hidden Hand, and, despite numerous new works of criticism on Uncle Tom's Cabin, none listed for The Pearl of Orr's Island, which was out of print until Houghton Mifflin's 2001 reissue.[11]

My initial reaction was in part relief: nobody had written my dissertation while I was away. But then it dawned on me: Had nobody written my dissertation because it was no longer a relevant subject? Because women writers were no longer viable as a category of study? Had the landscape changed, but in a way I hadn't anticipated? I have no clear answers to these questions, but I do find helpful the following passage, a summation of concerns raised by the critics Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pyrse from Davidson's preface to the special edition of American Literature:

---

[11]As a point of contrast, I found 75 new studies of The Scarlet Letter, 89 of Moby-Dick, and over 50 of Walden produced during the same period.

> In different ways . . . both Fetterley and Pyrse insist that post-separate-spheres criticism contributed to a neglect or devaluation of precisely the women writers that earlier feminist critics resuscitated from critical obscurity. The later critics rushed to attack newly rediscovered nineteenth-century writers that had barely been found. One generation of literary scholars found gold and the next cast it aside as dross. Both Fetterley and Pyrse write, explicitly, with the hope that recently rediscovered women writers will not, in Fetterley's coinage, "be re-vanished." (449-450)

If the concerns outlined above seem somewhat too apocalyptic, they do offer some possible reasons for the slackening of new criticism on nineteenth-century American women writers. They also present the other side of the on-going debate concerning the best ways in which to integrate women writers into a canon that has traditionally excluded them.

It is my hope that we may now have reached a point where there is room for criticism that places the work of male and female writers in dialogue and for studies, such as this one, which explore women writers as a discrete

group. One might argue that a study of the trope of the disorderly girl would be strengthened by the incorporation of male authors (Hawthorne comes to mind). However, I believe that this approach would risk obscuring a pattern in women's writing that reveals the special obstacles to expression that certain women faced and the literary traditions they reworked and utilized. Male writers of the period faced psychic and societal obstacles to expression as well, of course, but the story of those obstacles would necessitate shifting the spotlight away from a group of marginalized women's voices that, taken together, reveal a shared use of metaphor that may have implications for scholarly explorations of writing by other marginalized groups.

Finally, I believe that this study contributes to the current reassessment of the ideology of separate spheres by exploring the complex ways in which three writers of the period engaged with it in both their lives and writing. As a free black living in the antebellum North, Wilson used the ideology as a kind of authorial cover even as she exposed in her autobiographical novel the ways in which white middle-class women fell far short of its ideals. Southworth, a white Southerner, manipulated the ideology in order to keep the upper hand

in her relationship with her male publisher, while openly blurring its boundaries through her fictional portrayal of an androgynous heroine. And like Southworth, Stowe paradoxically sought to live up to the ideal in her public persona even as her prominence after the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin permanently removed her from the private sphere. Indeed, Stowe's autobiographical novel may be read as a deliberate interrogation of the ideology and its damaging effects on the psyches of men and women alike.

Whether the ideology of separate spheres is regarded as myth, metaphor or historical fact, these novels suggest that it was the site of important conversations about class, race, and gender identity during the nineteenth-century. A close examination of the intersections between the lives and writing of these writers reveals the extent to which each attempted both to exploit and dismantle the ideology through their re-workings of the questioning, insistent, and nonconforming young girl character of the sentimental woman's novel.

Chapter One: "Telling Tales Out of School: Girlhood and the Risks of Storytelling in Harriet E. Wilson's Our Nig"

Our Nig (1859) is the fictionalized autobiography of a free African-American woman who grew up an indentured servant to an abusive white family in antebellum New Hampshire. Beginning with Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who rescued this long-forgotten book from oblivion in 1982 and authenticated it as the first African-American-authored novel, critics of Our Nig have remarked on the subtlety with which its author, Harriet E. Wilson, represents African-American subjectivity.[12] In describing the changes Wilson made as she transformed her life into fiction, critics have also noted Wilson's strong aesthetic consciousness, narrative control, and adept

---

[12] Critics have called particular attention to Wilson's ironic use of the epithet "nig." Gates argues that the quotation marks around this word in the original title underscore Wilson's irony, while Claudia Tate reads the relationship between the title and signatory, which originally read "by 'our nig,'" as a form of parody (Domestic Allegories 40). Critics have also looked at the suggestiveness of Wilson's subtitle, which includes the phrase, "In A Two-Story White House, North." In this phrase they have noted suggestions of the white Southern plantation mansion, of the White House in Washington, D. C., and of the complex issue of race in the North as indicated by the ambiguity of the phrase "Two-Story" in this context. (See especially Claudia Tate, and Barbara White).

borrowings from disparate generic conventions, including the slave narrative, seduction plot, and, most importantly, sentimental novel.

According to Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Wilson's innovative use of sentimental conventions is especially central to her project because it allowed her to transform herself from "black-as-object into black-as-subject"(Introduction lv), while transforming her white abusers "into objects, the stock, stereotypical objects of the sentimental novel"(Introduction li). Like many other nineteenth-century women writers, Wilson was also driven to write sentimental fiction out of financial need, calling her work an "experiment which shall aid me in maintaining myself and child without extinguishing this feeble life" (preface). Indeed, Wilson's imperative to write a financially viable workwould have itself justified her choice of the sentimental mode, whose nineteenth-century practitioners, such as Susan Warner and Harriet Beecher Stowe, were among the nation's first best-selling authors. But while Wilson exploited the sentimental novel for its marketability and for the cultural authority it commanded, she also turned to this literary form as a means to safely tell her true story.

Following Gates' lead, critics of Our Nig have continued to look closely at Wilson's use of the predominantly female genres of the sentimental tradition, arguing that Wilson borrowed from this tradition not only to gain narrative authority, but also to expose and protest racial oppression. In an essay comparing Our Nig and Harriet Jacobs' Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861), for example, Beth Maclay Doriani writes:

> Both Jacobs and Wilson revise the conventions of white women's genres, the seduction novel and the domestic novel. They express as their goals not only the security of their children and a home but economic independence and political justice. They also defy the understandings of sexual morality found in white women's genres, challenging readers to think about the complexity of morality and virtue. In doing so, they bend the conventions to their other purpose, the creation of selves consistent with their own experience as black women. (207)

The construction of black womanhood in Our Nig has been further examined by Elizabeth Ammons, who focuses upon Wilson's interrogation of ideals of motherhood and maternal power as portrayed in Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. Ammons argues that Wilson draws upon Stowe's "myth of the mother-savior" only to absent this figure from her own text and thus to mock it as an impossible ideal. In another essay linking Our Nig and Uncle Tom's Cabin, Julia Stern explores Wilson's use of the gothic, another genre central to the tradition of white women's writing, to represent rage and social protest and to revise Stowe's "deification" of white motherhood as culturally redemptive.[13]

Focusing upon the sentimental themes of female sexual vulnerability and maternity in Our Nig, critical approaches such as these have provided crucial insights into the challenges Wilson faced as a black woman writer. They have also explained an important strategy Wilson

---

[13]Other essays which explore this issue include: Phyllis Cole, "Stowe, Jacobs, Wilson: White Plots and Black Counterplots"; P. G. Foreman, "The Spoken and the Silenced in Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl and Our Nig"; and Claudia Tate, "Allegories of Black Desire: Or, Rereading Nineteenth-Century Sentimental Narratives of Black Female Authority," in Changing Our Own Words, edited by Cheryl Wall.

employed to protest racial injustice while investing her narrative with authority and sympathy. Yet by emphasizing Wilson's construction of black womanhood in Our Nig, critics have neglected the voice of the young girl that resonates throughout much of the book. While Gates writes at length of Our Nig's connections to "woman's fiction," a category of nineteenth-century sentimental fiction which focuses explicitly upon girlhood development, critics have not fully considered the ways in which Wilson draws upon its construction of female childhood. In their discussions of connections between Our Nig and Uncle Tom's Cabin, for example, neither Ammons nor Stern mentions characters such as Stowe's unruly slave-girl, Topsy. Yet as a rebellious young girl whose education transforms her into a self-reliant, Christian woman, Topsy has much in common with Wilson's heroine, Frado, as well as with many of the young heroines of woman's fiction.[14]

---

[14]Claudia Tate does touch on this issue by comparing Frado to Pearl of Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter. Tate writes that "both Pearl and Frado reject a religion whose deity willfully subjects innocent children to the cruelty of social convention"(46). However, Tate's discussion of Frado as girl here is limited to an analysis of Wilson's interrogation of Christianity.

In this chapter, I argue that Wilson exploits the conventional story of girlhood development that is at the heart of woman's fiction as a means to narrate another mid-nineteenth-century story -- the unsanctioned story of racial abuse in the antebellum North. As Barbara A. White observes, Wilson faced a "crucial dilemma" in narrating her true story: "[H]ow to tell the truth about the racism she experienced in the North without harming the cause of slaves in the South. How could she tell the truth, even slant, about the racism and hypocrisy of abolitionists themselves?"(38). One way Wilson addresses this dilemma is through her use of the figure of the disorderly girl, a literary figure whose outspokenness suggests both transgression and vulnerability, and who is central to the woman's fiction plot. Close attention to this figure reveals Wilson's dramatization of the risks she faced in attempting to narrate and publish her true experience.

Before looking more closely at the ways in which Wilson revises the woman's fiction story of girlhood development, it is helpful to trace some of the commonalities between Wilson's plot and this sanctioned one. While the women's fiction plot was used by a number of female authors of the period, I select for comparison

the version told by Susan Warner in The Wide, Wide World (1850), widely believed to be the nation's first best-seller and one of the first novels to be reissued during the recent resurgence of interest in nineteenth-century American women's writing. While we cannot be certain that Wilson read Warner's novel, it is likely that she did, for as Gates notes, the eclectic selection of epigraphs in Our Nig suggests that Wilson "was a broadly read constituent of nineteenth-century American and English literature," and the novel's structure further indicates that she "read a number of popular, sentimental American novels"(Introduction xxxix).[15] A close comparison of the theme of girlhood in Our Nig and The Wide, Wide World suggests that if Wilson did not draw directly from Warner's enormously popular novel, she borrowed from the literary genre it represented in order to tell her own true story of African-American girlhood

[15]Among the authors cited in the epigraphs are popular nineteenth-century poets such as Eliza Cook, Martin Farquhar Tupper, and Josiah Gilbert Holland, as well as the Romantic poets Shelley and Byron. See also Barbara A. White's recent article, which presents new historical information about Wilson's real-life experience. White writes that because of Wilson's own true experience as a brutalized orphan she "probably did not need fictional models" of such experiences, "[a]lthough [she] was familiar with contemporary novels like Susan Warner's The Wide, Wide World (1850), wherein cruel guardians mistreat orphans"("'Our Nig'" 31).

and racial injustice. By inscribing her story into Warner's highly salable, conventional plot, Wilson not only safely exposed the brutality of her true experience, she strengthened her narrative authority and increased the marketability of her text. Moreover, by drawing upon Warner's construction of the figure of the disorderly young girl, Wilson presented an allegory of the risks she faced as a black author telling an unsanctioned true tale of racism in the antebellum North.

The Wide, Wide World begins with the girl's loss of her mother, who, true to the sentimental tradition, is a paragon of nineteenth-century virtue and morality. Left under the care of her Aunt Fortune, an angular spinster who rules her farming household with an iron hand, the young heroine of Warner's novel, Ellen Montgomery, is taught early that "sorrow's discipline" will strengthen her yet unreformed character. As her mother tells the sobbing Ellen just before leaving on an extended trip to Europe: "[I]f losing your mother might be the means of finding you that better friend, I should be quite willing -- and glad to go -- forever"(23).[16] Similarly, Mag

---

[16]For another parallel between Wilson's true experience and the fictional story told by Warner see the excerpt from a letter Wilson wrote to her real-life mother,

Smith, the mother of Wilson's young heroine, Frado, thrusts her willful young daughter into the hands of the hard-hearted Mrs. Bellmont, a white "mistress" of a New Hampshire farm whom she knows to be a "she-devil," believing that "severe restraint will be healthful"(20).

The plots of these two novels continue along a similar trajectory as both girls confront a new life of domestic labor with their guardians, whose arbitrary meanness likens them to evil stepmothers in the fairy tale tradition. In The Wide, Wide World, Aunt Fortune not only refuses to love and nurture Ellen, she also withholds long awaited letters from her beloved mother, dyes her white stockings brown, and "takes pleasure" in preventing the girl from reading (145). While Aunt Fortune strikes Ellen only once, her treatment of the girl is clearly abusive. Indeed, Jane Tompkins calls The Wide, Wide World "a chronicle of violence," noting that, "[f]or all its exaltation of passivity and turning the other cheek, its central situation, repeated over and over again, is the violation of one human being over

---

Walker, just before Wilson departed for the County House with her young son. Like the young Ellen, Wilson mentions her beloved portable inkstand and bible and addresses her mother with references to blinding tears and biblical quotations. The excerpt is quoted by Allida in the novel's appendix (134-135).

another"(Warner 599). Ellen Montgomery's status as a child is central to this victimization, for as Nina Baym has pointed out, she must endure "the assumption by those who have guardianship over [her] that they 'own' her"(146). Baym might well be describing Our Nig here, since its connections to slavery more explicitly evoke scenarios of power and its abuses. Indeed, this sort of scenario of abuse is evident in Wilson's description of Frado's first day on the Bellmont farm, where she is taught to perform household tasks by a woman whose notion of childrearing emphasizes taunts, scolding, and continual lashings:

> It was new discipline to the child . . . . The same routine followed day after day, with slight variation; adding a little more work, and spicing the toil with 'words that burn,' and frequent blows on her head
> . . . . She was often greatly wearied, and silently wept over her sad fate. (30)

Both Ellen and Frado are introduced as unruly young girls, freely giving voice to emotions that their adult

counterparts deem inappropriate and even dangerous.[17] In Warner's novel, this "buoyant and elastic spirit"(20) represents a flawed nature that falls short of the nineteenth-century ideal of womanly sobriety and self-control embodied by Ellen's mother, who dutifully acquiesces to her husband's decision to move to Europe and leave Ellen behind. By contrast, ten-year-old Ellen's emotional response to her father's decision is anger "sharpened by a sense of wrong and a feeling of indignation"(63). This girlhood response to perceived injustice is similarly presented in Our Nig. When Frado's stepfather, Seth Shipley attempts to break the news that the girl is to be "given away"(18), Frado screams "No!" and jerks away in a manner which destroys Seth's "equilibrium" and leaves him "sprawling on the floor"(19).

But while The Wide, Wide World and Our Nig both feature a disorderly young girl, the girl's willful voice functions differently in each text. The "uncontrolled

[17]While both Ellen and Frado express a range of emotion as young girls, the most "dangerous" of these is anger. For a discussion of anger and gender in nineteenth-century America see Peter N. Stearns, "Girls, Boys, and Emotions: Redefinitions and Historical Change." Stearns notes that in the Victorian period the expression of anger was construed as a threat to the sanctity of the home and family and thus was condemned more in girls than boys.

passions"(11) of Warner's ten-year-old heroine are attributed to an innate depravity which must be conquered through submission to the authority of various guardians and finally to God. By contrast, Frado's antics and outspokenness are valorized as signs of a "natural temperament" which is "in high degree mirthful"(53).[18] In Warner's Calvinist text this sort of temperament is castigated as evidence of the child's unregenerate nature, but Wilson applauds her young heroine for her transgressions. Indeed, Frado's "wild, frolicky"(18) antics are often deemed so entertaining that she is allowed to "venture far beyond propriety, thus shielded and countenanced"(38). In other scenes, Frado's antics are valorized for the way in which they allow her to gain mastery over her abusers, whether her black stepfather or white mistress.

Aligning herself throughout the novel with a humanized dog named Fido, Frado embodies in these scenes not only the figure of the disorderly girl, but also the animal trickster of African folklore, who "relies on wit, speed, and intelligence to deceive, beguile, overwhelm,

---

[18]Gates notes that "Frado's innate innocence, outside the respectability of the church, is one of the most subtle contrasts and social critiques of Our Nig(Introduction xlix).

and defeat a more powerful foe" (Braxton 45).[19] In The Wide, Wide World the figure of the trickster is embodied not by Ellen, but rather by her mischievous friend Nancy Vawse. A poor, lower class girl, born of immigrant stock, Nancy occupies a place outside the bonds of social propriety and proper feminine behavior to which the genteel Ellen must conform. Playing nurse to a bed-ridden Ellen, Nancy inverts the middle-class ideal of the ministering domestic angel as she forces gruel down Ellen's throat, tries on her best dresses, cracks hickory nuts on her bed, and brings a general sense of "lawlessness"(208) to the sanctified domestic setting of the sick room. In this sense Nancy is more like with Frado than is the timid heroine, for these two socially marginalized girls fearlessly "destroy the equilibrium" not only of those who threaten or annoy them, but also of such nineteenth-century sanctums as the sick room, kitchen and school room. While Nancy's disorderly presence is relegated to only a few scenes in Warner's long novel, however, Frado is clearly the heroine of Our

---

[19]For more on the figure of the animal trickster in African and African-American folklore see: Lawrence W. Levine, "'Some Go Up and Some Go Down': The Meaning of the Slave Trickster"; and Roger D. Abrahams, "Playing the Dozens," in Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore, edited by Alan Dundes.

Nig, which is centered not only on her girlhood antics, but her struggles towards womanly self-reliance and religious conversion. In The Wide, Wide World, Nancy recedes from the text when Ellen begins to internalize the tenets of Christian humility and self-control, underscoring her limited role as irreverent and rebellious double for the struggling heroine.[20]

In both novels, the heroine's development is aided by "good" surrogate relatives, who see the potential for salvation in the unregenerate girl. In The Wide, Wide World, this good relative is Alice Humphereys, the pious young woman who guides the willful and angry Ellen towards Christian humility and forgiveness. In Our Nig, Alice has her counterparts in James Bellmont and Aunt Abby, Frado's loving surrogate relatives, whose presence in the Bellmont household helps to mitigate her suffering. In both texts, the deaths of these "good" characters are portrayed through highly ritualized deathbed scenes, in which the girl's feelings for her beloved "sibling" are transferred to a love of Christ. After Alice's death, Ellen is inspired to "trust Him whom

---

[20]See Veronica Stewart for a discussion of Nancy Vawse as a representation of unconscious responses to external authority in Ellen and Warner herself. Stewart's argument is informed by the theories of Jung and Bakhtin.

she trusted"(442), as she prepares to fulfill Alice's role as domestic exemplar. James' dying words are similarly meant to inspire faith and proper behavior in Frado, as he attempts to guide the girl towards salvation: "[I]f you will be a good girl, and love and serve God," he tells her, "it will be but a short time before we are in a heavenly home together"(95).

But while both girls struggle with reconciling the notion of religious faith with their own doubts and suffering, only Ellen accepts Christianity unequivocally. While Frado's minister "endeavor[s] to make Christ, instead of James, the attraction of Heaven"(103) and Aunt Abby encourages her to read the bible, Frado's religious anxieties increase when she is confronted by Mrs. Bellmont, who tells her that "she could not go where James was; she need not try"(100). Frado finds it difficult to accept the hypocrisy of formalized Christianity as it is embodied by Mrs. Bellmont, whose membership in the church does not deter her from behaving brutally towards her servant and even her own children.[21] Indeed, while James and Aunt Abby see in Frado a soul to save, Mrs. Bellmont is threatened by her servant's

---

[21]See White ("'Our Nig'") on the possibility that the real person upon whom Mrs. Bellmont was based was a child-beater.

increasing faith, telling her "if she did not stop trying to be religious she would whip her to death"(104). This hypocrisy finally puts an end to Frado's "inward contest"(85). But if Frado is described as having only a "Christian exterior," she never fully abandons her faith. She continues to read her bible, which she considers her "greatest treasure"(117) and to "repos[e] on God"(130), though she no longer subscribes to the formal Christianity embraced by Mrs. Bellmont.

Nina Baym writes that "[a]lmost all the heroines of [woman's] fiction were devoted to books and hungry for formal education. The women authors saw cultivation of the mind as the great key to freedom, the means by which women, learning to think about their situation, could learn to master it"(31). In The Wide, Wide World, Ellen's struggles against the authority of Aunt Fortune, who tells her that "it doesn't do for women to be bookworms"(140) revolve around this issue. Forced to resort to self-teaching when her aunt opposes her wishes to attend school and attempts to force her into learning only the domestic arts, Ellen relies upon the tutelage of Alice, and then Alice's brother John, who instruct her in such subjects as French, grammar, and history. In Our Nig, Frado must similarly rely upon self-education when

she encounters the opposition of her guardian, who "was in doubt about the utility of attempting to educate people of color, who were incapable of elevation"(30). Like Aunt Fortune, who assesses Ellen's worth solely in terms of her "usefulness"(140), Mrs. Bellmont trains Frado only to the extent that it benefits her own economic interests in the child as laborer(26). As she "merge[s] into womanhood," however, Frado is determined to build upon her limited education, and despite her laboring, "[s]he had her book always fastened open near her, where she could glance from toil to soul refreshment"(116).

When she is released from her indenture to the Bellmonts at the age of eighteen, Frado's education is further extended by a simple woman "who could see merit beneath a dark skin"(124) and not only helps her to become "[e]xpert with the needle" but "teach[es] her the value of useful books":

> [W]hile one read aloud to the other of deeds historic and names renowned, Frado experienced a new impulse. She felt herself capable of elevation; she felt that this book information supplied an undefined dissatisfaction she had

> long felt, but could not express. Every leisure moment was carefully applied to self-improvement. (124-125)

In the last chapter of Our Nig, as fiction merges into autobiography and Frado merges with Wilson herself, this new-found literacy is represented by Our Nig itself, which replaces sewing and other employment as the means by which Wilson, now emerging as the true heroine of her novel, will attempt to support herself. Thus Wilson concludes her narrative with an injunction to her "gentle reader" that, while her story may fall short of complete self-disclosure, "[e]nough has been unrolled to demand your sympathy and aid"(130). That Wilson saw her writing in economic terms is underscored in an appended testimonial by her friend Allida, who explains that despite Wilson's past success at finding gainful employment, repeated troubles with her health have made her "obliged to resort to another method of procuring her bread -- that of writing an Autobiography"(137).

Gates writes that Our Nig shares "the tripartite structure of other women's novels, including an unhappy childhood, a seemingly endless period of indenture, and the conclusion"(Introduction xliv). Wilson revises this

structure, however, by rejecting its standard conclusion -- the conventional happy ending. Frado's story of girlhood development culminates not with this requisite happy ending, but with the heroine's seduction and abandonment -- the theme of the eighteenth-century novel of sensibility, which many of the authors of woman's fiction saw themselves as writing against. As Baym notes, these authors "detested Richardsonian fiction" with its emphasis on women as sexual prey. In contrast to this earlier genre, which ends with the death, often by suicide, of the transgressive heroine, woman's fiction instead typically ends with a happy marriage in which the orphaned heroine finally acquires the security of a loving home (26, 149).

This is exactly the ending Warner presents in the unpublished final chapter of The Wide, Wide World, in which Ellen's marriage to her mentor and surrogate brother, John Humphereys does not so much mark her entry into mature womanhood as signify her reclamation of the familial structure and security she lost as a child. More an idealized relationship between father and daughter than husband and wife, this marriage all but denies the heroine's achievement of adulthood. When John shows Ellen the desk drawer filled "with gold and silver

bank bills" over which she is to be "steward," Ellen seems to cling to a state of girlish dependency and uncertainty, telling her new husband: "You will tell me if I do anything wrong, and it will be just like old times. How I have longed for those old times!"(580). Yet despite Ellen's subordination to John as a figure of greater power and authority, their marriage is clearly presented as a happy ending because it reestablishes the bonds of family which the orphaned heroine has struggled throughout the narrative to replicate.[22] Although Wilson follows the plot expectations of woman's fiction by ending Frado's story with marriage, this union is ill fated. Rather than granting her the loving family she never had, Frado's marriage forces her to face abandonment once again, though this time as a woman rather than a girl.

If there is a certain dark symmetry in Frado's double abandonment, it is underscored by the story of her white mother, Mag Smith, which similarly begins with orphanhood and ends with abandonment. Like Frado, Mag's

---

[22]While this final chapter was not released until the 1987 publication of the Feminist Press edition of the novel, a future marriage between Ellen and John is strongly hinted at in the original conclusion.

girlhood was marked by tragedy: She was "[e]arly deprived of parental guardianship, far removed from relatives" and "left to guide her tiny boat over life's surges alone and inexperienced"(1).[23] In contrast to Frado's story, however, Mag's orphan's tale quickly shifts into a classic tale of seduction. Mag's status as a poor, friendless orphan, together with her "loving, trusting heart"(1) make her vulnerable to the charms of an upper-class Lovelace, who leaves her pregnant and alone. Shut out by her white community following her transgression, Mag turns to the only one willing to help her -- a "kind-hearted African"(9) named Jim, whom she soon marries and with whom she conceives Frado. But while Mag's story ends with marriage to a decent and kind man, this is not the conventional ending of the typical orphan's tale as portrayed by authors such as Warner. Instead, Wilson invokes the over-wrought language of the novel of sensibility to describe Mag's unsanctioned

---

[23]Claudia Tate reads Wilson's sympathetic depiction of Mag Smith in terms of Wilson's need to remember her own mother as good and loving (35). One might also argue that Wilson wishes to present Mag's story sympathetically because it prepares the reader to accept with sympathy Wilson's own story of seduction and abandonment which, by the novel's conclusion, leaves her a destitute and ailing single mother whose last hope lies in the purchase of her book by readers.

marriage to a black man: "Poor Mag," Wilson writes, "She has sundered another bond which held her to her fellows. She has descended another step down the ladder of infamy"(13).

In the concluding chapter, entitled "The Winding up of the Matter," Wilson invokes the language of this opening chapter to describe Frado's own seduction by a professed fugitive slave named Samuel:

> . . . [W]as it strange that she should attract her dark brother; that he should inquire her out; succeed in seeing her; feel a strange sensation in his heart towards her; that he should toy with her shining curls, feel proud to provoke her to smile and expose the ivory concealed by thin, ruby lips; that her sparkling eyes should fascinate; that he should propose; that they should marry? (126)

While Frado's marriage allows her to "realiz[e], for the first time, the relief of looking to another for comfortable support"(127), this relationship hardly offers the security that Ellen enjoys with John or even that Mag has with Jim. Indeed, Frado's "silent sympathy"

with Samuel is soon betrayed. As Wilson writes, Frado "open[s] her heart to the presence of love -- that arbitrary and inexorable tyrant"(127) only to discover that her new husband is an imposter -- a free black posing as an escaped slave. Leaving her without provision, Samuel continually goes away to "lecture" to an audience of "hungry abolitionists"(127, 128). Frado's troubles increase when she finds herself pregnant: "Once more alone! Yet not alone. A still newer companionship would force itself upon her. No one wanted her with such prospects. Herself was burden enough; who would have an additional one?"(128). Absent for increasingly long periods, Samuel eventually dies of yellow fever in New Orleans, and Frado, now left an ailing widow with a young son to support, has no choice but to throw herself on the mercy of public charity and "kind friends"(128), who offer her shelter and care for her child while she attempts to find work. Another friend later "kindly provides her with a valuable recipe" which she manufactures and sells, allowing her "a more agreeable, and an easier way of sustenance"(129). Despite this, however, Frado (now revealed to be Wilson herself) remains an "invalid" and, as Wilson asserts in the

conclusion to her novel, now must depend upon the "sympathy and aid" of her "gentle reader"(130).

The stories of Mag Smith and Frado end with seduction, but they begin with orphanhood. Unlike the struggles of Ellen Montgomery and the other middle-class orphans that populate nineteenth-century women's writing, however, the sufferings of Mag and Frado are complicated by class and racial circumstance. As a poor white, Mag's victimization stems from her wish to transcend class boundaries, a wish that not only fails to rescue her from the struggles of the working class, but forces her further into a life of poverty (8). Similarly, Frado's struggles stem from her wish to assert herself against a racist and exploitative employer who views her as "Nig." Even Frado's seduction is linked to her racial circumstance: she becomes a victim when she misguidedly places her trust in her "dark brother" -- a sense of trust which John Ernest describes as "a naive belief in the inherent community of race"(429)

Yet if both Mag and Frado are victims of their social standing, the possibilities for redemption are much stronger for Mag as a white woman. While she remains ostracized by her white community following her transgression, Mag finds love and security in her relationship with her black husband, Jim who "loved [her]

to the last" and "toiled for her sustenance long after he was able to do so"(15). By contrast, Frado's status as a poor, black single mother undercuts not only the happy ending of the typical sentimental novel, but any conclusion at all. As Gates writes:

> The desertion of her husband opens, rather than ends, the text, preventing the sort of closure we expect in this genre of the sentimental novel
> . . . . Frado's marriage to Samuel both obliterates the only independent, peaceful, relatively prosperous phase in her life, and serves as the incident that negates the novel's closure and forces the author of Our Nig to write, then attempt to sell, her story. (Introduction xlviii)

While the story of the novel ends ambiguously, the real-life story which prompted the writing of the book ends with tragedy: Our Nig was a failure in that it did not provide Wilson with the financial resources she needed to save her young son, who died of fever in the County House for the poor in 1860, "only six months after the

publication of the book intended to raise money for his support"(White, "'Our Nig'" 21).[24]

During the mid-nineteenth-century, many middle-class white women turned to writing as one of the few acceptable ways in which a woman of this period could, in the words of Allida, attempt to "procure her bread." As numerous conduct books from the period reveal, middle and upper class status provided no guarantee of financial security during this economically unstable period, and girls and young women were urged to be prepared to rely on their own resources if circumstances necessitated it. Many educated middle-class women turned to writing as a logical means of self-support during these financially perilous times; it was an occupation which not only drew upon their literacy, but proved more attractive in terms of financial reward and influence than the few other occupations open to women such as millinery work and teaching.[25]

---

[24]It was in fact the discovery of the death certificate of Wilson's son that enabled Gates and his colleagues to verify Wilson's racial identity and authorship of Our Nig. This is perhaps the saddest of what Gates calls "the list of ironies in [Wilson's] endeavor"(Introduction xiii).

[25]See Nina Baym(30-31).

As an educated upper middle-class woman whose family began to suffer financial difficulties when she was eighteen years old, Susan Warner similarly turned to writing for economic reasons. Neither Susan nor her younger sister, Anna married, in large part because the family's loss of wealth also entailed a loss of social standing. Thus driven to poverty and isolation, the Warner sisters' impetus for writing was financial need, and from the beginning their work was informed by an awareness of the importance of marketability and audience. Anna Warner's well-known story of the genesis of The Wide, Wide World underscores this point. In her 1909 biography of her sister, Anna remembers their Aunt Fanny suggesting, "Sue, I believe if you would try, you could write a story." Anna qualifies this recollection by adding: "Whether she added 'that would sell,' I am not sure; but of course that is what she meant"(263). In fact The Wide, Wide World did sell: It became the first American novel to sell over a million copies and received widespread critical praise. In writing sentimental fiction, Warner may have indeed sought to do the "cultural work" of bringing the nation to Christ, but she also wrote with an understanding that such Christian values, as well as the values of domesticity, would

appeal to the tastes of a broad middle-class audience. Warner's awareness of this audience, and the need for money which drove her to write, thus defined the terms of her career. As Susan Williams argues, Warner's success as a sentimental novelist stemmed directly from "her responsiveness to the desires of her readers" (566).

Harriet Wilson also turned to writing out of financial need, but her relationship to what Elizabeth Fox-Genovese calls her "probable" and "imagined" readers was more problematic than was Warner's relationship to her largely white middle-class audience ("To Weave" 189). Despite her direct appeal to her "colored brethren" for patronage, for example, scholars such as Claudia Tate have noted that Wilson also betrays an awareness of, and indeed need for, sympathetic white readers who "had the financial means to assist her with her project by purchasing the book"(Wall 113).[26] As John Ernest notes, this awareness of a white audience is suggested by the novel's subtitle, which includes a phrase referring to the presence of "slavery's shadows" in the North, a fact

---

[26]See also Julia Stern, who writes: " . . . hoping to earn enough to support [her son] through the sale of her novel, Wilson turned to the public. Though the novel was pitched to a black audience (Preface), Wilson's connections to her community crossed racial lines"(458).

that black readers would not need to be reminded of. It is also suggested, Ernest writes, by Wilson's handling of her first chapter, which is entitled "Mag Smith, My Mother":

> Presenting Frado's story as a sequel of a tale of love and seduction and postponing the identification of Mag Smith as white, Wilson undermines any assumption that the relationship between narrator and reader can be defined according to the conventions of racial affiliation. Both in the preface and throughout the narrative, Wilson signals her awareness that this text might be read and misread by those anxious to defend slavery . . . and to dismiss African Americans . . . . (426)

This passage points not only to the complex question of Our Nig's imagined audience, but also to the risks Wilson faced in presenting her autobiography to the public. In the hands of "those anxious to defend slavery," there was the risk that her story might be used as grist for the argument that the condition of free black workers in the North was worse than that of slaves in the South.

But Wilson also faced risks in presenting her book to those one might assume would have been sympathetic to a story of racial oppression and abuse: white abolitionists. Although this prospective white audience opposed slavery in the South, however, they were often reluctant to admit that racism even existed in the "free" North. As Eric Gardner notes, despite their sympathy to the plight of black slaves, many of these white abolitionists would have been "frightened or offended" by Wilson's graphic portrayal of racism in the North (243). Moreover, as Gates has observed, Wilson's "unabashed" portrayal of a relatively happy interracial marriage, a subject that was considered highly controversial during the mid-nineteenth century, may have further contributed to the novel's obscurity in the North as well as the South (Introduction xxxix).

Our Nig may have also alienated the black audience that Wilson directly targeted in her preface. Though they were already painfully aware of the presence of racism in the North, black abolitionists would not have approved of Wilson's negative portrayal of a "fake" fugitive slave who lectures to "hungry abolitionists"(Gates, Figures 137). Furthermore, as Claudia Tate writes, Wilson's use of the epithet "nig" in her title might have further offended

black readers who may not have recognized its intended irony and may have "erroneously concluded that Our Nig was a masked white story about black inferiority"(Wall 114).[27]

Finally, Wilson also faced personal risks in publishing her true story. Barbara White's recent research on the real-life family upon whom the fictional Bellmont family was based has shown that "Wilson had much to fear" from the surviving members of this family, who had abolitionist ties and who would have been embarrassed by her exposure of the family's ill-treatment of their black servant ("'Our Nig'" 40). Thus, as Gates writes: "It is clear that Wilson's anxieties about offending her Northern readers were not the idle uneasiness most authors feel about their ideal constituencies"(148). Indeed, the project of writing and publishing Our Nig was fraught with risks -- risks that Wilson would probably

---

[27]It is important to remember that until Gates authenticated Wilson's racial identity and authorship of Our Nig in 1982, there was no real proof that the novel was actually written by a black author. Thus Barbara White notes that the novel's title "contributed to a rumor" among rare book dealers "that the author was white"("'Our Nig'" 20-21). Gates himself writes that when he first picked up the novel in a used-book store he "was curious about the book's title" but that he put off reading it for a year: "I assumed that Our Nig was a book full of happy, shiny darkies, strumming banjos out in the field. Since I did not especially relish the notion of entering this fabricated never-never land of racial fantasy, I put Our Nig on the shelf . . . "(125).

not have ventured to take had it not been for the urgency of her need to support herself and her young son.

Wilson's awareness of the risks she faced in publishing Our Nig is revealed both in the novel's preface and in alterations she made to her autobiography itself. Wilson thus begins by noting that she would not want her work to "palliate" Southern slavery "by disclosures of its appurtenances North" and that she had deliberately edited her true story for this reason:

> I do not pretend to divulge every transaction in my own life, which the unprejudiced would declare unfavorable in comparison with the treatment of legal bondmen; I have purposely omitted what would most provoke shame in our good anti-slavery friends at home. (Preface)

The need to guard herself against both public censure and personal risk was perhaps the primary reason Wilson sought to fictionalize her actual experience by changing the names of the white family members with whom she lived and by making other narrative alterations. Principal among these alterations, according to White, may have been Wilson's omission of the fact that the real-life

Bellmonts were abolitionists. White suggests that Wilson not only resists including this fact in her description of the Bellmonts, but also deliberately withholds her angry critique against "professed abolitionists" until the conclusion of her text, where it is safely distanced from her descriptions of her mistreatment at the hands of this family("'Our Nig'" 38). In addition, as Gates has noted, the appended authenticating letters by Allida and two other friends of Wilson echo the preface not only in their appeals for patronage, but also as "a polemical gesture aimed at diffusing the intensity of her critics"(149). Yet despite protections such as these, Wilson still risked offending or being misunderstood by her prospective readers, both black and white.

A close reading of Our Nig reveals that Wilson represents this authorial risk, which was implicit in the very nature of her project, through her characterization of her alter ego Frado, a risk-taking girl. In a series of episodes in which Frado attempts to oppose her oppressors and tell the truth about her maltreatment, Wilson presents an allegory of the dangers implicit in her own endeavor at truth-telling. Despite the risks of punishment and censure entailed by Frado's self-expression, however, this transgressive girl is always

supported by an audience of sympathetic listeners and watchers who are able to bear witness to her suffering and who help to validate her voice. Wilson clearly hoped that she would have a similarly sympathetic audience of readers for her book.

The episode that initiates this theme of truth telling in Our Nig begins in the classroom. On her first day of school, Frado incurs the wrath of Mrs. Bellmont's adolescent daughter Mary, who shares her mother's cruel disposition and who is angered by the fact that she must attend school with the black servant whom her family refers to as "Nig." When Mary is made jealous by Frado's growing popularity with the other school children, her anger escalates to the point that she wishes "to use physical force 'to subdue her,' to 'keep her down'"(33). On their way home from school one day, Mary decides to act on these angry impulses by attempting to force Frado across a dangerously narrow plank, a plan which results in Mary's own fall into the stream. It is only because of the intervention of "some of the larger scholars" that Mary is saved from drowning and Frado, who had "hesitated, resisted" Mary's command to cross, from falling(33).

When the two girls return home, they tell different stories of the incident. While a tearful Mary exclaims that "Nig pushed me into the stream," Frado proclaims her innocence and "relat[es] the occurrence truthfully"(34). Mr. Bellmont is inclined to give Frado the benefit of the doubt, but refuses to get involved and "left the house as he usually did when a tempest was threatening to envelop him"(34). The withdrawal of Mr. Bellmont leaves Frado without protection from Mary and Mrs. Bellmont, who punish her "lying" by beating her harshly and then by "propping her mouth open with a piece of wood"(34-35). When Mrs. Bellmont's son Jack attempts to intervene, his mother justifies her actions by telling him that Frado "came home with a lie; it made Mary's story false"(35).

Frado's propensity to speak out in this episode is construed as punishable because it threatens to expose her white sister Mary's falsehood and abuse. Possessing the power to undermine the authority of Mary and Mrs. Bellmont through words, the danger posed by Frado's speech is suggested by a method of punishment that serves literally to block her ability to speak. When Jack searches for Frado who, the narrator explains, has been "shut up in a dark room, without any supper"(35), Mary tells him that, "Mother gave her a good whipping and shut

her up." As if to underscore the double meaning of the phrase "shut up" in this context, Mr. Bellmont then enters to ask if "Frado was shut up yet"(36).[28] While Frado has indeed been silenced, her story is nevertheless supported by Jack, who is moved to pity by what he understands to be Frado's truthfulness. Jack comes to Frado's aid not only by removing the wood from her mouth and comforting her until she falls asleep, but also by proving the veracity of her story. Countering Mrs. Bellmont's accusation that Frado is a liar, Jack presents an audience of supporters to validate her honesty, telling his mother that "the school-children happened to see it all, and they tell the same story Nig does. Which is most likely to be true, what a dozen agree they saw, or the contrary?"(35).

When Jack imparts this tale of unjust suffering to his father, who had been previously indifferent to Frado's plight, Mr. Bellmont is moved to tears. As Wilson writes, Mr. Bellmont "seemed untouched, till a glance at Jack exposed a tearful eye"(36). Wilson here

---

[28]The use of the phrase "shut up" to signify "hold one's tongue" or "compel silence" dates from the sixteenth century. Among the texts that include examples of the phrase "shut up" in this context are Shakespeare's King Lear, Dickens' Little Dorrit and Kipling's Barrack Room Ballads. See John S. Farmer and W.E. Henley, Slang and Its Analogues Past and Present.

suggests that her true story possesses as much sentimental power as the fiction that was prompting the tears of droves of nineteenth-century readers. But she also suggests that the problematic message of this story needed sympathetic and attentive "readers" such as Jack, who could not only help others to see her story's power, but attest to its integrity in the face of an audience that might be inclined towards indifference, skepticism, or even a willful desire to suppress it.

In another episode, which begins with Frado's playful performance on the roof of a barn, Wilson expresses her concern with audience responses to her own literary "performance." In this episode, Frado decides to climb to the top of the Bellmont barn, where the remnants of some recent repair work have provided "a staging"(53). Mounting the roof in "high glee," Frado receives different reactions from the members of the diverse audience watching her. While Mary and Mrs. Bellmont proclaim that they do not care if she breaks her neck, Mr. Bellmont calls "sternly for her to come down," and his invalid daughter Jane "nearly faint[s] from fear." Jack and the hired men who work on the farm appreciate Frado's antics and laugh "at her fearlessness"(53). This last response nurtures Frado's

"mirthful inclination," and encourages her to attempt even bolder pranks, such as one she performs on a "willful" sheep. As Wilson explains: "Among the sheep was a willful leader, who always persisted in being first served, and many times in his fury had thrown down Nig, till, provoked, she resolved to punish him"(54). Echoing the earlier incident with Mary on the plank, Frado's prank involves standing on "the highest point of land nearest the stream" and tricking the sheep away from his pasture and into the water.

Although Frado does not realize it, Mr. Bellmont and the hired men are watching her performance with much anxiety: "Should she by any mishap lose her footing, she must roll into the stream, and without aid, must drown . . . . They watched in breathless silence"(54). Yet when the sheep leaps towards the "mock repast" that Frado holds out and ends up rolling into the water, only the hired men understand the "object" of her trick. While Mr. Bellmont "talked seriously to the child for exposing herself to such danger," the men lay "convulsed with laughter"(55) as they applaud Frado's successful act of revenge against the sheep that had tormented her.

What the reader further understands is the implicit connection between this willful sheep and Frado's human

tormenter Mary, whose own act of "fury" had earlier resulted in Frado being "thrown down"(54). Indeed, Frado later tells Aunt Abby that Mary "is our cross sheep just as much, that I ducked in the river; I'd like to try my hand at curing her too"(80). While Aunt Abby reproves Frado for these words, and for celebrating Mary's imminent plans to leave home, Frado's "clear voice" sings joyously of "the relief she felt at the removal of one of her tormentors"(81). When Frado later learns of Mary's untimely death, she presents the following "strange query" to Aunt Abby: "She got into the river again . . . didn't she; the Jordon is a big one to tumble into, any how"(107).

Clearly, Frado's prank against the willful sheep is meant to suggest her wish for revenge against her abusive white sister, Mary -- her wish to "cure" Mary by exposing her persistence "in being first served"(54). Yet vindication of this sort requires the presence of someone to act as witness, someone to expose one's tormentor to. In the sheep episode, Frado's sense of revenge is at least partly contingent upon the approving audience of hired men who watch her perform. Unlike Mr. Bellmont and Jane, these observers are entertained by Frado's performance because they are able to see the "object"

that lies behind it -- the exposure and punishment of one who had "thrown her down."

Mrs. Bellmont, Frado's other tormentor, is similarly exposed in a later episode, which takes place at the family dinner table. Banished from this table by Mrs. Bellmont, who forces her servant to eat while assuming "a standing attitude"(68), Frado is allowed to sit with the family for the first time only when Mrs. Bellmont's visiting son James insists that "while I stay, she is going to sit down here, and eat such food as we eat"(68). While Mrs. Bellmont is not pleased by James' "innovations of table discipline"(70), she is powerless to oppose her son and a "few sparks from [her] black eyes" are her "only reply" to his request(68). But Mrs. Bellmont's rage is ignited when she enters the dining room one day to find Frado reaching for a dessert plate while seated in "her mistress's chair"(71). When Mrs. Bellmont commands Frado to eat from her mistress' dirty plate rather than take a new one, Frado deliberately insults her by calling her dog, Fido to lick the plate clean.

After hearing "the kitchen version" of this story from his brother Jack, James chastises his mother for provoking Frado's "impudent" actions: "You have not treated her, mother, so as to gain her love; she is only

exhibiting your remissness in this matter"(72). Unmoved by James' speech, Mrs. Bellmont waits until she is alone with Frado and then beats her harshly and threatens that if she ever again "exposed her to James" she would "cut her tongue out"(72). Explaining that this beating is a way "to bring up arrearages," Mrs. Bellmont makes it clear that she does not want her servant to profit from the incident. Yet this is just what Frado manages to accomplish. Despite her mistress' threat, Frado not only succeeds in "exhibiting her remissness," but does so in such an entertaining manner that Jack, who "boil[s] over with laughter" in retelling the incident to James, offers to pay Frado for her prank. After Jack finishes repeating this plate-licking story, he throws a silver dollar at Frado and says, "There, take that; 't was worth paying for"(72). Wilson hoped that her prospective readers would deem her own story, which also sought to expose the "remissness" exhibited by Mrs. Bellmont, not only morally instructive, but also entertaining enough to be considered worth paying for.

Ironically, though, while this episode may be read as an allegory of storytelling, Frado's victory over Mrs. Bellmont in this scene costs her her voice. When James finds her alone and sobbing after her beating, "she dared

not answer his queries"(72) for fear that Mrs. Bellmont would act upon her earlier threat. While James is able to guess the reason for Frado's crying, the risk of inciting Mrs. Bellmont's revenge prevents her from speaking out. It is not until James becomes seriously ill in a later episode that Frado breaks this silence. Offended by the fact that Aunt Abby is spending so much time at James' bedside, Mrs. Bellmont tells Abby the falsehood that James no longer wishes to have her visit. When James' wife, Susan questions Mrs. Bellmont about Abby's absence, Mrs. Bellmont tells her about the lie and instructs her: "You need make no stir about it; remember"(92). Fearful of Mrs. Bellmont's "fiery glance," Susan keeps silent(93). But when James asks Frado about the reason for Abby's absence, Frado tells all. Abby is welcomed back into the sick room by James, but Frado is soon "seized" by Mrs. Bellmont who places the wedge of wood between her teeth and threatens to "'cure her of tale-bearing'"(93). Frado remains in this position until Mr. Bellmont enters and, despite the fact that her mouth is gagged, begins to ask her questions that "she did not, because she could not, answer"(94).

While her heroine is thus physically prevented from speaking, Wilson herself deliberately chooses not to

speak. Refusing to narrate the ensuing exchange between Mr. Bellmont and his wife, Wilson explains: "Their conversation we will omit; suffice it to say, a storm raged which required many days to exhaust its strength"(94). Wilson's reasons for remaining silent in this passage are unclear. Did she deem the substance of this conversation irrelevant to the narrative as a whole? Did she feel that revealing this conversation would have posed some unnecessary risk? Whatever her motive, Wilson's deliberate silence in this episode underscores not only the dangers of "tale-bearing," but also her own need to balance self-expression with self-protection in the text as a whole.

Yet while Wilson chooses to remain silent in this episode, her autobiographical character, Frado continues to express herself. When James' imminent death contributes to Frado's increasing interest in religion and to a new "solicitude about the future," Mrs. Bellmont tells her servant not to bother with prayer, which "was for whites, not for blacks," and that to do as her mistress "commanded . . . was all that was required of her"(94). Despite Mrs. Bellmont's admonishing words, Frado continues to undergo much inner turmoil about James and about her own "fitness for heaven" as a black person.

When she is finally allowed to attend church meetings, Frado discovers in the family minister not only a spiritual guide, but a mentor who encourages her "to speak freely her mind":

> [The minister] was surprised to find the little colored girl so solicitous, and kindly directed her to the flowing fountain where she might wash and be clean. He inquired of the origin of her anxiety, of her progress up to this time, and endeavored to make Christ, instead of James, the attraction of Heaven. He invited her to come to his house, to speak freely her mind to him, to pray much, to read her Bible often. (103)

While Frado responds by speaking openly in meetings about her burgeoning religious experience, Mrs. Bellmont fears that her servant is exposing her abuse to the congregation. When she is informed by one of her neighbors that "her colored girl 'related her experience the other night at meeting,'" Mrs. Bellmont "expected to hear the number of times she had whipped Frado, and the number of lashes set forth in plain Arabic numbers"(103).

Mrs. Bellmont's subsequent threats over this imagined exposure help to end Frado's religious strivings, but they do not end her desire to "speak freely her mind." This desire is encouraged by Mr. Bellmont, who advises Frado to avoid punishment when "she was sure she did not deserve a whipping"(104). When Mrs. Bellmont next raises a stick to beat her, Frado follows this advice:

> "Stop!" shouted Frado, "Strike me, and I'll never work a mite more for you;" and throwing down what she had gathered, stood like one who feels the stirring of free and independent thoughts."(105)

Frado's triumph in this scene is short-lived, for her mistress soon continues her abuse and taunting. However, Frado's "victory at the wood-pile" serves to further encourage her to speak out against what she perceives to be injustice and "to assert her rights when they [are] trampled on"(108).

Frado employs this outspokenness to defend the interests of others as well as her own in an episode which features Jack's new wife, Jenny. An orphan whose poverty is compensated for by kindness, Jenny is treated

coldly by Mrs. Bellmont, who does not approve of her new daughter-in-law's lack of money and property. When Jack goes away for a time to work for his brother, Mrs. Bellmont seizes the opportunity to manipulate his young wife: "She wished to make her feel her inferiority; to relieve Jack of his burden if he would not do it himself. She watched her incessantly, to catch at some act of Jenny's which might be construed into conjugal unfaithfulness"(113). When a young man who is one of Jack's cousins is attentive to Jenny, Mrs. Bellmont spreads a rumor that "Jenny was deserting her covenant vows, and had formed an illegal intimacy with [Jack's] cousin"(113). Mrs. Bellmont also falsely tells Jenny that Jack is in love with another woman, whom he would gladly marry.

After these rumors begin to circulate, Lewis, the brother for whom Jack has gone to work, is sent for to take Jenny home. Prevented from leaving by Mrs. Bellmont, who insists that the trip be delayed until Jenny has acquired a more appropriate wardrobe, Jenny writes a desperate letter to Jack to come and rescue her. When Jack fails to reply, one "watchful and friendly" neighbor understands that Mrs. Bellmont has intercepted Jenny's letter. Devising a plan to elude Mrs. Bellmont,

this neighbor calls upon Frado to mail the letter from outside the Bellmont home. Frado not only succeeds in reconciling Jenny and Jack, who comes home "angry, wounded, and forever after alienated from his early home and his mother"(115), she also manages to comfort the distraught and victimized Jenny by sharing her own story of abuse:

> Many times would Frado steal up into Jenny's room, when she knew she was tortured by her mistress' malignity, and tell some of her own encounters with her, and tell her she might "be sure it wouldn't kill her, for she should have died long before at the same treatment." (115)

The risks Frado takes by mailing Jenny's letter in this episode are suggestive of Wilson's larger project. Like the letter, Wilson's narrative is a written document that she deployed as a call for help, a cry for rescue. Moreover, Wilson had good reason to fear that her own "letter" to the world would fall into the hands of ill-meaning persons such as Mrs. Bellmont, whose own interests could prevent her narrative from being

circulated and read by those more sympathetic to her plight.

When Frado reaches out to comfort Jenny, Wilson further suggests that the content of such a "letter" -- the story of abuse and survival that her narrative tells -- has value beyond just rescuing its author. Telling this story entailed risk, but it was a worthwhile endeavor because it could serve to comfort and inspire others who had suffered similar abuse. While Jenny shares Frado's status as a poor orphan, the fact that she is white reinforces Wilson's claim for her story's universality. As a tale of abuse that transcends racial lines, Wilson implicitly calls for a diverse audience to purchase and read her book. She may have hoped that these readers would do so not only out of charity, but because they could relate aspects of her story to their own lives and thus profit from its message.

The boldness Frado exhibits in the episode with Jenny marks the last moment of girlhood risk-taking in the novel. As Wilson notes, "Frado had merged into womanhood"(115), and while she continues to struggle to achieve self-reliance through education, religious faith, and work, her chronic illness is suggestive of the larger burden this burgeoning womanhood has begun to inflict

upon her. As a girl, Frado's emerging sexuality is perceived as a threat to Mrs. Bellmont, who cuts off her servant's long curls because she is "getting handsome"(70). But by the end of the novel, as these "shining curls" are "toyed" with by the prospective husband who is destined to leave her, Frado's sexuality suggests not her power but vulnerability. Transformed from the outspoken and fearless girl of the earlier chapters into an abandoned wife, Frado now not only bears the burden of race but of motherhood.

In this light, Frado's earlier relationship with Jenny becomes significant not only because of their similar background as orphans and their shared abuse at the hands of Mrs. Bellmont, but also because of the difference in their ages. As a girl, Frado is free to speak out and take risks in a way that the woman Jenny is not. Gentle and weak, Jenny conforms to the mid-nineteenth-century feminine ideal that Barbara Welter famously defined in terms of such "cardinal virtues" as purity and submissiveness (21-31). While this ideal insisted upon a view of womanhood that valued passivity, silence, and docility, very young girls of the period were remarkably free from its influence. As an African-American girl, Frado would have been even less restricted

by this middle-class ideal than would a white girl of her same age. Thus while Jenny is powerless to speak in her own defense, and even to go where she wishes to go, Frado is able to take action against the manipulations of Mrs. Bellmont and to speak openly about her own suffering.

A similar juxtaposition between girlhood and womanhood is revealed in the chapter that begins with Frado's antics on the roof of the barn and with the willful sheep. After Frado boasts that she was "quick enough to 'give [the sheep] a slide'"(55), the focus of the chapter abruptly shifts to Mrs. Bellmont's invalid daughter, Jane and the two suitors who are vying for her hand. Unlike the fearless Frado, Jane is a woman who lacks "the strength to brave the iron will of her mother"(37), who wishes Jane to marry the wealthy suitor with "sinister eyes"(55) instead of the kind-hearted and well-mannered man Jane herself prefers. While Jane "knew that her husband should be the man of her own selecting," she is too weak to fight for what she wants: "She engaged herself, yielding to her mother's wishes, because she had not strength to oppose them; and sometimes, when witness of her mother's and Mary's tyranny, she felt any change would be preferable, even such a one as this"(56). Although Jane finally prevails and (with the help of Aunt

Abby and Mr. Bellmont) marries the man she loves, Wilson writes that "[t]o brave her mother's fury, nearly overcame her"(60-61).

Jenny's story foreshadows Frado's own emerging womanhood, which is similarly marked by invalidism and weakness. Indeed, after Frado "merges into womanhood," in the novel's last full chapter, her physical collapse is paralleled by the collapse of the narrative itself into a brief two-page description of her marriage and subsequent abandonment. That the bulk of the narrative focuses on a young Frado, however, attests to the literary possibilities Wilson saw in the figure of the disorderly young girl, a figure who is able to act and speak in a manner in which women such as Jenny and Jane cannot. While Wilson follows a conventional plot structure, which insists upon the girl's development into conforming woman, the girl's transgressive speech at key moments throughout the narrative continues to resonate as a voice of protest and often-dangerous truth telling.[29]

---

[29]It is important to note here that despite Wilson's use of the first-person in the early chapter titles, the characterization and events in these early chapters are precisely those most likely to be fictive rather than autobiographical. As Gates writes: "Since these early chapters describe events far removed from the author's experiences closest in time to the period of writing, the first-person presences perhaps reveal the author's

Eric Gardner's recent research on the reception and readership of the first edition of Our Nig supports a reading of the novel that emphasizes the theme of girlhood. While Gardner's research cannot be considered definitive, based as it is upon a relatively small sample of extant first edition copies, the results of his study are provocative nonetheless. Gardner has not only discovered that many of the original owners of Our Nig were middle-class whites, but that a number of these owners were under the age of twenty when the novel was first published in 1859. The fact that many of these extant first edition copies belonged to young people leads Gardner to speculate that "the book's purchasers either interpreted or deployed Our Nig as a book geared toward the moral improvement of young readers"(228). Indeed, while Gardner calls the novel "a young black woman's bildungsroman"(242), he notes that these first readers may have been less interested in Our Nig's

---

anxiety about identifying with events in the text that she cannot recollect at all . . . . "(Gates, Figures 147). Gates' speculation in this passage supports my point that Wilson was borrowing from an established literary construction -- that of the figure of the disorderly girl -- in her characterization of a young Frado.

representation of race than in its theme of "a child's search for a self and a God"(238).

That Our Nig may have attracted the same white, middle-class readership as did Warner's The Wide, Wide World attests to Wilson's success at adapting, as well as revising, the formal structure and themes of this genre of sentimental fiction. While Gardner notes that Our Nig "was not designed to become a best-seller"(232), Wilson was clearly concerned with attracting as large and diverse an audience as possible. Transforming her true experience of racial abuse in the North into a conventional story of childhood development, Wilson not only makes a controversial and problematic story palatable, but widely appealing. Yet Wilson's borrowings from this established genre do more than add legitimacy and authority to an unsanctionable autobiography. Through her appropriation of the figure of the disorderly young girl, Wilson constructs a non-threatening, because fictive, voice of dissent to safely represent her own anger and to dramatize the very risks she faced in telling her story.

Chapter Two: "Countering 'the Iron Car of Literal Law': The Girl as Trickster in E.D.E.N. Southworth's The Hidden Hand"

In a climactic scene in E.D.E.N. Southworth's comic novel The Hidden Hand (1859), the swashbuckling girl protagonist, Capitola Black, or "Cap" as she prefers to be called, pretends to be a sentimental heroine. In a plan designed to foil the evil Gabriel Le Noir, who is plotting to swindle Cap's conventionally feminine double, Clara Day, out of her inheritance, Cap instructs Clara to "become" Cap. While her demure counterpart puts on Cap's boyish riding cap and characteristic "sway and swagger"(307), the tomboyish Cap impersonates Clara by "doing the sentimental," which she accomplishes by wearing Clara's long gown, refusing to eat, and sobbing so profusely "[a]ny one would have thought she was drowned in tears"(312). While Clara uses Cap's horse to escape from the clutches of Le Noir, who hopes to force her to marry his aptly named son, Craven, Cap plays Clara's part at the bridal altar. But when the priest asks if she will take Craven to be her lawfully wedded husband, Cap responds, "No! not if he were the last man and I the last woman on the face of the earth, and the

human race were about to become extinct, and the angel Gabriel came down from above to ask it of me as a personal favor"(315). When the scheming father and son simultaneously inquire about the "meaning of all this," Cap explains: "It means that you have been outwitted by a girl"(316).

As this scene suggests, Cap's spirited humor and fearless outspokenness are meant to undercut the sentimentality embodied by the Ellen Montgomerys (and Clara Days) of mid-nineteenth-century popular woman's fiction. Cap's story, which traces her transformation from homeless orphan to wealthy heiress and wife, evokes the woman's fiction plot only to parody it with the outrageous antics of its would-be heroine. As Joanne Dobson writes, "In creating Cap, Southworth turns Ellen Montgomery on her head, and if in doing so she allows the reader to see past the petticoats and glimpse the saucy knickers, well, so much the better"(Introduction xxix). Like Harriet Wilson, whose autobiographical novel was published in the same year during which The Hidden Hand first appeared in serial form, Southworth revises Warner's The Wide, Wide World by celebrating, rather than berating, her young heroine's willful antics. Reworking Warner's earlier portrayal of the disorderly girl, both

Southworth and Wilson valorize this outraged, outrageous, and outspoken figure as truth-teller, a figure whose satiric connections to the stereotypical sentimental heroine underscore her fictiveness while allowing her to speak out in a manner that would have been deemed unacceptable for a more realistic nineteenth-century heroine.[30]

With her fast-talking manner and table-turning tricks, Southworth's Capitola also has connections to the fictional figure of the confidence man. Indeed, Cap is doubled not only with the sentimental heroine, Clara Day, but also with the swindling con man Black Donald, a character that embodies the ubiquitous mid-nineteenth-century figure that scholars have identified as an especially American version of the trickster. What is perhaps most important to Southworth in imagining her girl heroine as confidence man is the con man's adept use

---

[30]Alfred Habegger acknowledges that Capitola "represented a new and unprecedented breakthrough for women," but adds that this liberation was more fantasy than real, taking place in "play-worlds" where "anything goes"(Gender 183). As Joanne Dobson writes in her introduction to the Rutgers edition of The Hidden Hand: "[Southworth's] desire to advocate a dignified humanity for women found expression in a fictional arena that did not aspire to literary realism
. . . but instead reveled in the innumerable imaginative possibilities made available by an overtly fictive universe"(xiii).

of language and modes of expression. Cap's connections to this expressive, if slippery, figure underscore the ways in which she speaks for her creator, Southworth herself.

Tracing the proliferation of the confidence man in American culture to the "flush times" of the 1840s and to the "new country" of the developing American frontier, William Lenz offers a definition of this trickster figure that emphasizes his facility with language and rhetoric:

> The American confidence man . . . . is defined . . . by his shifty language in the service of fun, and by a cardinal motive - personal profit . . . . Prowling fictional and historical works during the antebellum flush times, the confidence man disdains mere jokes and pranks, avoids eastern cities and criminal partners, shuns all tools but his own rhetoric. (1-2)

As a number of other critical studies of the confidence man in American literature have demonstrated, it is this "tool of rhetoric" that provides the link between the game of confidence and the "game" of fiction. A study of the trope of the confidence game in the works

of Melville, Twain, and Nathaniel West, for example, investigates "transactions of confidence" between author and reader by focusing upon the "complex interplay of rhetoric and theme" in the novels under discussion (Wadlington ix). In Knave, Fool, and Genius: The Confidence Man as He Appears in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction, Susan Kuhlmann makes a further connection between the role of the con man and that of the author by observing that "[t]he fact that both the 'game' and the 'art' support an illusion by the control of rhetoric makes the relationship between the con-man character and his artist-creator particularly sensitive and self-revealing"(7).

While most scholarship dealing with the literary figure of the confidence man, a type of the archetypal trickster, focuses on male-authored, canonical texts and on portrayals of this figure as a dangerous, self-motivated swindler, more recent criticism has focused on women and minority authors and examined the ways in which these authors employ what one critic refers to as "tricksterism" as narrative strategy. These studies have noted the ways in which such authors draw upon the universal figure of the trickster, who, whatever his many incarnations and guises, is always defined by a wily way

with words and by boundary breaking. The studies argue that these women and minority authors represent their own experience as "outsiders" by telling stories that question the boundaries of race, class, and gender by using trickster-characters or a "trickster-like" approach to narrative.

In a study of the "trickster aesthetic" in contemporary ethnic literature by women, for example, Jeanne Rosier Smith calls tricksters "rhetorical agents" that "infuse narrative structure with energy, humor, and polyvalence, producing a politically radical subtext in the narrative itself"(2). Elizabeth Ammons makes a similar assertion in the introduction to Tricksterism in Turn-of-the-Century American Literature: A MultiCultural Perspective by noting that many writers who experience themselves as "liminal" within the dominant culture may identify with the liminality of the trickster and thus choose to use "trickster strategies" as a mode of expression:

> Because trickster won't be contained, trickster strategies and tales provide a way of pulling together conflicting world views and sets of values into a coherent, new identity. This identity is

> turbulent, shape-changing, contradictory, "bad," culturally central, liminal, powerful, power-interrogating. It is a place to be in and of itself - an authentic, age-old location that is not western-dominated, where the artist, especially the artist who is a person of color or a white woman, can envision and maneuver. (xi)

Like Harriet Wilson, Southworth envisions a conventional girl protagonist as trickster in order to interrogate power structures in a fictional world that, much like Southworth's real world, is oppressive to white women and African-Americans. While Southworth draws upon, among other things, the contemporaneous figure of the con man, Wilson may have been inspired by the trickster of African folklore. But both authors share in the narrative "strategizing" Ammons describes, for in both their texts the girl-as-trickster functions as a subversive stand-in for the marginalized artist herself.

But while Ammons unites writers of color and white women writers, it is important to remember that, in suggesting similar strategies of narration in the writing of a white author like Southworth and an African-American one such as Wilson, or even Toni Morrison (who is treated

in Smith's critical study), the white female author is always positioned more securely within the "dominant culture" than is her minority counterpart. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that Southworth's own problematic portrayals of racial and ethnic difference were themselves derived from this dominant culture. A white Southerner, Southworth was an abolitionist and Union supporter during the Civil War, but, as Dobson notes, she was "not free of the limiting prejudices of her era" and her stereotyped portrayals of African-Americans as well as Jews reflect this limited perspective (Introduction xxiv).

Yet as a single working mother, Southern abolitionist, and public female figure, Southworth was very much an outsider in the antebellum culture in which she lived. If the risks she faced as a writer were not life-threatening, as they were for Wilson, Southworth did struggle to balance the ethos of the True Woman, which was especially entrenched in the antebellum South and which valued women's decorous silence, with her own felt imperative to expose in her writing painful truths about the experiences of white women and African-American slaves. Yet, like many other economically strapped women writers of the period, Southworth saw her fiction not

only as a forum for social change, but also as a personal financial lifeline. For this reason, Southworth was keenly aware of the need to write novels that would please, as well as instruct, a conventional popular audience by employing conventional plots, even though she may have found these plots -- such as the sentimental woman's fiction story of girlhood education - to be too narrow to convey meaningful truths about the social issues that concerned her.

For Southworth, the figure of the outspoken young girl, with her fictional links to the conventional sentimental heroine as well as the silver-tongued confidence man, offered a way to "please the multitude"[31] while telling "true" stories about oppression and voicelessness. A figure whose fictiveness is belied by her instincts for the truth, Cap helps to liberate her powerless counterparts from the conventional literary plots in which they are entrapped so that they can tell these true stories, stories that are deemed too "fictive" to be believed. In this capacity, Cap becomes an agent of expression for other characters in the novel who

---

[31]From a letter that Southworth wrote to her long-time publisher, Robert Bonner towards the end of her career: "I have always tried to please the multitude and satisfy the cultured"(qtd. in Dobson, Introduction xi).

cannot safely tell their own stories or whose stories cannot be heard--as well as for her story-telling creator, Southworth herself. Using her girl heroine in this capacity, Southworth demonstrates the limitations not only of the sentimental novel with its damaging portrayals of helpless heroines, but also of such patriarchal institutions as the law and the military, which, she believed, could be misused to further victimize the oppressed or to sacrifice innocent lives for unjust causes.

In fact as in fiction, Southworth interpreted "the sentimental" as a strategy of manipulation, a fictional construct that a woman could "do" to fulfill certain expectations of femininity in a culture dominated by an ideal that the historian Barbara Welter has labeled "the cult of True Womanhood." While the universality of this mid-nineteenth-century ideal has been challenged by more recent feminist historians, who have pointed to competing feminine ideals during the period that were less damaging to female self-expression and mobility, none dispute the pervasiveness of the True Woman ideal, particularly in the South, where Southworth had been raised.[32] As Susan

---

[32]Nina Baym, for example, has called Welter's definition "simplistic" and "outdated," and argues that the True

Coultrap-McQuin notes, Southworth desired to fulfill the expectations of this ideal, even as she lived her real life independent, for the most part, of male support and protection: "[A]lthough [Southworth] did believe in women's self-reliance, generally, she wanted to be a True Woman - pious, pure, domestic, and pleasing to others, and she expressed those values in the conduct of her career"(50). Indeed, Southworth's conduct in her career as an author, as discussed by both Coultrap-McQuin and Mary Kelley, underscores the ways in which she herself "did the sentimental" as a strategy for survival and success in the public sphere of business and publishing while maintaining her socially-approved identity as True Woman.

In telling the story of Southworth's troubled relationship with her first publisher, Henry Peterson, these scholars portray Southworth as a woman who chose to use "covert" strategies of self-assertion, rather than compromise her sanctioned role as a helpless woman in need of a powerful male protector in the fast-paced

---

Woman, defined, according to Welter, by her piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity, is not favored in the domestic fiction of antebellum women writers such as those Baym deals with in Woman's Fiction. Also see Frances Cogan's discussion of the competing ideal of "Real Womanhood" in All-American Girl.

business world. By 1857, after Peterson had repeatedly fallen short of the ideal of "the Gentleman Publisher" by insulting Southworth for her supposed lack of moral integrity and intelligence, Southworth decided to replace him. However, she was careful to accomplish this dismissal circuitously so that she could play the lady-like part of wronged victim rather than manly aggressor.

All reports indicate that Southworth was satisfied with her relationship with Peterson's replacement, Robert Bonner, who did embody the Gentleman Publisher ideal, but she continued to use covert strategies with him as well in the interest of maintaining her True Woman role. According to Coultrap-McQuin, Southworth "used manipulative tactics" whenever she felt that Bonner's appreciation of her and her work was waning, noting that "[s]uch manipulative tactics fit naturally in the structure of their relationship; they were the tactics of unequal male-female relationships"(76). As Kelley adds, Southworth projected an image of herself to Bonner that would necessitate his taking on the role of patriarchal protector for she "saw herself as a naïve woman, relatively helpless, exploited, and adrift in a man's world of business"(161). While Southworth's sentimental image of herself as wronged lady was far from the truth,

it proved to be a savvy business tactic for it helped her to maintain a sanctioned public image that enhanced the reception of her work and in turn her financial stability and public influence.

If there is a paradox in Southworth's desire to be a True Woman and her outspoken role as public author, there is a further one to be noted in the revelatory quality of her work and her guarded, self-protective stance in her life. While she conveyed her painful life story indirectly in myriad fictional portrayals of mistreated and abandoned girls and women, Southworth was reticent about certain aspects of this true story in her autobiographical "author" sketches and even in letters to her daughter, Lottie.

What scholars do know about Southworth's biography indicates that the true story of her life was painful. She experienced an unhappy girlhood and suffered relentless feelings of inferiority and loneliness that may have been precipitated by the loss of her beloved ship captain father when she was four years old. This event also left her formerly affluent family in severe financial straits and led to the neglect that she and her sister would suffer at the hands of their new stepfather. When Southworth addressed this early period of her life

in an autobiographical sketch, however, she was circumspect about her unhappiness, using sentimental language to avoid discussing the details of the pain she had suffered: "Let me pass over in silence the stormy and disastrous days of my wretched girlhood and womanhood - days that stamped on my brow of youth the furrows of fifty years -"(qtd. in Dobson, Introduction xvi).

Southworth continued to experience "stormy and disastrous days" well into her womanhood. She married an intermittently employed inventor named Frederick Hamilton Southworth, who eventually abandoned her and their two small children to go on an extended expedition in Brazil. When her stepfather refused to come to her aid, Southworth was left alone to support herself and her children, one of whom was seriously ill, on a meager school-teacher's salary which she attempted to supplement through writing short newspaper stories. While Southworth's career as a teacher and writer eventually proved to be her salvation, it was marked by such overwork and poverty that her own health was often at risk.

In her autobiographical reminisces of this period, however, Southworth again uses the language of the sentimental to gloss over her struggles:

> That night of storm and darkness came to an end, and morning broke on me at last - a bright, glad morning, pioneering a new and happy day of life . . . . I, who six months before had been poor, ill, forsaken, slandered, killed by sorrow, privation, toil, and friendlessness, found myself born, as it were, into a new life; found independence, sympathy, friendship and honor, and an occupation in which I could delight. (qtd. in Coultrap-McQuin 56)

Southworth was even more guarded in discussing her marriage and separation from her husband. While she told her daughter that "someday" she would reveal the full story of those "stormy days" to her, Kelley writes that "It is questionable whether Southworth ever told Lottie or Rose [her granddaughter] any more regarding her husband, just as it is not questionable whether she ever forgot what there was to tell"(263).

If Southworth was evasive in discussing her own true story, she made defending the veracity of her fiction into a kind of campaign throughout her career. Often criticized for her implausible plots, overwrought language, and exaggerated characterizations, Southworth

took great pride in proclaiming that all of her novels were "founded on facts"(qtd. in Coultrap-McQuin 62). As her biographer, Regis Boyle, notes, when Southworth was "doubtful of the reception" of an incident in one of her novels, "she added an asterisk which located a footnote, 'a fact.'" (127). This emphasis on the factual basis for her fiction is also evident in Southworth's story of the genesis of The Hidden Hand:

> I happened to see in a New York paper a short paragraph in which it was stated that a little nine-year-old girl, dressed in boy's clothes and selling newspapers, had been arrested. She was homeless and friendless, and was sent to some asylum in Westchester County. That was the origin of Capitola. The newspaper item was a seed which dropped in my mind and germinated there . . . . Nearly every adventure of Capitola came from real life. Her bright rejoinders to Old Hurricane were taken from many scenes of the same kind between my sister and her old uncle in Mississippi. Her adventure with Black Donald was taken from a somewhat similar adventure, in which figured a woman of Maryland and a colored ruffian who, in 1812, was

> the terror of the neighborhood. Her duel and its cause were also founded on fact. Capitola's encounter with Lenoir in the woods and the ruse by which she escaped was also taken from the adventure and escape of a Maryland girl . . . . All these separate incidents, from the infancy to the maturity of my heroine, were like beads; I strung them together. (qtd. in Hudock 10)

In a later statement, Southworth reiterated these claims to the authenticity of her writing by noting that, "Every one of my books was based on incidents in life that I saw, even the most improbable of them. I could tell you stories, true ones, that I never dared to put in my books"(qtd. in Dobson, Introduction xxvi).

But while Southworth may not have dared to tell certain true stories, her character Cap did. Speaking through this daring girl character, Southworth tells true stories, particularly those dealing with injustices to white women, without violating the sentimental ideal of feminine silence that she sought to uphold in her own life. Cap's myriad fictive characterizations -- from sentimental heroine and fast-talking confidence man to burlesque performer and Don Quixote hero -- belie her own

basis in fact as well as her role as revealer of unheard and untellable truths.[33] Commenting that "'The Hidden Hand' was a true story, or partially true" and that "Capitola was a true picture"(qtd. in Dobson, Introduction xxvi), Southworth thus intends a kind of truth that goes beyond the literal and factual.

Cap's adolescence is one important aspect of her borderline status and of her freedom from the mid-nineteenth-century edict of womanly silence. As her future guardian, Old Hurricane, asserts, Cap must be treated "with the delicacy due to womanhood and the tenderness owed to childhood!"(39; original emphasis). While Old Hurricane will soon discover Cap's own abhorrence of such sentimental terms as "delicacy" and "tenderness," his confusion over how to classify her is suggestive of her adolescent mobility and freedom. As Southworth writes, Cap is defined not only by the borderline period of adolescence, but also by her constant testing of actual borders:

---

[33]For a reading of Capitola as a figure of the American burlesque, see "Funny Tomboys," a chapter in Alfred Habegger's Gender, Fantasy, and Realism in American Literature. For a reading that looks at Capitola in light of the literary conventions of male heroism, see Amy E. Huduck, "Challenging the Definition of Heroism in E.D.E.N. Southworth's The Hidden Hand."

> [W]e all know the diabolical fascination there is in forbidden pleasures for young human nature. And no sooner had Cap been commanded, if she valued her safety, not to cross the water or climb the precipice, than, as a natural consequence, she began to wonder what was in the valley behind the mountain, and what might be in the woods across the river!(110)

This adolescent yearning to cross borders and boundaries, whether geographic or metaphoric, is a trait that "young human nature" shares with the trickster, a figure who has been further described as "a homeless wandering spirit" who inhabits such borderline locations as "the market-place, the crossroads, and the thresholds of houses"(Turner 57).[34]

In scholarly explorations of the link between the adolescent and the trickster, historians such as Caroll

---

[34]For another reading of Cap as trickster, see Lori Landay's Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con Women: The Female Trickster in American Culture. Landay sees Cap's trickery in light of an opposition between an "influence strategy of women's power" and a "fantasy of action" that depends upon "covert strategies." Landay's reading does not, however, deal with the significance of Cap's adolescence or her role as truth teller.

Smith-Rosenberg have looked not only at their shared liminality, but also at their freedom from social constrictions.[35] In a discussion of the fictionalized frontiersman Davy Crockett as "mythic adolescent," Smith-Rosenberg explains that during the antebellum period adolescent freedom from societal codes seemed to pose a threat to an increasingly fragile social structure:

> The adolescent - neither child nor adult - stands between social categories and roles. The person between categories is perceived as outside of categories, institutions, and values. As such he embodies all the chaotic power of formlessness and disorder. The stage of being between categories and the power inherent in that process have been designated by anthropologists as liminality. (Disorderly Conduct 98)

Smith-Rosenberg's discussion here is specific to male adolescence, but it is nonetheless an accurate

---

[35]For a discussion of the significance of the trickster in contemporary "adolescent fiction," see Anna Lawrence-Pietroni, "The Trickster, The Changeover, and the Fluidity of Adolescent Literature."

historical gloss on Southworth's adolescent heroine.[36] Indeed, although she is a girl, Cap has a male side, one that is literally represented by her stillborn twin brother, who, as Habegger notes, is later "brought to life" when Cap decides to "become" a boy in order to get a job selling newspapers on the streets of New York ("Well-Hidden Hand" 202). And while Cap loses her real male twin, she may be thought to become a kind of mythical twin of the fictionalized adolescent Davy Crockett, for she shares his raucous humor, outspokenness, and dangerous freedom.

This freedom from conventional social constraints is evident in Cap's gender crossing, which leads her to

---

[36]For further background on historical conceptions of adolescence, see Joseph Kett's Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present. Kett argues that adolescence was reconfigured to correspond with certain social changes that took place after the 1830s, and that contemporary demarcations of the stages of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are not helpful in describing nineteenth-century historical reality. According to Kett "it is preferable to begin with types of status - dependency, semi-dependency, and independence - which different individuals passed through at different ages"(14). As other historians, such as Mary Ryan, have demonstrated, the first third of the nineteenth century witnessed a lengthening of the number of years that middle- class children remained in the stage that would now be labeled "adolescence." Kett writes that the justifications for this lengthening of the period of childhood, however broadly defined, were both economic and moral, and included fears concerning the "crisis" that puberty was believed to pose to "the putative innocence of childhood" (133).

transform herself into a ragamuffin newsboy with oddly feminine features:

> He was a handsome boy, too, notwithstanding the deplorable state of his wardrobe. Thick, clustering curls of jet black hair fell in tangled disorder around a forehead broad, white, and smooth as that of a girl; slender and quaintly-arched black eyebrows played above a pair of mischievous, dark gray eyes, that sparkled beneath the shade of long, thick, black lashes; a little turned up nose, and red, pouting lips, completed the character of a countenance full of fun, frolic, spirit, and courage. (33)

Cap does not fully transform herself into a boy through her cross-dressing trick; she retains her very feminine "quaintly-arched eyebrows" and "red, pouting lips." And despite her brazenness and bravery, she also retains the vulnerability a real girl would face living on the streets of New York. But by dramatizing Cap's capacity to "be" a boy, Southworth grants her heroine a kind of freedom and outspokenness not possible for adolescent girls of the period, whether fictional or real.

Cap's straddling of gender categories is also conveyed through her doubling with a series of fictional male characters. Among these is the confidence man, Black Donald, who, as Habegger observes, "has the same perverse polymorphism as Capitola herself" and, as an outlaw, "embodies her own wayward freedom"("Well-Hidden" 208). Yet if Donald is Cap's most obvious male double, he is not her only one. Two of Cap's other male doubles -- Traverse Rocke and Herbert Greyson -- share her adolescent status as well as her ability to straddle the separate male and female worlds in the text. While Habegger views the aspiring young doctor, Traverse Rocke as "desexualized"(207) because of this very straddling of gender spheres, Lynette Carpenter argues that Traverse "represents an ideal mixture of masculine and feminine qualities"(20) because of his mixture of strength and tenderness. As his name suggests, Traverse is indeed able to "traverse" boundaries of various kinds, including those of gender stereotyping, just as Cap does.

Carpenter does not include Traverse's good friend and surrogate brother, Herbert Greyson, in her triad of Cap's male doubles. But Herbert, the young sailor who first rescues Cap from the sea and eventually becomes her husband, shares not only Cap's boldness and bravery, but

also the same relationship to Old Hurricane, the retired military major who becomes Cap's guardian. This older man, whom Cap calls "uncle," though they share no blood relationship, is in fact the brother of Herbert's deceased mother and therefore Herbert's actual uncle. And like Traverse, Herbert's name -- "Greyson" -- is suggestive of his crossover status as he moves "betwixt and between" two worlds that are as different as white and black, a masculine military and legal world and a feminine world of domesticity and storytelling.[37]

As a number of critics have observed, The Hidden Hand is a highly self-reflexive text, notable for its weaving together of disparate forms of narrative -- from various genres of fiction, which are associated in the text with the feminine world, to legal "narratives" such as depositions and wills, which are associated with the world of men.[38] Without full access to legal means of justice, the conventional women characters in the novel are left to tell their true experiences of oppression and suffering through language evocative of traditional

---

[37] The term, "betwixt and between" comes from the anthropologist, Victor Tuner's discussion of the figure of the trickster (576).

[38] See especially Dobson's introduction to the Rutgers edition of The Hidden Hand and Habegger's "A Well-Hidden Hand."

fictional forms, such as the sentimental novel and the gothic tale. Not surprisingly, these attempts at truth telling are deemed too "fictive" to be believed, and so justice for such women does not come to pass. At the same time, the corrupt courtroom machinations of Gabriel Le Noir, the powerful military leader who is the nemesis of Cap and almost every other character in the novel, reveal that the notion of legal justice itself can be a form of fiction.

Fortunately, Southworth allows Cap to intervene. Straddling the borders of gender, Cap circumvents the feminine plots that entrap her oppressed counterparts, while orchestrating her own "counterplots" in which Cap or one of her male doubles affirms the veracity of these seemingly "fictional" narratives of abuse. By employing the rhetorical tricks of a confidence man, Cap also exposes the inadequacy of the law in revealing truth and achieving justice, while liberating female storytelling from the limitations of the sentimental mode. A walking conflation of fact and fiction, and of hero and heroine, Cap thus calls into question the "truth" of the masculine

rule of law as well as the "fictionality" of women's story-telling.[39]

The novel sets forth this theme of truth and fiction before Cap is even introduced. Called upon one "dark and stormy" Halloween night to a small cottage near an abyss that is known by locals as the "Devil's Punch Bowl," Old Hurricane goes to hear the deathbed deposition of an aged mulatto midwife called Granny Grewell, a woman who turns out to have been Cap's first guardian.[40] Although she is ostensibly giving a legal narrative of past events, Granny Grewell's story sounds like fiction. Indeed, her deposition begins like a gothic novel, a genre known for employing disguised identities, with its many references

---

[39]See Veronica Stewart for a different reading of the novel's melding of legal discourse and sentimental plots. Stewart's discussion focuses upon a tension in the novel between the narrator's and the author's competing portrayals of Cap and her ostensible textual freedom ("Narrative").

[40]Southworth invokes the trope of tricksterism in The Hidden Hand not only through her portrayal of Cap as a threshold figure and boundary-breaker, but also by beginning her novel on All Hallow Eve, a night traditionally associated with disorder and trick-playing. It is on this carnival-like night, when the black servants of Hurricane Hall are having a "banjo break-down"(8), that Old Hurricane goes to hear this tale of Cap's origins. For a discussion of children as tricksters during traditional Halloween activities, see Ervin Beck, "Trickster on the Threshold: An Interpretation of Children's Autumn Traditions." Folklore vol. 966:i (1985): 24-28.

to masks, from the masks of Gabriel Le Noir's bandits to the masked face of Cap's kidnapped mother, Capitola Le Noir, the wife of Gabriel Le Noir's murdered brother and his chief rival for the Le Noir family fortune, whose face and right hand, she remembers, were sewn up in black crepe (20). There is also a reference to gothic doubling. As Granny Grewell explains, when she was left to assist Capitola Le Noir, she became the sole witness to the birth of her twin babies: Cap and Cap's stillborn brother. And when the young mother enlisted Granny Grewell's help in saving the surviving twin from Le Noir's clutches, Granny Grewell engaged in a masquerade herself, concealing the infant Cap under her shawl while disguising the dead infant as sleeping and passing it off to one of the bandits.

As she recounts it to Old Hurricane, Granny Grewell's story soon shifts from gothic novel to slave narrative. She and the baby were taken away by one of the bandits, who, not recognizing that the baby she was carrying was in fact the sole heir to the fortune Le Noir was trying to usurp, sold them into slavery. As Granny Grewell tells Old Hurricane, she soon found herself on a ship heading for the South:

> And there, master, right afore my own eyes, me and the baby was traded off to the captain! It was no use for me to 'splain or 'spostulate! I wan't believed. The willain as had stole me got back into the boat and went ashore. And I saw him get into the shay and drive away. It was no use for me to howl and cry, though I did both, for I couldn't even hear myself for the swearing of the captain and the noise of the crew, as they was a gettin' of the vessel under way. Well, sir, we sailed down that river and out to sea. (25)

In this passage, Granny Grewell's position as a black woman and future slave ensures that her pleas for recognition and help will not be heard, no matter how much she tries to "splain or 'spostulate" or "howl and cry."

When the ship capsizes and "no one seemed to hear" Granny Grewell's calls, she, Cap, and the other "insignificant" members of the crew - "a poor sailor lad and the black cook" -- seem to be doomed. But as Granny Grewell tells the story, "we as were left to die were the only ones saved"(26): The life boat went down while the wrecked ship was prevented from sinking when it became

lodged on a sandbar. As Granny Grewell remembers it to Old Hurricane, her gothic tale turned slave narrative takes on the aura of a biblical parable:

> Marster, as soon as the sea had swallowed up that wicked captain and crew, the wind died away, the waves fell, and the storm lulled - just as if it had done what it was sent to do and was satisfied. The wreck - where we poor forlorn ones stood - the wreck that had shivered and trembled with every wave that struck it - until we had feared it would break up every minute, became still and firm on its sand-bar, as a house on dry land. (26)

The conclusion to Granny Grewell's tale, which might be categorized as "realism" as it outlines her decade-long struggle to make a living as a servant and washwoman in New York City, is the part most likely to be taken as true. But it is here that Granny Grewell becomes reticent, telling her listener, "Well, marster, I aint a gwine to bother you with telling you of how I toiled and struggled along in that great city"(27). Granny Grewell seems to understand that, while the gothic and miraculous aspects of her tale may not be believable, they at least

promise to capture her listener's attention in a manner in which realism cannot.

Yet while her tale may have been deemed entertaining, Granny Grewell found that it was not believable enough to evoke sympathy in her audience, as she explains to Old Hurricane:

> Sometimes I was fool enough to tell my story in the hopes of getting pity and help - but telling my story always made it worse for me! Some thought me crazy and others thought me deceitful, which is not to be wondered at, for I was a stranger, and my adventures were indeed beyond belief. (27)

Granny Grewell's disclaimers and silences indicate her understanding that, because of his status as a powerful white man, Old Hurricane may not be disposed to believe her tale. Southworth's description of Old Hurricane, whose nickname was inspired by his hurricane-like temper, certainly suggests a masculinity unrelieved by any "feminine" tenderness or understanding:

> His features were large and harsh; his complexion dark red, as that of one bronzed by long exposure

> and flushed with strong drink. His fierce, dark gray eyes were surmounted by thick, heavy black brows, that, when gathered into a frown, reminded one of a thunder cloud, as the flashing orbs beneath them did of lightning. His hard, harsh face was surrounded by a thick growth of iron-gray hair and beard that met his chin. (8)

Old Hurricane's ties to the male world of the military and the law would seem to further place him on the side of the powerful Colonel Le Noir rather than on that of a mulatto slave woman and the victimized white woman and children she tried to aid.

In fact, Old Hurricane functions, like Cap, to bridge the male world and the "fictional" female world represented by Granny Grewell's storytelling. While he earlier rejected his sister and wife, women who had the potential to bring his own tender side to life, Old Hurricane is himself an arch enemy of Gabriel Le Noir, the central representative in the text of an authoritarian male world. It was Le Noir who attempted to rape Old Hurricane's wife, Marah, and who later caused the break-up of this marriage when Old Hurricane mistakenly came to believe that his wife was guilty of

having an adulterous affair with Le Noir. As Le Noir's sworn enemy, Old Hurricane is thus aligned with Cap as well as with Cap's female counterparts, whose lives have been similarly destroyed through Le Noir's evil plotting. According to Carpenter, who reads Old Hurricane as Cap's "primary" male double, the "likeness" between Cap and Old Hurricane is further emphasized through similarities in their dress and their shared "stubbornness and temper"(20).

After repeating Granny Grewell's story to the minister, Old Hurricane expresses outrage at the injustice of a rule of law that would refuse to hear the deposition of a black midwife (179). Undaunted by the court's refusal to hear Granny Grewell's testimony, however, Old Hurricane decides to play the part of the trickster by devising his own "fictional" plot in which he will offer a reward for the capture of Le Noir's chief henchman, Black Donald, and then force Donald to give a deposition that reveals the truth about his evil leader (180). In this way, Old Hurricane functions as a crossover figure by exposing the injustice of the law while seeking to affirm the truth of storytelling.

While Old Hurricane acts here as a mediating figure between the worlds of men and women, earlier in his life

he eschewed the female sphere, choosing to live in his all-male military regiment while arranging for his new wife, Marah, to live by herself, save one female servant, in a small cottage nearby. It was in this "domestic sphere" that Marah became the victim of another of Le Noir's plots: An old military rival of Old Hurricane, Le Noir began a Lovelace-like campaign to seduce his rival's wife, and then left her to be abandoned by her legitimate lover, Old Hurricane. Casting Marah as Clarissa in this reworking of the eighteenth-century seduction plot, Le Noir also told fictitious stories about his "intimate terms" with Marah at the military fort, leading Old Hurricane to further doubt her avowals of love for her husband.

Remembering her story to Herbert Greyson, the young man whom she raised after his mother's death, Marah explains that Old Hurricane refused to believe her avowals of the truth of the seduction because of their "false" fervency, and she notes that, "Like Lear's Cordelia, I was tongue-tied - I had no words to assure him"(95). Marah finally recovers her "power of expression," but the truth of this expression is lost in the over-wrought, "literary" language of the sentimental heroine:

> I awoke from that deadly swoon to find myself alone, deserted, cast away! Oh! Torn out from the warmth and light and safety of my home in my husband's heart, and hurled forth shivering, faint and helpless upon the bleak world! And all this in twenty-four hours! Ah! I did not lack the power of expression then! Happiness had given it to me - anguish conferred it upon me! That one fell stroke of fate cleft the rock of silence in my soul, and the fountain of utterance gushed freely forth. I wrote to him - but my letters might as well have been dropped into a well. I went to him, but was spurned away. I prayed him with tears to have pity on our unborn babe; but he laughed aloud in scorn, and called it by an opprobrious name! Letters, prayers, tears, were all in vain. (97)

Marah's sentimental storytelling fails to reveal the truth and to achieve justice, but the plotting of the trickster -- as embodied by Herbert Greyson -- succeeds. As Cap's double, Herbert brings the truth to light by creating new "stories" in order that justice may prevail over "the iron car of literal law" (423). That this

"literal law" is not the best forum for achieving justice is clear when the long-estranged couple coincidentally meet at a court hearing in a case in which Gabriel Le Noir is being sued, though not by either of them. Despite the irony of their meeting for the first time in court with their mutual perpetrator Le Noir on the stand, no justice comes to pass. While Herbert hopes that Old Hurricane will be moved to forgiveness by the sight of his wife, the courtroom meeting amounts to no more than a "little incident" (332).

Deciding to go outside of the bounds of the court to rectify the evil that Le Noir has done to Marah and Traverse, as well as to Old Hurricane, Herbert acts as a mock-attorney himself. In this role, Herbert gathers physical evidence such as a photograph of Marah's son, Traverse, that he sends, along with a letter, to Old Hurricane to prove by his likeness that Traverse is his child. He also single-handedly convinces his fellow jurors to reverse their verdict against Traverse in military court, a verdict that was based on a bogus case that was initiated by Le Noir after he realized that Traverse's engagement to the heiress Clara Day could threaten his own tenuous hold on her fortune. Thus justice is achieved through Herbert's trickster-like

disruption of a "literal," and thus ineffectual, approach to justice

An idealized male character whose "girlish" (429) traits are intended to enhance, rather than undercut, his masculine fortitude and ambition, Marah's son Traverse Rocke is notably Cap-like in his gender straddling. Indeed, Traverse plays dual roles in the novel: He is both the blushing fairytale "heroine"(429) whom Herbert rescues, and he is the earnest young doctor who saves yet another silenced heroine, Cap's mother, the beautiful Capitola Le Noir. After discovering Mrs. Le Noir in an insane asylum where he has gone to work as a physician, Traverse's first act is to listen as the woman unfolds a story that she herself admits "is almost as melo-dramatic as a modern romance"(449). A kind of companion piece to the story told by Granny Grewell, this story is actually "authored" by her brother-in-law, Gabriel Le Noir, who, fearing that she will take his inheritance, transforms her into a gothic heroine. After locking her up in the Hidden House and rigging the lamps so that a "strange unearthly light" makes her appear a ghost through the windows, Le Noir finally takes her to the insane asylum where, several years later, she is discovered by Traverse.

Mrs. Le Noir's true story, which begins with her orphanhood in revolutionary France when her patriot father dies for the cause and her mother of a broken heart, and which ends with the murder of her husband at the hands of his own brother, contains as much adventure and intrigue as a work of fiction. Confusing fiction for fact, however, the doctors at the insane asylum refuse to believe Mrs. Le Noir's true story because Le Noir had "told him that this truth was the fiction of a deranged imagination"(446) and instead insist upon interpreting her protestations as further evidence of her madness. Like such literary heroines as Bronte's Bertha Rochester, Mrs. Le Noir is thus entrapped in a gothic literary plot authored by a man who seeks to contain her potentially disruptive power. And like Mr. Rochester, Le Noir uses the "fiction" of madness to quell questions about the facts concerning the whereabouts of his would-be "heroine." But while Mr. Rochester keeps his madwoman, Bertha, ensconced in her attic, Le Noir moves Mrs. Le Noir from attic to actual madhouse, a move that ironically serves to liberate her, for it is here that she will meet Traverse and finally find a sympathetic listener to her true story.

In the opening paragraph of the chapter in which Mrs. Le Noir unfolds this true story to Traverse, Southworth writes: "There is some advantage in having imagination, since that visionary faculty opens the mental eyes to facts that more practical and duller instincts could never see"(444). As a person of such imagination, Traverse is able to question the supposed "facts" surrounding Mrs. Le Noir's incarceration for "[h]e thought it quite possible that the distinguished officer's story might be a wicked fabrication, to conceal a crime, and that the lady's 'crazy fancy' might be pure truth"(444). When Traverse asks why she never tried to protect herself from Le Noir's villainy, Mrs. Le Noir reveals that, because of her status as a foreigner, she did not know about such legal means of recourse: "I did not know your land, your laws, or your people"(452). But while Traverse vows to rectify this mistake by taking "legal measures"(457) to help to liberate Mrs. Le Noir, he discovers a more powerful means in narrative - specifically the "narrative"(427) that Le Noir composed on his deathbed and gave to Herbert Greyson to reveal after the death of its author. As Le Noir's own true story, this narrative also tells the truth behind his "fictionalized" plots, including "the deceptions, wrongs,

and persecutions practiced upon Madame Eugene Le Noir"(460) and thus corroborates her own true narrative without the need, as Traverse tells Herbert "of applying to law"(461).

Le Noir's deathbed narrative also refers to the wrongs done to Cap's "feminine" double, Clara Day. However, Clara's liberation from Le Noir's plotting takes place long before the appearance of this document, thanks to the trickster-like antics of Cap herself. Describing Clara's entrapment, Cap's servant, Pitapat, uses a fairy tale analogy in which Clara is cast as a kind of Rapunzel in the tower of the Hidden House:

> How us has got a new neighbor - a bootiful young gal - as bootiful as a pictor in a gilt-edged Christmas book! Wid a snowy skin, and sky-blue eyes, and glistenin' goldy hair like de princess you was a readin' me about, all in deep mournin' and a weepin' and a weepin' all alone down dere in dat wicked, lonesome, outlawful ole haunted place, the Hidden House . . . . (262)

Hearing this description of Clara as fairy tale heroine brings out the hero in Cap, and she decides to ride out to the Hidden House, like Don Quixote "in quest of adventures" (269). But while Cap is here compared to a quintessential literary hero, in fact she is less hero than author, for her means of rescuing Clara Day takes the form of "writing" her out of her fairy-tale plot. Rewriting herself as sentimental heroine, complete with fictionalized sobbing, Cap transforms Clara from imprisoned Rapunzel into fearless tomboy by dressing her in Cap's riding costume and teaching her how to "sway and swagger, as if you didn't care a damson for anybody"(307).

While Clara gains temporary escape from Le Noir's clutches by playing Cap's part, Cap understands that Clara's new-found freedom must be reinforced by the law, although not the "literal" law that allowed Le Noir to wrongly win his original case against Clara in Orphan's Court. As a girl, Cap has neither the magisterial powers of Old Hurricane, nor Herbert Greyson's right to sit on a jury, but when she is called to the witness stand during Clara's case against Le Noir in Orphan's Court, she trumps the defense through her ability to adopt the "apt and cutting"(333) tongue of a lawyer. While she had

earlier straddled the gender border between Don Quixote hero and sentimental heroine and played a table-turning trick on Le Noir and his son Craven at the marriage altar, Cap here evokes the archetypal trickster because of her ability to manipulate the conventions of both narrative and rhetoric. While Cap first demonstrates this facility with language through her appropriation of the "irreverent speech"(33), as well as dress, of the newsboy, and later through her parodies of Old Hurricane's own authoritative speech, here Cap stuns Le Noir's attorney during his cross-examination with replies that "overwhelmed him with ridicule and confusion and [did] more for the cause of her friend than all her partisans put together!"(333).

Southworth's satire of the courtroom as suggested by Cap's antics extends to her portrayal of another patriarchal institution -- the military. Not only is the central villain of The Hidden Hand, Gabriel Le Noir, a corrupt military colonel, almost all of the major male characters play military roles. The uncontrolled invective of Old Hurricane, whose real name -- Major Ira Warfield -- suggests both his propensity to engage in "irate" tirades against his subordinates as well as his identification with the actual war field, serves to

parody the military's adversarial approach to human interactions. Meanwhile, Le Noir's second in command, Black Donald, who is referred to as "Cap'n" by his cohorts, is a dark mirror of a real military man, for he is actually a hardened criminal carrying out his duty to his superior by kidnapping, murdering, and stealing.

Even Cap, whose name echoes the military epithet of Black Donald, helps Southworth to critique the exclusivity of this all-male world. Thus Southworth inquires of the male members of her audience: "[W]hen women have their rights, [Cap] shall be a lieutenant-colonel herself. Shall she not, gentleman?"(348). And while Herbert and Traverse are "feminized" male characters, they too have military connections; both serve dutifully as soldiers in the Mexican-American War -- Herbert as a lieutenant and Traverse as an enlisted private soldier. But while the chapter that introduces the war episodes featuring Herbert and Traverse is entitled "Glory!" Southworth in fact refuses to glorify her characters' participation in the war. Not only does she repeatedly proclaim her desire to return to writing about "our little domestic heroine, our brave little Cap"(348) instead of detailing the intricacies of battles, she also has Traverse question the honor of

fighting a war motivated by expansionism rather than national defense (345). Moreover, by making the evil Colonel Le Noir commander of the young men's regiment, Southworth dramatizes the dangerous potential for "despotism" (346) in an institution that is already based upon hierarchies of power.

Such satiric portrayals of military men and of war may be read in light of Southworth's larger critique of a masculine approach to justice and, more specifically, in light of her views concerning the abolition of slavery. Indeed, when The Hidden Hand was first serialized in 1859, the Mexican-American War was already history, and another war was threatening to tear the country in two. A Southern abolitionist, Southworth would ultimately lend her support to the Union cause in this war, but she was never an advocate of military action. While Southworth believed in abolition, she was reluctant to engage in war to accomplish it, explaining that freedom for slaves should be "peacefully effected by 'moral suasions'" (qtd. in Jones).

In the culminating scene of The Hidden Hand, Southworth dramatizes the power of "moral suasions" through her trickster-heroine's resolution of a potentially violent conflict through moral language --

language marked by compassion and redemption. The scene begins with Cap's potentially deadly run-in with Black Donald, the con man who shares her facility with language and disguise. After Donald intrudes upon Cap in her bedroom, intent on raping and abducting her, Cap uses her rhetorical skill not simply to persuade or dupe, but rather to reform. Transforming herself from disorderly girl into moral mother, Cap delivers the following speech to Donald before releasing a lever that would send him hurtling through a trapdoor to his likely death:

> I will not call you Black Donald! I will call you as your poor mother did, when your young soul was as white as your skin, before she ever dreamed her boy would grow black with crime . . . . [M]en call you a man of blood; they say that your hand is red and your soul black with crime . . . . But I do not believe all this of you. I believe that there is good in all, and much good in you; that there is hope for all, and strong hope for you. (389)

While Donald plays many roles in the novel, he is here a figure of corruption, a would-be rapist who is carrying

out Le Noir's plot to harm yet another "helpless" woman. Significantly, however, the criminality that Donald represents is not contained through legal means, but rather through the "feminine" intervention of a maternal Cap. Like another such figure of corrupt male power, Harriet Beecher Stowe's evil slave overseer, Simon Legree, Black Donald is redeemed by an evocation of his lost mother. Thus while Donald responds to this speech with the words, "leave my mother alone. Let the dead rest," Cap notices a "betrayal of feeling" in the outlaw that confirms her belief in his capacity for moral redemption (389).

Southworth believed that fiction was a more powerful tool for social change than the law. This belief is dramatized in the novel's final section, when Donald survives his trap-door fall only to be jailed for a crime of which he is innocent. After Cap fails in her efforts to help the penitent Donald by "turning aside the law"(467), she uses her wily way with words to convince the jailer to allow her access to his cell, where she delivers his thief's tools and helps him break free. But Cap's use of language extends beyond the slippery speech of the trickster in this episode. After offering the former outlaw money and her own horse to aid him in his

escape from bondage, Cap entreats Donald "to lead a good life" and prays that God may "redeem" him (480). Predictably, the newly liberated outlaw immediately returns to the Devil's Punch Bowl, where he distributes this money to his former cohorts so that they might lead honest and productive lives (483). Where the law fails to achieve justice and reform, Southworth seems to argue, words of compassion and love succeed.

The power of Cap's moral language in these dealings with Donald is emblematic of Southworth's belief in the "sentimental power" of fiction. Like her friend, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Southworth was motivated to write, at least in part, because of her political convictions. To this end, Southworth published a number of abolitionist and feminist novels, and she was among the first to encourage Stowe to publish Uncle Tom's Cabin, which called upon women -- and especially mothers -- to oppose a law that Stowe (and Southworth) considered morally reprehensible. Moreover, Southworth, like Stowe, was a Christian novelist who believed in divine rather than legal justice. Indeed, Dobson notes that it was "with strict Christian rectitude" that Southworth chose not to take advantage of a divorce bill that was passed specifically for her relief (Introduction xix).

In writing fiction, white women authors of the antebellum period such as Southworth and Stowe, who were restricted from most other forms of public speech, saw a means to counter the "iron car of literal law" by bringing society to higher truths. But while, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has noted, sentimental fiction was "a more acceptable female genre than undisguised political polemic" ("'To Be'" 12), for Southworth its restrictive plots reinforced the very oppression of women that she sought to redress. Through the antics of her trickster-heroine, Southworth finds a means to critique the narrowness of sentimental women's plots even as she exploits their marketability. At the same time, however, Southworth's trickster-heroine allows her to expose the limitations of the law and the military, which she repeatedly associates in the novel with masculine power and its abuses. In this way, Southworth circumvents the restrictions placed on female expression during the period through what Ammons calls "trickster strategies," strategies of storytelling that pull "together conflicting world views" (Tricksterism xi).

Throughout The Hidden Hand, Southworth distances herself from the disruptive antics of her heroine, using mock disapproval to describe Cap's thumb-nosing gestures,

which she calls "more expressive than elegant"(118), and explaining to the reader that "I do not defend, far less approve, poor Cap! I only tell her story and describe her as I have seen her, leaving her to your charitable interpretation"(121). But by the end of the novel, Southworth's pretended distance from her trickster-heroine falls away as, Cap-like, she undercuts the traditional "happily ever after" ending by having the traditionally "silent" wives speaking their minds:

> The truth is, I have reason to suppose that even Clara had sometimes occasion to administer to Doctor [Traverse] Rocke dignified curtain lectures; which no doubt did him good. And I know for a positive fact, that our Cap sometimes gives her 'dear, darling Herbert,' the benefit of the sharp edge of her tongue, which of course he deserves. (485)

Here Southworth suggests that women's moral language has the power to prevent even good men from slipping into the corruption that can come from an excess of power and authority. And if Southworth equivocates this social message by deciding to end the novel with a double wedding ceremony, a plot device designed to satisfy the

expectations of her popular nineteenth-century audience, she is careful to proclaim that her characters went on to enjoy only "a fair amount of human felicity"(485), thus balancing fairy-tale with truth.

Chapter Three: "Portrait of the Woman Artist as a Young Boy: Harriet Beecher Stowe's The Pearl of Orr's Island"

In their re-workings of the woman's fiction plot, Harriet Wilson and E.D.E.N. Southworth re-envision the figure of the outspoken, willful girl as a primarily fictive, rather than realistic, character, one whose comic qualities make her more entertaining than dangerous or threatening. This strategy allows them to dramatize their own unsanctioned voices of dissent and truthfulness in the "safe" arena of fiction. Harriet Beecher Stowe's strategy in her autobiographical novel, The Pearl of Orr's Island (1862), is to vest this "disorderly energy" - with all of its connections to speech and desire - in the character of a boy, while representing herself as a conforming "true girl," the self-abnegating, studious, and submissive figure valorized in the woman's fiction genre.

Begun immediately after the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin in 1852 (though it would not be completed until ten years later), Pearl is concerned not with questions of race but of gender. As Judith Fetterley argues, Pearl addresses the problem of women's oppression with as much power and conviction as Uncle Tom's Cabin

uses to address the oppression of African-Americans (Provisions 12). Yet while Uncle Tom's Cabin is in many ways a political tract, Pearl is a highly personal narrative in which Stowe attempts to represent the oppression she faced in her own life. Describing Pearl as "Stowe's story of what it meant to a young girl to grow up in a society that prescribed sharply curtailed possibilities for women," Stowe's biographer notes that this novel "is as close as [she] ever came to writing a fictionalized autobiography" (Hedrick 297).

Following the conventional woman's fiction plot, Pearl focuses on the development of a young girl named Mara Lincoln, who is left an orphan when her mother dies in childbirth, after having witnessed the drowning of her husband, Mara's father, in a shipwreck. Like Ellen Montgomery and company, Mara is a bookish girl who struggles to gain an education by following her own self-directed course of reading and who, despite her initial resistance to their mindless tedium, also becomes adept at such domestic arts as hemming handkerchiefs and knitting stockings. But while Mara has much in common with the heroines of domestic fiction, she is also evocative of Stowe's earlier portrait of the angelic little Eva, with whom she shares a fragile and ethereal

nature. As Stowe describes her early in the novel, Mara "appeared one of those aerial mixtures of cloud and fire, whose radiance seems scarcely earthly"(37).

If Mara is modeled after various fictional "good girls," her surrogate brother Moses Pennel, a willful, outspoken young boy, is not unlike Stowe's "bad girl," Topsy, a character who has strong connections to the prepubescent, and thus still unreformed, disorderly girls of The Wide, Wide World and The Lamplighter. Adopted by Mara's maternal grandparents after they discover him on the shores of Orr's Island in the arms of his drowned Spanish-American mother, Moses shares not only Topsy's dark skin but also her mysterious origins and heathenish nature. Significantly, however, Moses' status as a boy allows him broad opportunities for study and adventure not possible for the powerless slave girl Topsy, nor even for white, middle-class girls such as Ellen Montgomery, Gertie Flint, and Mara. While Moses learns Latin and goes on boating expeditions, Mara is relegated to the domestic sphere, where she devotes herself to saving her bold and unthinking adopted brother from corruption. True to the over-plot of woman's fiction, Pearl ends with marriage, though not with the expected marriage of Mara and Moses. Instead the novel concludes with Mara's

transformation into "dying maiden" as her sacrificial death from consumption serves to redeem Moses and leads to his spiritual awakening.

In Uncle Tom's Cabin, girls such as Little Eva and Topsy are primarily allegorical figures; little Eva is drawn from the nineteenth-century cultural ideal of the "dying maiden" and the religious iconography of Christ's ascension, while Topsy is a figure for the larger social disorder of slavery.[41] In Pearl, Stowe's portrayal of childhood is drawn from autobiography rather than allegory. Stowe's biographer, Joan Hedrick points out that Mara not only shares Stowe's heavy-lidded eyes and longings for an idealized lost mother, but also her early literary proclivities. Like the young Harriet Beecher, Hedrick notes, Mara's imagination is captured by a tattered copy of Shakespeare's The Tempest, which she discovers in her grandmother's attic (297).

But despite her strong connections to Mara, Stowe also has much in common with the willful, ambitious Moses, the boy who never wavers in his self-confidence or

---

[41]See Barbara Welter on the figure of the "dying maiden." For a discussion of Little Eva and Christian typology in Uncle Tom's cabin, see Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860, chapter 5.

his single-minded determination to go to sea. As Stowe once said of her own literary drive: "nothing but deadly determination enables me ever to write -- it is rowing against wind and tide" (qtd. in Hedrick 195). Like the fictional Moses, who achieves success and recognition on the "public stage" of the sea, Stowe became the most talked about woman of her day after the unprecedented success of Uncle Tom's Cabin in 1852. In a culture that tended to associate this sort of public stature with men and masculinity, however, Stowe may have felt uncomfortable with the violation of the role of "private woman" that this recognition entailed.[42] Indeed, Stowe famously said of Uncle Tom's Cabin that "God wrote it" and she "merely took his dictation." It is perhaps not surprising, then, that in the autobiographical novel she began just after becoming an international literary figure, Stowe chose to invest this "masculine" side of her personality only in her male character, Moses, while

---

[42]The terms "public stage" and "private woman" come from the title of Mary Kelley's 1984 study of nineteenth-century women writers, whom she refers to as "literary domestics." In the introduction to her book, Kelley describes the psychic conflict she believes many such women writers, Stowe included, may have suffered: "Anomalies in a man's world, they found that their ability to appreciate themselves in the public sphere was hampered by their ambiguous regard of themselves in the woman's private sphere"(xi).

constructing her heroine, Mara, as a portrait of conforming femininity.

Far from liberating her from the ideology of true womanhood, Stowe's public stature after the success of Uncle Tom's Cabin made her even more keenly aware of the need to present herself with the modesty and self-effacement her culture expected of women. Thus Stowe learned to speak in a self-deprecating manner about her literary ambition and success, allowed her husband, Calvin Stowe, to speak for her in public forums, and often chose to express her opinions through the pulpit of her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, or through publishing anonymous editorials in the newspapers he edited.[43]

Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pyrse have argued that Mara's reticence and lack of self-expression in Pearl

---

[43]The most famous example of Stowe's self-deprecating posture is in a letter she wrote to a reader who had requested some information about the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin. After describing how she came to write the novel, Stowe concludes the letter with the following: ". . . and so I became an authoress Very modest, at first I do assure you, & remonstrating very seriously with the friends who had thought it best to put my name to the pieces, by way of getting up a reputation, & if you ever get to see a wood cut of me, with an inordinately long nose, on the cover of all the Anti Slavery almanacs, I wish you to take notice that I have been forced into it, contrary to my natural modesty by the imperative solicitations of my dear 5000 friends & the public generally" (qtd. in Hedrick 239-240).

indicate Stowe's failure "to fully locate or imagine herself in her fiction"(American Women Regionalists 2-3). I will argue that by identifying her own unsanctioned "masculine" ambition and outspokenness with the male character Moses, Stowe indeed imagines herself fully in Pearl. Stowe's bifurcation of her self through her characterizations of Mara and Moses may be read as a strategy of self-representation, a way of telling an autobiographical story about female desire and ambition within a culture that not only restricted female voice in the public realm, but forced writers to find creative means of fully representing women's lives in the realm of fiction. Because Stowe also used such strategies in her own life, particularly through her relationship with her famous brother, Henry Ward Beecher, a consideration of the close relationship between Stowe and this favorite brother provides an important biographical context for understanding the fictional sibling relationship between Mara and Moses.

Born two years before him in a family of thirteen children, Harriet was her younger brother's closest childhood companion and later his most trusted confidant and friend. Growing up in a family headed by the formidable Calvinist preacher Lyman Beecher, the strong

bond between Harriet and Henry was forged not only through their closeness in age and similar temperaments, but also by a shared spiritual development. While Lyman Beecher relentlessly pressured all of his children towards religious conversion, Harriet and Henry were united by a painful sense of doubt and unworthiness; despite their adolescent conversions, both eventually rejected the wrathful God of their father's Calvinist theology in favor of a more liberal Christ-centered Protestantism. As a minister Henry would preach this liberal theology from his enormously popular pulpit in Brooklyn, while Harriet would "preach" it through the even more widely influential medium of her fiction.

Yet if their lives followed parallel paths, Harriet's gender made her experience growing up significantly different from that of Henry, and indeed from all of her brothers. Despite his eagerness that all of his children undergo conversion, Lyman Beecher subscribed to the conventions of his day by arming only his sons with the skills necessary for survival in the public sphere. As a child, Stowe remembered her father testing the polemical prowess of her brothers by leading kitchen-table debate over difficult theological questions. As a girl, Stowe was not invited to

participate in these all-male sessions, which her father hoped would help to prepare her brothers not only for the private battles of the soul, but also for those of the larger world. Years later she would describe herself as the "sole little girl among so many boys," as she recalled helping to sweep and pile wood that her father and brothers had chopped. Galvanized by her father's declaration that "he wished Harriet was a boy, she would do more than any of them," Stowe remembered "casting needle and thread to the wind" as she put on a black coat that looked like a boy's and set out to impress her father with her energy and diligence (qtd. in Hedrick 18-19). When her father, observing her hard work, invited her along on the fishing expedition he had planned for her brothers, Harriet was elated: "What a privilege it was to be treated, even for a day, as a son!" (Rugoff 95).

Observing the exceptional intelligence of his young daughter, Lyman Beecher came to regret not the separation of spheres that deemed her an "oddity," but the fact that she had been born female rather than male. While Henry was a slow learner, with a shy, stammering "thick speech" that made him appear even slower (Rugoff 114-116), Harriet was endowed with a "remarkably retentive

memory"(qtd. in Hedrick 26) that enabled her to easily learn Latin from her older sister Catharine, who superintended her younger sister's rigorous early education. It must have seemed unfortunate to Lyman Beecher that while his daughters exhibited an aptitude for this traditionally "male" subject, his son Henry was made frustrated and restless not only by Latin declensions, but by the drills of the schoolroom in general. Describing Harriet and Henry as young children, Lyman Beecher wrote: "Harriet is a great genius-- I would give a hundred dollars if she was a boy & Henry a girl -- she is as odd -- as she is intelligent & studious --"(qtd. in Hedrick 29-30).

In a practical joke played several years later when Harriet was a sixteen-year-old teacher at Catharine Beecher's Hartford Female Seminary, Harriet and Henry playfully acted out their father's early wish. As recounted by the writer Fanny Fern, who was one of Stowe's students at Hartford, the joke consisted of Harriet and Henry slipping away to exchange clothes while Catharine's back was turned: "When they reappeared, 'Henry had become Harriet and Harriet had become Henry.' In Henry's coat and trousers Harriet 'made a more than passable Beecher youth,' while Henry in hoopskirt,

mantilla, bonnet, and veil 'was the very "spit and image" of Harriet'"(qtd. in Hedrick 55-56). Suggestive of their shared irreverence and humor, this joke is also an apt metaphor for Stowe's later donning of her brother's male authority to speak out in public on political and social issues.

More than fifteen years before the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin, Stowe used this male authority to speak out against a mob attack on an abolitionist newspaper near her home in Cincinnati. After expressing a wish that she were a man so that she could physically defend the newspaper against further attack, Stowe decided to speak out pseudonymously in a letter to the Cincinnati Journal, of which Henry was temporary editor. Through the male voice of "Franklin," Stowe blasted the mob by arguing that it had violated the rights of private property. While an effective argument against mob violence, Stowe's editorial is perhaps most significant as an early example of her struggle to balance her need to speak out with her desire to fulfill the expectations of true womanhood. Not only did Stowe carefully protect her feminine identity by speaking through a fictionalized male persona, but she also deliberately downplayed this foray into the public world of political debate in a

letter to her husband, Calvin in which she described herself as "a good wife" whose purpose was to "[defend] one of your principles in your absence" (qtd. in Hedrick 108).

Unlike some of her more radical female contemporaries, Stowe believed in the ideology of separate spheres and never openly challenged its sanctions against women's public voices. Yet while she strove to live according to the ideology of "true womanhood," Stowe was also a person of strong convictions who felt frustrated by the constraints this ideology placed on female expression. This sense of frustration became acute in 1851 after Stowe learned of the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, which required bystanders to help capture runaway slaves so that they could be returned into slavery. In a letter to Henry, who shared her belief that the law was morally wrong, Stowe wrote: "It did my heart good to find somebody as indignant as I am about this miserable wicked fugitive slave business. Why I have felt almost choked sometimes with pent up wrath that does no good"(qtd. in Clark 94). As a woman, Stowe lacked an outlet through which to take action against the law, and at first had to be satisfied with encouraging Henry, who had access to both the pulpit and

the press, to speak out against it. Writing to offer encouraging words to her brother, however, Stowe revealed her own sense of impotence and rage: "I feel as if my heart would burn itself out in grief and shame that such things are -- I wish I had your chance -- but next best is to have you have it -- so fire away -- give them no rest day or night"(qtd. in Hedrick 205).

Coming of age in a culture that would not allow women to become preachers, Stowe once told Henry: "I have all my life . . . gone with a gospel burning in my bosom which I longed to preach but could not because I was a woman"(qtd. in Hedrick 370). Uncle Tom's Cabin was in many ways her great sermon, but it is important to remember that this widely read and enormously influential novel began as a modest series of short newspaper sketches. Incited to write only by her escalating anger over the Fugitive Slave Law, Stowe carefully justified her public display by explaining that the moral urgency of the issue had convinced her to violate the boundaries of the private sphere:

> I feel now that the time has come when even a woman or a child who can speak a word for freedom and humanity is bound to speak. The

> Carthaginian women in the last peril of their state cut off their hair for bowstrings to give to the defenders of their country; and such peril and shame as now hangs over this country is worse than Roman slavery, and I hope that every woman who can write will not be silent. (qtd. in Hedrick 208)

Like the Carthaginian women who sacrificed their long hair, a perennial symbol of femininity, to save their country, Stowe here calls upon nineteenth-century American women to sacrifice their own particular mark of femininity, their decorous silence, to save their nation from the evils of slavery. Thus Stowe justified the writing of Uncle Tom's Cabin and its violation of feminine propriety by citing her anger over the moral injustice of slavery. "That it was anger for others," Hedrick adds, "went a long way towards excusing this breach of proper womanhood"(201).

It was not until 1869 that Stowe's anger for the suffering of a woman, namely her recently deceased friend Lady Byron, would incite her to step outside the boundaries of feminine propriety again. In her attempt to vindicate the memory of her friend, who had earlier

confessed to Stowe the secret of Lord Byron's incestuous affair, Stowe boldly took it upon herself, as she had earlier in Uncle Tom's Cabin, to speak for the "voiceless" by telling the silenced Lady Byron's "true story." When Stowe was later vilified for writing "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life"(1869), it was clear that the public was less concerned with her defense of her wronged friend than with her breach of decorum in speaking out publicly on the taboo subject of incest. That she was a woman made her action even more unpardonable.[44]

While Stowe wrote Lady Byron Vindicated (1870) in part to vindicate herself, she would ultimately heed this criticism. Hedrick writes that "Stowe was never again to attempt such direct sexual speech" and that instead she "retreated to her earlier posture of speaking indirectly and attempting to wield her influence behind the scenes"(370). Again Stowe relied on her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, whose newly acquired newspaper, the

---

[44]See Susan Wolstenholme, who writes: "The problem was double: first of all, something about the story Stowe told was 'unrepresentable' . . . . But the second problem was that a woman here publicly and dramatically revealed things that women should certainly not state, even if they knew about them. The silence of women on such issues should itself be testimony to women's propriety and virtue"(54).

Christian Union, allowed her to speak out covertly on controversial issues by writing anonymous editorials published under the cover of his masculine authority.[45]

Looking at the relationship between Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher one is struck by the intensity of the bond Stowe felt with this brother, who more than even her husband, was her soul mate and male counterpart. Years after Henry was exonerated of the adultery charge that had embroiled him in national scandal, Stowe wrote that the trial had "drawn on my life

---

[45]Hedrick describes two incidents that incited Stowe to try to utilize this masculine authority; each was related to the burgeoning women's movement of which Stowe was a devoted though politically conservative proponent. The first of these incidents concerned the publication of two then-recent articles praising the notorious George Sand and her radical "French" ideas of sexual liberty. Perceiving the promulgation of these ideas as a threat to the sanctity of the institution of marriage, Stowe felt the need to retaliate, though not with her own voice. As she explained to Henry: "[T]he things to be said are such as a man can far better say & such as would only draw malignant reaction on me. For if a woman undertakes to utter a protest when licentiousness is concerned she is overwhelmed with a deluge of filth" (qtd. in Hedrick 372). In the second incident, Stowe wanted to defend leaders of the women's movement against a defamatory editorial published in the Nation. Again, she asked Henry to publish this defense under the "shield" of an anonymous editorial in his paper. "I have . . . prepared an Editorial to meet the Nation on the religious ground," she wrote to him, "But I must have liberty to fight this battle under your shield. You have seen how they can insult a woman who has a word to say. Give me the right of an editorial now & then & we will fire shots from the Christian Union on both sides"(qtd. in Hedrick 373).

-- my heart's blood," adding that "He is myself"(Rugoff 544). While written during a painful moment in their lives, this comment is suggestive of the merging of identity that characterized Stowe's relationship with her brother; as a girl she had playfully appropriated his male clothing, later in her life she appropriated his male voice of authority to speak out in the public sphere.

In life, Stowe needed to project her voice through her brother and even at times seemed to merge her identity with his. It is not surprising, then, that she employed a similar strategy in a work of fiction like Pearl, with its strong autobiographical elements and realism.[46] While she centers her story on Mara, a heroine who fulfils the ideal of the silent and self-effacing "true woman" to which Stowe herself aspired, Stowe represents her own unsanctioned desire for voice and agency through Mara's surrogate brother Moses. And like Stowe's own brother, Henry Ward Beecher, this fictionalized brother has access to a world of speech and action from which the heroine is excluded.

---

[46]As Stowe wrote in a preface to the second half of the novel, which first appeared in newspaper installments, Pearl is "a story pale and colorless as real life, and sad as truth."

If Stowe's bifurcation of self in Pearl may be linked to her adolescent and adult relationship with her brother, it should also be understood in light of the earlier influence of her parents, whose roles within the Beecher family were emblematic of the polarized gender spheres of the larger nineteenth-century culture. The most celebrated Calvinist minister of the antebellum era, Stowe's father, Lyman Beecher, seemed to live and breathe in the "public sphere" of intellectual endeavor and political involvement. His wife, Roxanna Foote Beecher, on the other hand, willingly relinquished her own literary and artistic interests in order to devote herself fully to the "private sphere" of home and family. After Roxanna died at the age of forty-one, when Harriet was five, she was remembered by the Beecher family as domestic "angel" and perfect embodiment of the ideal of self-sacrificial womanhood. But if as a girl Stowe continually strove to win the approval and respect of her father, the influence of her mother was more problematic. While the maternal world of Nutplains, the ancestral home of Roxanna's family and the place Stowe herself lived for a time as a child, was a central influence on her development as a writer, the memory of Roxanna herself may have been more a hindrance than a source of

inspiration. The myth of a perfect mother clearly haunts the pages of Pearl, as well as much of Stowe's other writing, but, as Stowe's biographer notes, this image of a "saint Roxanna" was "perhaps emotionally unconvincing" to Stowe and even a "liability" in her fiction (Hedrick 16).

The two most important literary critics of Stowe's novel read Mara's strange relationship with her adopted brother, Moses, in light of the idealized portrait of motherhood embodied by Stowe's own mother. The first of these critics, Sarah Way Sherman emphasizes Mara's mystical "merging" with Moses's drowned mother Dolores, who seems to select Mara to be her living surrogate, as a way to explain the "large admixture of the maternal" in Mara's relationship to the boy. Part of a study on the life and writing of Sarah Orne Jewett, one of Stowe's own "literary daughters," Sherman's reading looks at some of the key classical and religious sources for Pearl and argues that these sources suggest Stowe's "deliberate reworking of the matriarchal mythology" (29).

The second critic, Judith Fetterley, argues that in writing Pearl, Stowe saw herself as telling a "true story" about the psychic risks of romance. After exploring the inequality of the respective educations and

upbringings of Mara and Moses during their childhood years, Fetterley focuses upon the difficulties posed by these unequal childhood experiences in the novel's problematic second half, during which Mara and Moses are presented as "young adults positioned to transform their relationship of brother and sister into that of lovers"("Only a Story" 110). As Fetterley notes, during this section of the novel, Mara takes on the role not of lover but redemptive mother as she reveals "she loves God and loves Moses because God has given him to her as a sacred charge"("Only a Story" 120).

Both Sherman and Fetterley trace their readings of Mara's redemptive maternal role to a prophetic dream that Mara has early in the novel. In this dream, "a black-eyed boy, who seemed to be crying and looking about as for something lost" is presented to Mara by his mother Dolores, a pale, white-robed woman, with the words, "Take him, Mara, he is a playmate for you" (50). After noting Dolores' connections to the figure of the Virgin Mary, Sherman interprets Mara as a Christ-figure in whom "are combined the pathos of the Lady and the resurrection of the Lord"(29). For Fetterley, Mara's dream is a feminist rewriting of both the Old Testament creation story as well as the New Testament story of the resurrection, with

Mara cast in the roles of Adam and Christ ("Only a Story" 123).

Although these analyses of Mara's dream are apt, especially given the importance of biblical typology in Stowe' writing, they do not consider fully the psychological significance of Mara as dreamer. If, as Freud suggested, dreams are wishes, why might Mara wish for a boy who is later described as "the perfect miniature of proud manliness" (81), a boy who could not be more different from the ultra feminine heroine, with her concern for her "pitty" dress (50) and her spiritual connections to a world of lost mothers? Sherman and Fetterley offer important insight into Mara's role as "feminizing" force for Moses, whose redemption clearly depends upon her moral influence, but they do not address the question of what this "fiery, irascible" male character (56) offers the heroine in return. While the text indeed emphasizes Moses' "difference" from Mara, it is this very gender difference that Stowe interrogates and seeks to balance in <u>both</u> characters. Stowe's attempt to create such a balance in Mara ultimately fails, but the heroine's dream of a male "playmate" with whom she may identify is still significant for the way it

indicates her desire to project herself out of a sphere of experience delimited by her female status.

Even before Mara is introduced into the narrative, Stowe presents an image of repressed female desire and voicelessness in her "portrait" of Mara's beautiful young mother, Naomi. In marked contrast to the "expressive physiognomy" of her father (and Mara's grandfather) Captain Zephaniah Pennel, Naomi's impassive expression suggests only "melancholy and timidity"(1). Focusing in on Naomi's mouth, the facial feature most obviously identified with expression, the narrator carefully describes "a sad quiet in its lines" that revealed "a habitually repressed and sensitive nature" (1). The difference between father and daughter is further evident in their reactions as they watch the ship carrying Naomi's husband begin to sink just as it enters the harbor. While Captain Pennel's "involuntary" words of unheard counsel and then despair serve to narrate the tragic story of ship wreck even as it is unfolding, the narrator observes that "the woman lifted up no voice" (4).

The narrative of the wreck of the home-bound ship that Naomi and Captain Pennel witness in these opening pages has been read as a retelling of a tale of divine

providence in Cotton Mather's Magnalia (Baker 62) and as a story "concerning the limitations of masculine power" (Fetterley, Provisions 379).[47] The story is also suggestive of the problem of gender division that Stowe will interrogate throughout the rest of the novel. On the one hand, the story of the drowning of the "unfortunate crew" just before they reach their "sisters, wives, and mothers" on shore suggests a literal gulf between the gender spheres that ship and shore represent. But on the other hand, the fact that the crew is "home-bound" reminds us that men regularly traverse these disparate worlds. Captain Pennel's personal history confirms this, for after the birth of his daughter he announced that he would stay at home instead of "rambling around the world after riches" (12). Similarly, Captain Kittridge, a neighbor of the Pennels, "had followed the sea in his early life, but . . . in time changed his ship for a tight little cottage on the sea-shore"(30). As Stowe's novel will make clear, such a choice of worlds is not open to the sisters, wives, and mothers on shore, who have no choice but to wait for their men in their "tight little cottages."

---

[47]For an explanation of the true historical story behind the shipwreck, see E. Bruce Kirkham's, "The Source of the Shipwreck in The Pearl of Orr's Island."

The story of the shipwreck, which "is yet told in many a family on this coast"(4), also introduces storytelling itself as a theme, one that also must be considered in light of the novel's larger concerns with gender. While Mrs. Kittridge repeatedly admonishes her retired sea captain husband for the "mythical character" (31) of his colorful sea stories, she is forced to admit, "there's never any catchin' you, 'cause you've been where we haven't"(64). Indeed, Captain Kittridge, who made "the most of his foreign experiences" and "took the usual advantages of a traveler" (30) tells tales whose inspiration is beyond the direct experience of women.

While the captain's tales of experience, which are "fabricated" to "suit his market"(30), charm many listeners, these stories do not suit an audience comprised of women such as Mrs. Kittridge. This may be attributed to the fact that Mrs. Kittridge is a "literal body"(31), but her distaste for her husband's yarns may also be explained by their focus on heroic men, such as the tale of the gentlemanly merman who bravely asks the captain to lift the anchor blocking the door to his underwater home so that his family might attend a church meeting (119-120), or of the captain himself as he descends into the depths of the sea in a diving bell.

In this last tale, which his young daughter, Sally listens to with eager curiosity, Captain Kittridge's theme also touches on a "public sphere" concern with buying and selling as he describes pearls "big as chippin'-birds' eggs" that he traded off "to the Nabobs in the interior for Cashmere shawls and India silks and sich . . . and brought 'em home and sold 'em at a good figure, too" (63). As these themes suggest, the narrator's description of the captain as "a humbler phase of the 'mute, inglorious Milton,'" is not incidental. While the captain may share with women artists a need "for an atmosphere of sympathy and confidence in which to develop himself fully" (68), he shares with such canonical male poets as Milton an authoritative male voice in which to tell tales of epic heroes conquering strange lands.

While Mrs. Kittridge has little patience for her husband's fish tales, she listens with rapt attention to the ghost stories told by Miss Roxy, a spinster whose domestic authority has made her "a sort of priestess and sibyl in all the most awful straits and mysteries of life" (21). In contrast to Captain Kittridge's tales of masculine individualism, Miss Roxy's storytelling emphasizes human connection and mutual dependency. In

one such story, Miss Roxy remembers caring for the wife of a Captain Titcomb as she lay on her deathbed. Terrified of entering "the dark valley" alone, Mrs. Titcomb at first asked Miss Roxy to go with her but then announced that her son John, who was away on a boating expedition at Archangel, would accompany her. Mysteriously, it turns out that John "died at Archangel the very day his mother died, and jist the hour, for the Cap'n had it down in his log-book" (71). In another story, Miss Roxy tells of a worldly bachelor known as Thaddeus of Warsaw, for whom Roxy and her sister Miss Ruey, were caring the night he died. The night's tossing and turning caused Thaddeus's hidden pendant, which contained a picture of a blue-eyed woman in pearls and a black dress, to appear on his pillow. Later that night, Miss Roxy reports, the ghost of the woman herself materialized: "Well, now, I don't like to tell about these 'ere things, and you mustn't never speak about it; but as sure as you live, Polly Kittridge, I see that ar very woman standin' at the back of the bed, right in the partin' of the curtains, jist as she looked in the pictur' - blue eyes and curly hair and pearls on her neck, and black dress"(74). After the image "kind o'

faded away," Miss Roxy discovered the man dead "with the pleasantest smile on his face that ever you see" (74).

Miss Roxy's ghost stories, which Stowe positions immediately after her description of the strange discovery of Moses in the arms of his dead mother, are clearly intended to suggest a kind of spirituality that cannot be rationally explained. As the doctor to whom Miss Roxy told her tale of Thaddeus of Warsaw observed (paraphrasing Hamlet), there are "more things in heaven and earth than folks know about" (74).

But the ghost stories told here by Miss Roxy (and earlier by Miss Ruey) are also significant because of the way they contrast the tales told by men such as Captain Kittridge (or John Milton). In contrast to such masculine stories of heroism, these female-authored stories privilege human sympathy and connection -- even across the boundary of death. Moreover, as Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar argue in the introduction to their book Haunting the House of Fiction: Feminist Perspectives on Ghost Stories by American Women, these female-authored stories present an alternate approach to the "dualistic thinking" that marked the nineteenth century, a period known for great debates between, for

example, science and religion; transcendentalism and positivism; and natural and supernatural:

> Such dualistic thinking, an approach to the supernatural that seeks to confirm one side of the dichotomy by wholly denying the other, is not characteristic, we believe, of ghost stories by women . . . . In their ghost stories, women writers seem more likely to portray natural and supernatural experience along a continuum. Boundaries between the two are not absolute but fluid, so that the supernatural can be accepted, connected with, reclaimed, and can often possess a quality of familiarity. (11-12)

In the female-authored story that is Pearl, Stowe represents the nineteenth-century dichotomy that was of greatest concern to her personally, that between male and female, as suggested by the metonyms of ship and shore, and then seeks to erase, or at least blur it. But while she achieves this in her dramatization of Mara's transformation of Moses from "true boy" into spiritually awakened, and thus "feminized," young man, Stowe's

attempt to "masculinize" Mara through her relationship to Moses is problematic.

While Moses enters the text as a child "looking about as for something lost," it is important to remember that Mara is also introduced as a child of longing. As the narrator explains, "Even when the baby lay in her cradle, and its dark, inquiring eyes would follow now one object now another, the gossips would say the child was longing for something"(28). Significantly, Mara's longing is from the first associated with artistic expression. When Miss Roxy observes the baby Mara on the floor of her grandmother's kitchen, the girl appears as a kind of miniature artist "arranging a little grotto of gold and silver sea shells and seaweed" (28). As if searching for a muse, the baby Mara "rests her little arms on the chair and looks through the open kitchen-door far, far off where the horizon line of the blue sea dissolves into the blue sky" (28).

Miss Ruey interprets Mara's "wishful" (28) look in this scene as a longing for her lost mother, but the text suggests that her longing may also be for a father, or father figure. As Miss Ruey's less conventionally-minded sister Miss Roxy observes, Mara's gaze in fact replicates that of Naomi in the novel's first scene, for both female

characters are looking for Mara's father: "Wa'n't her mother always a-longin' and a-lookin' to sea, and watchin' the ships, afore she was born?"(28). Indeed, the girl's looking in this scene extends through the kitchen door (a symbol of the domestic sphere) out to the sea, a place already associated in the text with the male sphere of action and experience and thus the father. Perhaps intuiting this ambiguity, Miss Roxy corrects her sister's earlier observation: "Some say it's the mothers longin' after 'em . . . and some say it's them longin' after their mothers; but dear knows, Ruey, what anything is or what makes anything. Children's mysterious, that's my mind" (29).

In exploring the mysteries of how children first become aware of their own subjectivity, "of being the one who desires," the contemporary psychologist, Jessica Benjamin, has found that this stage of development, which occurs before the age of three, coincides with a child's first awareness of her dependency and gender identity. It is during this phase that the child seeks "a particular kind of oneness with the one person who embodies the power one now feels lacking" (101). According to Benjamin, this person is for both little girls and little boys the father, who represents

independence and the outside world. Correcting Freudian theory which holds that only boys seek to identify themselves with the figure of the father, Benjamin argues that children of both genders want recognition of their own power "as one who desires," from this powerful other. And Benjamin adds, "Nothing is more characteristic of this phase than the reiteration of the word 'want'" (101).[48] In Pearl, Mara's response to Miss Ruey's inquiry about the girl's thoughts during her "steady

---

[48]Benjamin's ideas build upon the earlier work of Nancy Chodorow, who argues that gendered identity stems from the different ways in which boys and girls develop in relation to the mother, the figure traditionally responsible for parenting. According to Chodorow, girls' identification with the mother allows them to develop "a self-in-relation," while boys' identification with the father (and rejection of the mother) leads to the development of a self that "denies relatedness" (Feminism 15). There is clearly a negative side to the association of connectedness and intimacy (as opposed to autonomy and individualism) solely with women, but Chodorow's early work focused on the need for a revision of traditional parenting roles so that boys might develop a greater capacity for such "feminine" qualities. This argument, it seems to me, is one that Stowe seems to anticipate in her dramatization of Mara's influence upon Moses in Pearl. While Benjamin's theory overlaps with Chodorow's in its description of the polarization of gender identity, her emphasis on the girl's need for independence and separation (as opposed to the boy's need for connectedness) helps to place the focus on Mara and her need (and desire) to balance her self with such positive "masculine" attributes. That only Moses is able to achieve such a balance (through a "feminization" of his character) may be part of the reason that readers have felt that the novel "breaks apart" in its second half.

look-out" is suggestive of Benjamin's description of this early developmental phase: "Me want somefin,'" Mara says, a phrase, Miss Roxy confirms, that "she's always sayin'" (29). Significantly, Mara's repetition of the word "want" is what leads to her dream, and subsequently to her relationship with the male figure of Moses.

After qualifying her want in the scene with Miss Ruey by adding, "Me want somebody to pay 'wis" (29), Mara gets for her first playmate not Moses, but the Kittridges' six-year-old daughter, Sally. Described as a "healthy girl" with black eyes that "looked surly and wrathful" (33), Sally at first seems like a prime candidate for disorderly double to the delicate Mara. Indeed, when she is first introduced, Sally is protesting the domestic task of sheet turning, which was "thought a most especial and wholesome discipline for young girls" (33). Yet despite her "rugged" (59) quality, Sally, who speaks to Mara in a "patronizing motherly tone" (50), actually serves to embody, rather than disrupt, the conventional feminine ideal of the island community. While Mara is still enraptured by the memory of her dream of Moses, Sally "seconds [the] commands of her mother" (50) as she attempts to replace Mara's "pitty dress" with more practical country clothing.

Interestingly, later in the novel Sally is transformed from a domestic exemplar into the feminine literary figure of the coquette as she becomes Mara's rival for the romantic love of Moses. While, as Sherman observes, during this last half of the novel, Sally shares with Moses a "pagan" quality and need for the "saving ministry" of Mara (39), it is important to note that Sally never shares in Moses' masculine power. In fact, as a coquette, Sally is defined by her difference from, rather than identification with, men. While Sally as coquette seems powerful, in fact the coquette is, like the mother, constrained and limited by her female body. In this way, the sexuality of the coquette deems her an object of male desire, rather than an expressive subject herself. If as girls Sally and Mara are as different "as a hen and a bumblebee" (37) they are both still entrenched in this restricted feminine world. And as both maternal hen and flirtatious coquette, the young Sally is, despite her energy and buoyancy, finally unsatisfactory as a model of agency for Mara. It is Moses who will fulfill this role, as suggested by an older Mara's response when Sally asks if she has missed Moses while he was away making his fortune at sea: "[W]e two girls down on this lonely island need some one to

connect us with the great world; and he was so full of life, and so certain and confident, he seemed to open a way before us into life" (338).

That Mara regards Moses as her "connection with life" is suggested by her early reverence of him as a figure of maleness, and thus of power and experience. While as a baby Mara seems imperious in her commanding refrain, "Pitty boy, -- pitty boy, --come!" (55), she nevertheless soon "appropriates" as "chosen idol" (56) this male figure, whom she "constantly" refers to as her "boy" (84). As Stowe writes in a passage describing the mysterious connection between Mara and this boy she seems literally to have dreamed up: "She had no words to explain the strange dream of the morning; it lay in her, struggling for expression, and giving her an interest in the new-comer as in something belonging to herself" (56-57). In the "adventures" that follow this passage, Mara's "appropriation" of the boy not only provides her with access to new, conventionally masculine, experiences, but also serves to distance her from the figure of the mother, as represented by such domestic women as Miss Ruey.

In the first of these adventures, the maternal realm itself, as suggested by the nest of "a very domestic

sitting-hen" called Dame Poulet, is disrupted by Moses' antics. Hearing screams emanating from the barn, Miss Ruey soon discovers "the little boy perched on top of the hay-mow" while Mara "was found to have slipped through a hole" into the nest of this matronly hen, "whose clamors at the invasion of her family privacy added no little to the general confusion" (83). The adventure ends by literally landing Mara back in the domestic, but her association with Moses nevertheless allows her to take risks that result in a disruption of this realm. Moreover, Mara's identification with Moses in this episode helps to distance her from the figure of the mother as embodied here by Miss Ruey. Thus when Miss Ruey attempts to discipline the misbehaving boy, Mara lashes out at her with a "martial expression" (84); her loving protector, Miss Ruey, is now "the common enemy" she shares with "her boy" (84).

In a second adventure, Moses' rejection of the figure of the mother in favor of a male world of independence takes center stage. Persuading Mara to accompany him on a sea voyage in a small canoe, Moses thinks, "how beautiful it would be to sail out as he had seen men sometimes do" (106). While Mara plays "fairy princess" (106) to the heroic Moses, the girl and boy are

nevertheless unified in their escape from the shore and all it represents: "The children were all excitement at the rapidity with which their little bark danced and rocked, as it floated outward to the broad, open ocean"(107). On shore, Mrs. Pennel, Miss Ruey, and Miss Roxy consternate over the danger the children face in this beautiful, open world with its circling sharks, while Moses thinks "with glorious scorn" of Miss Roxy's press-board, symbol of the "restraint and bondage that shall never darken his free life more" (108). Indeed, when the children finally return to the shore, Moses looks at the maternal Miss Roxy with "a world of defiance in his great eyes" for he now feels himself part of a separate and more powerful world of fathers: "The spirit of Sir Frances Drake and of Christopher Columbus was swelling in his little body, and was he to be brought under by a dry-visaged woman with a press-board?" (110).

Stowe writes that "there are two classes of human beings in the world," and if she does not label these classes "male" and "female," she suggests it by noting that Mara and her submissive and excessively sensitive grandmother, Mrs. Pennel belong to the one "made to give love," and Moses to the other, which is made "to take it" (104). But while Mara's attraction to Moses may be

attributed to a feminine desire to "give love," it is also suggestive of her desire for agency:

> It was, perhaps, of service to the little girl to give to her delicate, shrinking, highly nervous organization the constant support of a companion so courageous, so richly blooded, and highly vitalized as the boy seemed to be . . . . [T]he fair golden-haired girl seemed to be gladdened by his companionship, as if he supplied an element of vital warmth to her being. She seemed to incline toward him as naturally as a needle to a magnet. (104-105)

While Mara belongs to a "feminine class" represented by such maternal figures as Mrs. Pennel, Miss Ruey, and even the tough-minded Miss Roxy, her "inclination" towards a contrasting male world of action and voice represented by Moses indicates her desire for the same sort of separation and self-assertion that Moses himself struggles to achieve.

If Mara looks to Moses to help her achieve this process of individuation, Moses himself looks to such surrogate fathers as Captain Zephaniah Pennel, Mara's

grandfather and Moses' own adopted father, and to the Reverend Sewell, religious "father" to the entire Orr's Island community. While defiant towards his various "mothers," Moses exhibits an "instinctive awe towards Zephaniah which his manly nature and habits of command were fitted to inspire" (101). Similarly, Moses' "mirthful" demeanor comes to a "pause" when he meets Mr. Sewell for the first time and, stepping forward to greet this man, fixes "his bold, dark, inquisitive eyes upon him" (115). When Mr. Sewell remarks that the boy seems to "like to look" at him, Moses responds by asking the minister, "Are you the Lord?" (115).

While neither Captain Pennel nor Mr. Sewell are biolcgically related to the orphaned Moses, both take a fatherly interest in the boy -- Captain Pennel as the adoptive father who raises him and Mr. Sewell because of his love for Moses' deceased mother Dolores. In the long letter which serves to inform Moses about the story of his parentage later in the novel, Mr. Sewell tells of his past experience as tutor to Dolores and her wealthy Spanish family in Florida and implicitly contrasts himself to Moses' biological father, a "tyrannical" Cuban slave-holder called Senor Don Guzman, who married Dolores for her beauty and "passive obedience" (262). While Mr.

Sewell writes that Moses may well "consider it a loss" (266) not to have been brought up by this father of "sensuality" and wealth, he suggests that Moses is fortunate to have been raised in the austere Protestant community of which the minister Sewell is literally "father": "You have simply to reflect whether you would rather be an energetic, intelligent, self-controlled man, capable of guiding the affairs of life and of acquiring its prizes, -- or to be the reverse of all this, with its prizes bought for you by the wealth of parents" (267). In fact, both surrogate fathers, Captain Pennel and Mr. Sewell himself, superintend Moses' development into manhood in this New England Protestant community, the former in the physical arena of shipbuilding and sailing and the latter in the intellectual arena of books and study.

Mara has equal claim to Captain Pennel and Mr. Sewell as father figures, but they do not recognize her potential to follow in their footsteps as they do the boy Moses. While Captain Pennel prepares to take the ten-year-old Moses along on an ambitious sea voyage in his schooner, he sees Mara as his "delicate Pearl" (126) and, despite Mara's confession to Moses that she wishes she could join them, never considers bringing her along.

Similarly, while Mr. Sewell recognizes that Mara possesses greater intellectual potential than her brother, he sees this as at best a detriment and at worst a "danger" (158). Thus he decides that, rather than tutor her in Latin as he will Moses, he will assign his conventionally-minded sister Miss Emily the job of instructing Mara in such proper feminine "accomplishments" as sentimental mortuary embroidery. As he tells Captain Pennel:

> That child thinks too much, and knows too much for her years! . . . If she were a boy, and you could take her away cod-fishing, as you have Moses, the sea-winds would blow away some of the thinking, and her little body would grow stout, and her mind less delicate and sensitive. (156)

While he earlier acknowledges that the "true boy" Moses requires a balancing of his nature through the "development of the moral" (154), something always associated in Stowe's writing with the "feminine principle," Mr. Sewell cannot imagine providing the girl with a "masculine" upbringing without envisioning her "growing stout" and, in effect, actually turning into a

boy. Thus Mr. Sewell concludes his speech to the captain: "But she's a woman . . . and they are all alike. We can't do much for them, but let them come up as they will and make the best of it" (154).

Despite the neglect of such potential male mentors as Captain Pennel and Mr. Sewell, Mara manages to discover books that provide her with vicarious access to a forbidden world of male experience. While she had earlier read the books of Roman history that Mr. Sewell leaves for Moses, during the months that Captain Pennel and Moses are away on their sea voyage, Mara has her own intellectual voyage of discovery by adding to this reading such imaginative fare as Aesop's Fables, and most importantly, Shakespeare's The Tempest. When Mr. Sewell later questions Mara about her reading, she reveals the sense of agency such books have given her when she speaks of her identification with the heroic figure of Quintus Curtius from her Roman history: "[W]hy, there was a great gulf opened in the Forum, and the Augurs said that the country would not be saved unless someone would offer himself up for it, and so he jumped right in, all on horseback. I think that was grand. I should like to have done that" (154). Mara's identification with Quintus Curtius here may be read as an indication of her

"male" desire for experience and glory, for Mara tells her fantasy with "her eyes blazing out with a kind of starry light which they had when she was excited"(154).

But Mr. Sewell's response to Mara's fantasy reveals his inability to recognize the desire for experience in his "daughter" in the same way he does for his "son," for he quickly recasts Moses in the role of Roman military commander and Mara in that of "Roman girl": "And how would you have liked it, if you had been a Roman girl, and Moses were Quintus Curtius? Would you like to have him give himself up for the good of the country"(154). As if following Mr. Sewell's cue, Mara responds to this revised scenario with stereotypical "feminine" sentimentality. While acknowledging that she would indeed like to see Moses do something "brave and grand," she tells the minister, "it would be so dreadful never to see him any more," as the narrator describes "a large tear" rolling from "the great soft eyes" (154).

In two key scenes later in the novel, Mara attempts to merge her own identity with that of Moses, but rather than enabling Mara to incorporate Moses' masculine capacity for "glory" and experience into her self, this merging instead leads to Moses' incorporation of Mara. In the first of these scenes, Mara takes a break from

Miss Emily's "lessons" to listen to Moses practice his Latin declensions, expressing a wish that "she had been invited to share in this glorious race" (169). After accepting the fact that the race is not open to her, Mara satisfies herself with "admiring when Moses read, in a loud voice, 'Penna, pennae, pennam,' etc" (169).[49] But later, as she pretends to listen to Miss Emily's questions on marking-stitches, Mara's mind seems to merge with that of Moses, who is still at work on his Latin:

> The fact was that she was listening, with her whole soul in her eyes, and feeling through all her nerves, every word Moses was saying. She knew all the critical places, where he was likely to go wrong; and when at last, in one place, he gave the wrong termination, she involuntarily called out the

---

[49]Stowe's choice of the Latin word "penna" here also seems to play into the novel's larger concerns with gender and power. As Fetterley observes, "penna" translates as "feather" in English and thus evokes Moses' "soaring ambition" as he attempts to "master" the world around him. And as Fetterley adds, "penna" is also the root of the English word "pen," which she connects with Mara's intellectual superiority to Moses. I would add that "pen" might also be considered a metonym for story-telling and artistic expression in the text. See "Only a Story, Not a Romance: Harriet Beecher Stowe's The Pearl of Orr's Island."

right one, starting up and turning towards them. (171)

Merging her voice with that of Moses in this scene finally allows Mara to be heard by Mr. Sewell, who reconsiders his earlier decision to leave Mara out of "the glorious race" of Latin study. But in the subsequent "mutual studies" (173) of Moses and Mara, the girl's greater ability serves only to inspire the achievement of the boy. Unable to imagine Mara as full-fledged contestant in the race, Stowe instead dramatizes the "active, daring" boy's incorporation of the girl's "patience" and "quiet": "[Mara] saw and felt, with a secret gratification, that she was becoming more to him through their mutual pursuit. To say the truth, it required this fellowship to inspire Moses with the patience and perseverance necessary for this species of acquisition" (173).

In the second of these scenes, a sixteen-year-old Moses' involvement with an evil smuggling ring dramatizes Mara's own unconscious desire to "smuggle" by crossing imagined boundaries and by going to forbidden places - places associated explicitly with the male sphere. Starting where the Latin episode left off, this scene

tells the story of how Moses is manipulated by a hard-talking smuggler named Atkinson, who influences Moses to neglect his studies, despite the "feminine" expostulations of Mara and Mr. Sewell: "Was he always going to be tied to a girl's apron-string? He was tired of study, and tired of Old Sewell, whom he declared an old granny in a white wig, who knew nothing of the world" (198). Leaving the feminine world behind, Moses comes within a hair's breadth of joining Atkinson's illegal gang, whose plot to establish a secret depository of contraband goods on Orr's Island includes a plan to implicate the law-abiding Zephaniah Pennel as revenge for the captain's past involvement in exposing smugglers and their unlawful stashes of merchandise.

Hearing Moses steal off in the middle of the night, Mara secretly follows him deep into the forest, where she watches as he joins Atkinson and his gang of men. Mara here exhibits "maternal" anxiety over Moses' potential law breaking, but, as his "shadow," she also seems to feel complicit in law breaking herself. As the following passage suggests, Mara's maternal feelings intersect with feelings of guilt as she literally "watches over" the sinning Moses:

> Ever since that dream of babyhood, when the vision of a pale mother had led the beautiful boy to her arms, Mara had accepted him as something exclusively her own, with an intensity of ownership that seemed almost to merge her personal identity with his. She felt, and saw, and enjoyed, and suffered in him, and yet was conscious of a higher nature in herself, by which unwillingly he was often judged and condemned. His faults affected her with a kind of guilty pain, as if they were her own; his sins were borne bleeding in her heart in silence, and with a jealous watchfulness to hide them from every eye but hers. (198)

The tension between maternal concern for and guilty identification with Moses evident in this passage continues throughout the episode. Secretly watching from "the hemlock shadows" (207) as Moses sobs in awareness of his disgrace after the gang has returned to their schooner, Mara represses "herself as the mother does who refrains from crying out when she sees her unconscious little one on the verge of a precipice" (208). As she continues to sit in the shadows, Mara then remembers her childhood dream of Moses' actual mother as "[a] strong

motherly feeling swelled" into her heart and she feels that "she must, she would, somehow save that treasure which had so mysteriously been committed to her" (209).

But accompanying such maternal feelings is Mara's "guilty" identification with Moses and his law breaking. Thus as she stealthily runs home, "the dark little shadow" empathizes with the sinning Moses by thinking "how he must feel, poor fellow!" and steals up the stairs "past his room as guiltily as if she were the sinner" (209). Later, after she enlists Captain Kittridge's help in saving the actual sinner, Mara "refrained, in a guilty way, from even looking at Moses" (215).

Moses is eventually delivered from the smugglers through the intervention of Captain Kittridge, who arranges for the boy to go to China on a sailing expedition. But as he prepares for this voyage, Moses' thoughts not only foreshadow his later desire to marry Mara, but also suggest his intention to "smuggle" from her:

> For Moses, like many others of his sex, boy or man, had quietly settled in his own mind that the whole love of Mara's heart was to be his, to have and to hold, to use and to draw on when he and as he liked.

> He reckoned on it as a sort of inexhaustible, uncounted treasure that was his own peculiar right and property . . . .(216)

Moses feels himself entitled to Mara's heart as "uncounted treasure" and "property," but the phrase "to use and to draw on," with its ironic echo of the marriage vow, suggests that, for Stowe, marriage has the dangerous potential to legitimize men's emotional smuggling from women.

Yet it is important to acknowledge the ways in which the episode as a whole dramatizes Mara's desire to commit an act of "emotional smuggling" herself. In her secret shadowing of Moses and entry into an illicit place where she hears "men talk in the undisguised manner which they use among themselves" (204), Mara exhibits a similar desire to "smuggle" from Moses and the male world that he inhabits. But while Moses is entitled in "taking" from Mara by the laws of love and marriage, Mara is, according to these laws, designated only as "giver." As her guilty thoughts suggest, Mara's "shadowing" of Moses gains her entry into this forbidden male world of experience and action, which even under the pretext of maternal concern, qualifies as an illicit act for girls and women. Yet

rather than further explore the girl's yearning to enter a forbidden male sphere, however unsanctioned this yearning may be, the smuggling episode shifts quickly into a narrative of romantic misunderstandings, a narrative that is predicated not on a merging of masculine and feminine identities, but rather on an assumption of the separation of spheres: "No man - especially one that is living a rough, busy, out-of-doors life," the narrator explains, can fully understand "that veiled and secluded life which exists in the heart of the sensitive woman, whose sphere is narrow . . ." (219). While the smuggling episode dramatizes Mara's psychological exploration beyond this narrow sphere, Stowe is careful to place her safely back in a feminine world of domesticity and religious faith.

Before looking further at Mara's role as a "feminizing" influence on Moses in the last section of the novel, it may be helpful to return to the contemporary psychologist Jessica Benjamin and her description of what she terms "identifactory love" (115). Benjamin explains that little girls desire the same sort of independence and experience in the larger world as do little boys, but, problematically, this desire continues to be associated in middle-class American society solely

with masculinity. As a result, girls' attempts to identify themselves with male role models are often met with indifference and even hostility in such a societal context. In the following passage, Benjamin explains the psychological costs for girls when such "thwarting" of their attempts at male identification occurs:

> [W]hen identifactory love is thwarted in childhood, it becomes associated with unattainable yearning and with self-abasement. Opportunities for assertion and recognition later in life often do not suffice to undo this tendency towards submission. What this means is that when identifactory love succeeds in toddlerhood, accompanied by the pleasure of mutual recognition, then identification can serve as a vehicle for developing one's own agency and desire. But when the identifactory love is not satisfied within this context of mutual recognition - as it frequently is not for girls - it later emerges as ideal love, the wish for a vicarious substitute for one's own agency. (122)

Thus the frustration of the natural desire for agency on the part of the girl stems from a traditional gender division that continues to ascribe "subjectivity" only to maleness, masculinity, and manhood and that, as Benjamin writes, "does not allow for reconciliation of agency and desire with femininity" (123).

If the psychological phenomenon that is described here is endemic to middle-class American families of today, as Benjamin believes it is, it follows that the problem would have been even more acute during the nineteenth-century, when gender roles were more sharply polarized. Indeed, the historical record suggests that during this period, girls, and particularly intellectually-inclined middle-class girls such as Stowe and her fictional counter-part, Mara were precluded from exercising their own desire for agency, voice and experience, or were made to feel that this desire was not compatible with their femininity and prescribed female role.

In Pearl, the absence of models for such female agency or of encouragement of this female desire for experience leads Mara to devote herself to what Benjamin terms "ideal love," as she subsumes her own desire for experience and glory into worship for Moses as her

personal "hero" and later into a desire to "save" him through an infusion of her "feminine" moral influence. This process is encapsulated by an early encounter when Mara's expressed desire to join Moses on his first sea voyage is met with the boy's disparaging refusal: "[Y]ou're a girl; and what can girls do at sea? You never like to catch fish - it always makes you cry to see 'em flop." As Stowe writes, Mara is left "perplexed between her sympathy for the fish and her desire for the glory of her hero, which must be founded on their pain" (127). While Mara eventually succeeds in making Moses share in her sympathetic concern for the world around him, she never shares in his direct experience of this larger world.

At the end of the novel's first section, Mara emerges as an artist, spending long hours sketching realistic charcoal drawings of nature and giving the "true artist's sigh" (162). As Stowe writes, "Ignorantly to herself, the hands of the little pilgrim are knocking on the door where Giotto and Cimabue knocked in the innocent child-life of Italian art" (162). At the same time, Moses emerges as a confident young sailor, able to navigate Captain Kittridge's new boat with ease. But despite their respective talents, the girl and boy are

not equal in their self-confidence. Moses continues to think "himself quite a man" even though "the manhood of a boy is only a tiny masquerade, -- a fantastic, dreamy perversion of real manhood" (163-164). By contrast, as Stowe notes, "It was curious that Mara, who was by all odds the most precociously developed of the two, never thought of asserting herself as a woman; in fact, she seldom thought of herself at all, but dreamed and pondered of almost everything else" (164).

As Stowe writes, Mara is one of "the artists, the poets, the unconscious seers, to whom the purer truths of spiritual instruction are open" (166), and as such she will forgo asserting herself as a painter by sublimating her gifts into helping to kindle divine love into the hearts of others - especially the unreflecting boy, Moses:

> The types of this latter class are more commonly among women than among men. Multitudes of them pass away in earlier years, and leave behind in many hearts the anxious wonder, why they came so fair only to mock the love they kindled. They who live to maturity are the priests and priestesses of the spiritual life, ordained of God to keep the balance

> between the rude but absolute necessities of life and the higher sphere to which that must at length give place. (166-167)

While Stowe is able to imagine such a "balance" in Moses through the spiritual intervention of a dying Mara, Mara herself remains relegated only to this "higher sphere."

As children, Mara attempts to bring the values of this feminine spirit to Moses through her questioning of his love of violence and "mastering" of nature. Thus when a young Moses boasts of stealing eggs from an eagle's nest and connects the eggs to the spoils of war, Mara counters, "do you think war is right?" (165). Interestingly, Stowe earlier uses the idea of "spoils" in the context of an argument in favor of the education of women by noting that "there is a masculine and a feminine element in all knowledge," and "knowledge can be fully orbed only when the two unite in the search and share the spoils" (125).[50] But in their debate over the eagle's

---

[50]One might note the way in which Stowe's language here echoes that of the earlier feminist writings of Margaret Fuller, a woman who received an unusually rigorous, "male" education and who went on to earn the respect of such revered male intellectuals as Ralph Waldo Emerson. Significantly, however, Fuller was judged by many during her day as at best an anomaly and at worst a freakish figure. See Woman in the Nineteenth Century for a

eggs as spoils of war, the "feminine element" that Mara represents is overshadowed by the "masculine" as represented by Moses: "Right? Why, yes, to be sure; if it ain't, it's a pity; for it's all that has ever been done in this world. In the Bible, or out, certainly it's right. I wish I had a gun now, I'd stop those old eagles' screeching" (127). As an older Moses later tells Mara: "[T]here are a class of feelings that you have that I have not and cannot have . . . . I can understand what religion is in you, I can admire its results . . . but people are differently constituted. I never can feel as you do" (325).

When Moses later goes to visit Mara, now his dying fiancée, in her sick room, he continues to resist being "wrenched suddenly from the sphere of an earthly life and made to confront the unclosed doors of a spiritual world on behalf of the one dearest to him" (385). But by the end of the novel, Moses comes to accept the feminine "power of love" which Mara tells him she will impart to him through her death: "[H]e had seen more of a real spiritual beauty and significance of Mara's life than in years before, and felt upspringing in his heart, from the

---

discussion of Fuller's education at home in her "father's library."

deep pathetic influence of the approaching spiritual world, a new and stronger power of loving" (396).

In describing the inherent problem between romantic love between men and women, Stowe writes: "The difficulty of real understanding intensifies in proportion as the man is distinctively manly, and the woman womanly" (319). In the novel's last chapter, Stowe makes clear that a chastened Moses has now become a man "with a large infusion of the feminine element" (319) when, four years after Mara's death, Moses tells Sally, whom he will soon marry: "[D]o you know I am tired of wandering? I am coming home now. I begin to want a home of my own" (405). Thus the novel ends happily with the prospect of a marriage and with the culmination of a process of "feminization" that serves to balance the character of the male hero. But what of Mara and her struggle to identify with the male sphere that this male hero has embodied, a sphere connected in the novel not only with action and experience, but also intellectual and artistic expression?

In attempting to answer this question, it is helpful to look more carefully at Stowe's incorporation into Pearl of references to The Tempest, the Shakespearean play that, according to Elaine Showalter, "has long been

used by American women writers as a metaphorical account of the woman artist or feminist intellectual" (27). Curiously, after first discovering a fragmentary copy of this play in her grandparents' garret, a young Mara identifies neither with the figure of the artist as embodied by Prospero nor even with Miranda as motherless daughter with access to her father's library, but rather with Miranda as submissive helpmeet: "and then there was the beautiful young Prince Ferdinand, much like what Moses would be when he grew up - and how glad she would be to pile up his wood for him, if any old enchanter would set him to work!" (135).

If Mara cannot connect the idea of womanhood with intellectual power and creativity in her reading of The Tempest, a later scene may gives some clues as to why. In this scene, Mara joins Captain Kittridge and Sally for a clambake on the beach, where she shows them her wondrous discovery: "it's a beautiful book, -- it tells about an island, and there was an old enchanter lived on it, and he had one daughter, and there was a spirit they called Ariel, whom a wicked old witch fastened in a split of a pine-tree, till the enchanter got him out" (140).[51]

---

[51]Showalter notes that, although Ariel is male, stage productions of the play since the early eighteenth century

When Mara asks the well-traveled Captain Kittridge if he has ever seen "an enchanter that could make storms" (142), he responds that he has seen "witches and conjurers" who could, and goes on to tell the story of old Polly Twitchell of whom "people used to say she brewed storms, and went to sea in a sieve" (142). Presented here as a kind of female counterpart to the artist Prospero, Polly Twitchell is, to Mara's mind, not "a good enchanter" who creates art "by a book and a rod" (143), but rather an aberration. Indeed, the woman artist as embodied by Polly Twitchell does not so much evoke Prospero as she does such freakish feminine figures as Shakespeare's Weird Sisters, who are themselves dark mirrors of the man-like Lady Macbeth.

Sally notes that she has heard stories about witches like Polly Twitchell told by Miss Roxy (142), a character who is herself a rather manly woman. Described as an angular, hard-edged spinster, Miss Roxy may suggest an ideal of feminine domesticity with her gifts for calming colicky babies, bonnet-trimming, and tending to the sick,

---

have cast Ariel with female actors. And because Ariel's plot is about liberty (in contrast to the marriage plot that ultimately thwarts Miranda), Ariel has been a compelling figure to such "rebels" as Louisa May Alcott and Sylvia Plath (25-37). Interestingly, Mara later suggests that Moses name the small schooner he has built the "Ariel" (174), but the boat represents his liberty, not hers.

but Miss Roxy is also set apart from a feminine type embodied not only by the delicate Mara, but also by Miss Roxy's sentimental younger sister, Miss Ruey. As Stowe writes, "Miss Roxy was the master-spirit of the two, and like the great coining machine of a mint, came down with her own sharp, heavy stamp on every opinion her sister put out" (22). If Stowe's language here suggests a male world of money and business, it should be noted that she also presents Miss Roxy as chief rival to the patriarchal Reverend Sewell in matters of medicine (88).

While Miss Roxy's storytelling is distinct from the "masculine" yarns of Captain Kittridge, it is also distinct from such "feminine art" as the sentimental poetry loved by Miss Ruey or the maudlin "mortuary embroidery" in which Miss Emily takes so much pride. Instead, Miss Roxy's "artistic attitude" is strikingly unsentimental, undercutting, for example, the melodrama of the opening death scene with her observation that the "still white form" of Naomi will "make a beautiful corpse"(8). This balance is further suggested by the novel's ending, in which the love of the dying Mara reveals that Miss Roxy, who is as prickly as "an old burdock-bush"(392) also possesses a heart as soft as "satin fibres"(354). But if Miss Roxy evokes Stowe's own

narrative voice and even comes closest to Stowe's ideal of a "masculinized" woman -- a figure in whom male authority and experience are combined with a distinctly female perspective on the world, she is not the focus of Stowe's story. As Fetterley has observed, Miss Roxy "articulates her author's most radical thought because Stowe keeps her safely distanced as a regional character" ("Only a Story" 112).

At the end of Pearl, the narrator acknowledges that readers are not ready for an "unlovely" heroine like Miss Roxy, however lovely the old spinster's heart and soul might be (354). Stowe was not ready to make such a character her heroine either. Rather, in writing her autobiographical story of girlhood, Stowe attempted to portray her struggles as an artist through Mara, a conventionally feminine young girl. But as many readers have observed, Stowe could not imagine Mara as a complete fictional counterpart. Mara's experience may tell part of this story, but one must look to the disorderly energy Stowe vested in "her boy," Moses, to read her story in full.

EPILOGUE: "Louisa May Alcott's Jo March and the Disorderly Girl Legacy"

Jo March, the heroine of Louisa May Alcott's widely-read nineteenth-century novel for girls, is introduced as a willful, moody, young tomboy with a "fiery" temper that she struggles to douse with strong doses of Christian love and humility. As Alcott writes, "Jo had the least self-control" of the four March sisters: "Poor Jo tried desperately to be good, but her bosom enemy was always ready to flame up and defeat her; and it took years of patient effort to subdue it" (74). Subdue it Jo did, however. Much like the earlier women's novels upon which it was modeled, Little Women features the moral education of its disorderly girl and concludes with her marriage to the fatherly Professor Bhaer.

Like her predecessors Frado, Capitola, and Mara, Jo is a figure whose autobiographical connections to her creator make her an ideal vehicle for the expression of unsanctioned female desire and speech. But Little Women, which initially appeared in serial form a few years after the end of the Civil War, represents a different construction of girlhood in American women's writing, one

that serves to bridge the disorderly girl of the 1850s with the figure of the woman artist that later came to replace her. Indeed, Baym regards the publication of Little Women as an event signaling the demise of the earlier genre, for it marked "the transformation of woman's fiction into girl's fiction" (296). I would add that it also marks the birth of a later tradition of women's writing by portraying the disorderly girl as artist.

While Wilson, Southworth and Stowe stop short of making a writer of the disorderly girl, Alcott openly tells her own story of literary apprenticeship through Jo. In a chapter of Little Women entitled "Literary Lessons," Jo dons a black "scribbling suit" and "falls into the vortex" of writing a novel:

> She did not think herself a genius by any means; but when the writing fit came on, she gave herself up to it with entire abandon, and led a blissful life, unconscious of want, care, or bad weather, while she sat safe and happy in an imaginary world, full of friends almost as real and dear to her as any in the flesh . . . . The divine afflatus usually lasted a

> week or two, and then she emerged from her "vortex" hungry, sleepy, cross, or despondent. (265-266)

Channeling her "disorderly" energy into writing, Jo hopes to make money as well as art, for one of her motivations is to earn enough to rescue her family from poverty. In this way, Jo March may be considered a fictional descendant of the popular women authors in this study who justified their writing, at least in part, by financial need. Indeed, Alcott playfully invokes the name of E.D.E.N Southworth, the mid-nineteenth-century novelist most emblematic of the popular women's tradition, when she makes "Mrs. S. L. A. N. G. Northbury" Jo's primary literary influence.

But as a fictionalized novelist, Jo March is also a forerunner of the character that dominated women's writing in the decades after the Civil War: the heroine as artist. As Elizabeth Ammons explains in Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn into the Twentieth Century:

> In fiction by women at the turn of the century, the figure of the woman artist appears almost

> obsessively. Iola Leroy wants to be a writer, as does the protagonist of "The Yellow Wallpaper." The narrator of The Country of the Pointed Firs is a writer. The heroine of Edith Wharton's first novel, The Touchstone (1900) is a famous author. A principal character in Hopkins's Contending Forces is named for the poet Sappho, and the heroine in Of One Blood is a singer. The main female character of Ellen Glasgow's first novel, The Descendant (1900), is a painter; the protagonist of Kate Chopin's The Awakening is a would-be painter, and the supporting character Mademoiselle Reisz is an accomplished musician [among many other examples]. Clearly writing about the woman artist . . . compelled . . . almost all serious turn-of-the-century women writers. (121)

In attempting to answer the question "why?" Ammons argues that, because of the social and cultural changes that occurred in America after the 1870s, women writers were finally able to envision themselves as serious artists rather than "professional writers." Indeed, Ammons notes that these later women writers defined themselves in terms of their rejection of the earlier female tradition

and that they sought instead to align themselves with the "great writers of the western tradition, who were almost all male" (123). But while Ammons calls the work of this later generation of women "groundbreaking" and "new," her discussion of their portrayals of the figure of the woman artist as a struggle against "silencing" evokes nothing so much as the earlier illicit speech of the disorderly girl as portrayed by Wilson, Southworth, and Stowe (Conflicting 122). Indeed, one might say that the disorderly girl grows up to become the woman artist in turn-of-the-century American women's writing.

One might assume that, with the broadening of educational and occupational possibilities for women by the end of the nineteenth century, women writers of this later period would no longer need to struggle with issues of voice. But the transition from the ideal of True Woman to that of New Woman during this period did not mean that women were free from conventional notions concerning women's "place." Rather, many women wrestled with competing societal expectations even as they freely occupied positions outside of the home. And as literary historians such as Ammons have demonstrated, women writers of the period struggled additionally with how to define themselves as artists within the competing

literary traditions of the revered, mostly white male canon and the often maligned, yet influential, legacy of popular women's fiction. While their predecessors may have struggled with these same dichotomies, the freedom granted to women at the turn-of-the-century meant that writers of this later generation could explore their struggles more directly and openly through mature female characters whose stories centered on a search for artistic self-realization.

As if to evoke the legacy of girl heroines from the earlier women's tradition, three well-known works from this later period - Kate Chopin's The Awakening (1899), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"(1892) and Sarah Orne Jewett's The Country of the Pointed Firs (1896)- each features an adult heroine whose artistic struggle begins with a metaphoric return to girlhood. Although already a wife and mother when she is first introduced, Edna Pontellier, the heroine of Chopin's The Awakening, engages in a search for sexual and artistic fulfillment that critics have discussed in terms of an adolescent desire to balance individuation on the one hand and emotional fusion with another person on the

other.[52] Similarly, the narrator of Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a depressed wife and mother whose doctor-husband orders her to undergo protracted bed rest in a room that once served as a children's nursery, where he insists on calling her "little girl" (41). And in Jewett's The Country of the Pointed Firs, the narrator, a lone woman writer who retreats to the peace and seclusion of Maine's Dunnet Landing for the summer, finds herself literally going "back to school," after she decides to rent a one-room schoolhouse in which to write. Describing her daily ritual at the schoolhouse, the narrator explains: "I hung my hat and luncheon-basket on an entry nail as if I were a small scholar"(66).

But if the girl is not construed as a figure of power and dissent in these later texts, the woman artist is. As Mademoiselle Reisz, the serious pianist who befriends Chopin's heroine, responds when Edna confesses that she intends to become an artist: "The artist must possess the brave soul . . . . The soul that dares and defies"(83). The music of the iconoclastic Mademoiselle Reisz inspires Edna's own artistic leanings, although the

---

[52]See especially Cynthia Griffin Wolff's "Thanatos and Eros: Kate Chopin's The Awakening," and Elaine Showalater's Tradition and the Female Talent: The Awakening as a Solitary Book" in the Bedford edition of The Awakening.

eccentricity of this "disagreeable little woman"(44) finally deems her an unacceptable role model for the struggling heroine. Still, as Showalter argues, the voice of Mademoiselle Reisz "seems to speak for the author's view of art and for the artist"(181). And if Edna's suicide on the final page of the novel is, as some critics believe, an act of freedom and self-assertion, it may be significant to note that, just before she dies, Edna thinks of Mademoiselle Reisz's earlier speech concerning the artist's defiant voice.

In "The Yellow Wallpaper" and The Country of the Pointed Firs the theme of voice literally drives the narrative as the artist-heroine takes on the role of first-person narrator. In Gilman's gothic story, the imprisoned narrator, forbidden to undertake any intellectual activity until her "nervous condition" dissipates, staves off insanity by keeping a secret journal, which becomes a written record of her defiance. As she confides to "dead paper" early in the story: "Personally, I disagree with their ideas. Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good"(42). While the narrator's liberation at the end of the story is merely an escape into madness, the narrative itself represents a daring and powerful

expression of defiance on the part of Gilman, who underwent the so-called "rest-cure" herself after the birth of her daughter and who wrote the story, as she later explained, "to save people from being driven crazy" (58).

While Jewett's writer-narrator finds "literary employments" to be "vexed" (64) when she first arrives in Dunnet Landing, her hostess, Mrs. Todd, the matriarchal herbalist who later becomes her dear friend, not only unleashes the writer's expression but gives her her subject: the close-knit community of humble, mature individuals at whose center Mrs. Todd stands. In this novella, the narrator, an independent woman writer, is free to reject or rework the revered male literary tradition as represented by Captain Littlepage, whose epic narratives of the sea she finds "a little dull" (72), and to find inspiration in what was formerly not considered fodder for great art: domesticity and nurturing. Explaining this epiphany late in the novella, the narrator observes that, despite the fact that "those few words which escape us in moments of deep feeling look but meager on the printed page," she has finally discovered her voice in the humble and loving world of Dunnet Landing. After hearing Mrs. Todd make a simple

observation about the fine weather and the wedding that will take place that day, the narrator suddenly "felt something take possession of [her] which ought to communicate itself to the least sympathetic reader of this cold page"(191). The woman writer thus finds her voice while asserting her freedom to return to a tradition of female mentors and role models.[53]

Many white, middle-class women writers of the twentieth century, from Gertrude Stein to Joyce Carol Oates, have looked back for inspiration not to the turn-of-the-century figure of the woman artist, but rather to the disorderly girl from which she sprang. Few of these contemporary authors read such forgotten works as Our Nig, The Hidden Hand, or The Pearl of Orr's Island, but many were inspired by reading about Jo March when they were girls. As Cynthia Ozick proclaims, "I read Little Women a thousand times . . . . Ten thousand. I am Jo in her 'vortex,' not Jo exactly, but some Jo of the future"(qtd. in Showalter 42).[54] The tradition of women's

---

[53]Significantly, Jewett's own voice was inspired by the regionalist fiction of Stowe, and especially by The Pearl of Orr's Island, which Jewett read when she was a girl. For more on the influence of Stowe upon Jewett, see Sherman's Sarah Orne Jewett: An American Persephone.

[54]For further discussions of the influence of Little Women on later women writers, see Carolyn Heilbrun's essay in

writing from which Jo emerged is constricted, to some degree, by class and gender. But a consideration of the uses of the disorderly girl -- as the central fictional figure from this female tradition -- may suggest new ways of looking at other emerging literary traditions, including multicultural and ethnic literature by men as well as women, in which diverse metaphoric portrayals of boundary breaking and voice reflect the writer's struggle against enforced silences of other kinds.

Women, the Arts, and the 1920s in Paris and New York and Elaine Showalter's "Little Women: The American Female Myth" in Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing.

Works Cited

Alcott, Louisa May. Little Women. 1868-1869. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.

Ammons, Elizabeth. Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn into the Twentieth Century. New York: Oxford UP, 1992.

---. "Stowe's Dream of the Mother-Savior: Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Women Writers Before the 1920s." New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin. Ed. Eric J. Sundquist. New York: Cambridge UP, 1986.

Ammons, Elizabeth and Annette White-Parks, eds. Tricksterism in Turn-of-the-Century American Literature: A MultiCultural Perspective. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994.

Arthur, T. S. Advice to Young Ladies on Their Duties and Conduct in Life. Boston: Phillips & Sampson, 1848.

Baker, Dorothy Z. "Puritan Providences in Stowe's The Pearl of Orr's Island: The Legacy of Cotton Mather." Studies in American Fiction 22 (1994): 61-79.

Baym, Nina. Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820 - 70. Second Edition. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Beck, Ervin. "Trickster on the Threshold: An Interpretation of Children's Autumn Traditions." Folklore 96 (1985): 24-28.

Benjamin, Jessica. The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.

Brenzel, Barbara. "Domestication as Reform: A Study of Wayward Girls, 1856-1905." Harvard Educational Review 50 (1980): 196-213.

Brown, Gillian. Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Brown, Lyn Mikel and Carol Gilligan. Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992.

Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls. New York: Random House, 1997.

Budick, Emily Miller. Engendering Romance: Women Writers and the Hawthorne Tradition, 1850-1990. New Haven: Yale UP, 1994.

Calvert, Karin. Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood, 1600-1900. Boston:

Northeastern UP, 1992.

Carpenter, Lynette and Wendy K. Kolmar, eds. Haunting the House of Fiction: Feminist Perspectives on Ghost Stories by American Women. Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1991.

Carpenter, Lynette. "Double Talk: The Power and Glory of Paradox in E.D.E.N. Southworth's The Hidden Hand." Legacy 10 (1993): 17-30.

Chodorow, Nancy. Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989.

---. The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender. Second Edition. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1999.

Chopin, Kate. The Awakening. Ed. Nancy A. Walker. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Clark, Clifford Edward. Henry Ward Beecher: Spokesman for a Middle-Class America. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978.

Clement, Priscilla Ferguson. Growing Pains: Children in the Industrial Age, 1850-1890. New York: Twayne, 1997.

Cogan, Frances B. All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America. Athens:

University of Georgia Press, 1989.

Coultrap-McQuin, Susan. Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Cummins, Maria Susanna. The Lamplighter. 1854. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1995.

Davidson, Cathy N. "Preface: No More Separate Spheres!" American Literature 70 (1998): 443-463.

Degler, Carl. At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present. New York: Oxford UP, 1980.

Dobson, Joanne. "The Hidden Hand: Subversion of Cultural Ideology in Three Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Women's Novels." American Quarterly 38 (1986): 223-242.

---. Introduction. The Hidden Hand. By E.D.E.N. Southworth. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992.

Dundes, Alan, ed. Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973.

Elbert, Monika. Separate Spheres No More: Gender Convergence in American Literature, 1830-1930. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000.

Ernest, John. "Economies of Identity: Harriet E. Wilson's Our Nig." PMLA 109 (1994): 424-438.

Farmer, John S. and W.E. Henley, eds. Slang and Its Analogues Past and Present. New York: Routledge and Kegan, 1965.

Fetterley, Judith and Marjorie Pryse, eds. American Women Regionalists, 1850-1910: An Anthology. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992.

Fetterley, Judith. "Only a Story, Not a Romance: Harriet Beecher Stowe's The Pearl of Orr's Island." The (Other) American Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers. Ed. Joyce W. Warren. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1993

---. Provisions: A Reader from 19th-Century American Women. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Foreman, P.G. "The Spoken and the Silenced in Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl and Our Nig. Callaloo 13 (1990): 313-324.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. " 'To Be Worthy of God's Favor': Southern Women's Defense and Critique of Slavery." 32nd Annual Robert Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture. Gettysburg College, 1993.

---. " 'To Weave It into the Literature of the Country':

Epic and the Fictions of African American Women." Bainard Cowan and Jefferson Humphries, eds. Poetics of the Americas: Race, Founding, and Textuality. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State UP, 1997.

Fuller, Margaret. Woman in the Nineteenth Century. 1845. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1971.

Gardner, Eric. " 'This Attempt of Their Sister': Harriet Wilson's Our Nig from Printer to Readers." New England Quarterly 66:2 (1993): 226-246.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.

---. Introduction. Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black. 1859. By Harriet E. Wilson. New York: Vintage Books, 1983.

Gilligan, Carol. In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. "The Yellow Wallpaper." Four Stories by American Women. Ed. Cynthia Griffin Wolff. New York: Penguin, 1990.

Graves, Mrs. A.J. Girlhood and Womanhood: or, Sketches of My Schoolmates. Boston: T.H. Carter & Co., 1844.

Habegger, Alfred. Gender, Fantasy, and Realism. New York:

Columbia UP, 1982.

---. "A Well Hidden Hand." Novel: A Forum of Fiction 14 (1981): 197-212.

Harris, Susan K. 19th Century American Women's Novels: Interpretative Strategies. New York: Cambridge UP, 1991.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. Vol. 1, True Stories. Ed. William Charvat. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1972.

---. The Scarlet Letter. Ed. Ross C. Murfin. Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1991.

Hedrick, Joan D. Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life. New York: Oxford UP, 1994.

Heilbrun, Carolyn G. "Louisa May Alcott: The Influence of Little Women." Women, the Arts, and the 1920s in Paris and New York. Eds. Kenneth W. Wheeler and Virginia Lee Lussier. New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1982.

"How Schools Shortchange Girls: The AAUW Report: A Study of Major Findings on Girls and Education." New York: Marlowe and Co., 1995.

Hynes, William J. and William G. Doty. Eds. Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and

Criticisms. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993.

Jewett, Sarah Orne. "The Country of the Pointed Firs." Four Stories by American Women. Ed. Cynthia Griffin Wolff. New York: Penguin Books, 1990.

Jones, Paul Christian. "'This Dainty Woman's Hand . . . Red with Blood': E.D.E.N. Southworth's The Hidden Hand as Abolitionist Narrative." American Transcendental Quarterly 15 (2001): 59-80.

Kelly, Mary. Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America. New York: Oxford UP, 1984.

Kerber, Linda K. "Daughter of Columbia: Educating Women for the Republic, 1787 - 1805." The Hofstadter Aegis: A Memorial. Eds. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick. New York: Knopf, 1974.

---. Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980.

Kerber, Linda K., et al. "On In a Different Voice: An Interdisciplinary Forum." Signs 11 (1986): 304-333.

Kett, Joseph. Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present. New York: Basic Books, 1977.

Kirkham, Bruce E. "The Source of the Shipwreck in The Pearl of Orr's Island." The American Transcendental Quarterly 1978

---. "The Writing of Harriet Beecher Stowe's The Pearl of Orr's Island." Colby Library Quarterly 3 (1980): 158-165.

Kleinfeld, Judith. "The Myth That Schools Shortchange Girls: Social Science in the Service of Deception." (1998): http://www.uaf.edu/norther/schools/download.html.

Kuhlmann, Susan. Knave, Fool, and Genius: The Confidence Man as He Appears in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973.

Landay, Lori. Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con Women: The Female Trickster in American Culture. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998.

Lawrence-Pietroni, Anna. "The Trickster, the Changeover, and the Fluidity of Adolescent Literature." Children's Literature Association Quarterly 21 (1996): 34-39.

Lenz, William. Fast Talk and Flush Times: The Confidence Man as a Literary Convention. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985.

Leverenz, David. Manhood and the American Renaissance. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989.

Levine, Lawrence W. " 'Some Go Up and Some Go Down': The Meaning of the Slave Trickster." The Hofstadter Aegis: A Memorial. Eds. Stanley Elkins and Eric Mckitrick. New York: Knopf, 1974.

Maclay Doriani, Beth. "Black Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century America: Subversion and Self-Construction in Two Women's Autobiographies." American Quarterly 43 (1991): 199-222.

Mitchell, Sally. The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915. New York: Columbia UP, 1995.

Nathanson, Constance. Dangerous Passage: The Social Control of Sexuality in Women's Adolescence. Boston: Temple UP, 1991.

Newcombe, Harvey. How to be a Lady: A Book for Girls Containing Useful Hints on the Formation of Character. Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1852.

Orenstein, Peggy. Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap. New York: Knopf, 1995.

Pipher, Mary. Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995.

Regis, Louise Boyle. Mrs. E.D.E.N. Southworth, Novelist.

Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1939.

Reynolds, David S. Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988.

Rouse, P. Joy. "Cultural Models of Womanhood and Female Education: Practices of Colonization and Resistance." Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write. Ed. Catharine Hobbs. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995.

Rugoff, Milton. The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century. New York: Harper & Row, 1981.

Ryan, Mary. The Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865. New York: Cambridge UP, 1981.

Samuels, Shirley. The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America. New York: Oxford UP, 1992.

Sherman, Sarah Way. Sarah Orne Jewett: An American Persephone. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989.

Showalter, Elaine. Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing. New York: Oxford UP,

1991.

Sigourney, Lydia. Letters to Young Ladies. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1836.

Smith, Jeanne Rosier. Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America. New York: Knopf, 1985.

---. "Puberty to Menopause: The Cycle of Femininity in Nineteenth-Century America." Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women. Eds. Mary Hartman and Lois W. Banner. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

Southworth, E.D.E.N. The Hidden Hand; or, Capitola the Madcap. 1859. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

Stansell, Christine. City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860. New York: Knopf, 1986.

Stearns, Carol Zisowitz and Peter N. Stearns. Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America's History. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Stearns, Peter N. "Girls, Boys, and Emotions: Redefinitions and Historical Change." Journal of

American History 80 (1993): 36-74.

Stern, Julia. "Excavating Genre in Our Nig." American Literature 67 (1995): 439-466.

Stewart, Veronica. "Narrative Freedom in E.D.E.N. Southworth's The Hidden Hand or, Capitola the Madcap." Literature, Interpretation, Theory 8 (1997): 153-172.

---. "The Wild Side of The Wide, Wide World." Legacy 11 (1994): 1-16.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. The Pearl of Orr's Island. 1862. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

---. Uncle Tom's Cabin. Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: W. W. Norton's & Co., 1994.

Tate, Claudia. Domestic Allegories Of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century. New York: Oxford UP, 1992.

Tompkins, Jane. Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.

Turner, Victor. "Myth and Symbol." International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. Vol. 10. Ed. David L. Sills. New York: Macmillan, 1968.

Vallone, Lynne and Claudia Nelson, eds. The Girl's Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830-

1915. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994.

Vallone, Lynne. Disciplines of Virtue: Girls' Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. New Haven: Yale UP, 1995.

Vinovskis, Maris A. and Richard M. Bernard. "Beyond Catharine Beecher: Female Education in the Antebellum Period." Signs (1978): 856-869.

Wadlington, Warwick. The Confidence Game in American Literature. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975.

Wall, Cheryl A., ed. Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory, and Writing by Black Women. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1989.

Wallace, James D. "Hawthorne and the Scribbling Women Reconsidered." American Literature 62 (1990): 201-222.

Warner, Susan. The Wide, Wide World. 1850. New York: The Feminist Press, 1987.

Welter, Barbara. Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century. Athens: Ohio UP, 1976.

White, Barbara A. Growing Up Female: Adolescent Girlhood in American Fiction. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985.

---. " 'Our Nig' and the She-Devil: New Information about

Harriet Wilson and the 'Bellmont' Family." American Literature 65 (1993): 19-52.

Williams, Susan S. "Widening the World: Susan Warner, Her Readers, and the Assumption of Authorship." American Quarterly 42 (1990): 565-586.

Wilson, Harriet E. Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black. 1859. New York: Vintage Books, 1983.

Wise, Daniel. The Young Lady's Counsellor; or Outlines and Illustrations of the Sphere, the Duties and the Dangers of Young Women. Boston: C.H. Pierce, 1852.

Wolstenholme, Susan. "Voice of the Voiceless: Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Byron Controversy." American Literary Realism 19 (1987): 48-65.