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"I Am Master Here and You Shall Learn to Know It": Recovering Domestic Abuse Literature by 19th-Century Transatlantic Women Authors

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"I AM MASTER HERE AND YOU SHALL LEARN TO KNOW IT":

RECOVERING DOMESTIC ABUSE LITERATURE

BY 19TH-CENTURY TRANSATLANTIC WOMEN AUTHORS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: "I Am Master Here and You Shall Learn to Know It": Recovering Domestic Abuse Literature By 19th-Century Transatlantic Women Authors

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This dissertation examines nineteenth-century British and American fiction by women authors treating domestic abuse: *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, *Mauleverer's Divorce*, *Bessy Conway*, *Lost and Saved*, *Fettered for Life*, *Ishmael*, *Self-Raised*, and *Jupiter Lights*. These novels show the unmanliness of male abusers, warn readers about the fiction of romantic notions, speak against the "angel in the house" ideology, illustrate women's legal vulnerability, and offer examples of gender-bending advocate figures. Although other scholars have not made this classification, my analysis shows that literature dealing with domestic abuse shares similar concerns with more recognized reform-oriented literature categories while providing unique plots, characters, and situations and, thus, deserves a name of its own. By examining contemporary newspapers and information on laws, I show how these novels are representative of their historical period and can provide further insight into many facets of womanhood.

Although domestic abuse can involve a victim or abuser of either gender, for the purposes of this study, domestic abuse or domestic violence is examined from the context of men who abuse their female partners. In order to get at the heart of the many ways that a man can abuse a woman, I have chosen to apply modern definitions or types of abuse as a means of assisting modern readers in understanding differences between the types of abuse (physical, psychological, emotional, legal, and economic) that these authors share. These modern definitions provide a useful means of organizing the different types of abuse that these authors

illustrate and the common effects that they have on the characters. Finally, I consider the impact that these works can have on modern classrooms by initiating conversations on domestic abuse and sexual assault.

My goal is twofold. This project is descriptive in that I want to show how authors use similar plots and characters to discuss abuse, in order to help build a potential canon of what domestic violence fiction looks like. This dissertation is also analytical in its investigation of how these women authors talk about domestic abuse and what these authors intend with their inclusion of abuse scenes and abused women.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As I began this dissertation, my original intent was to examine the numerous female-authored nineteenth-century novels that discuss women finding jobs and the difficulty of earning income (a situation that I could very much relate to as a twenty-first century female dealing with a challenging academic job market and facing the perpetual gendered wage gap). However, as I delved into these texts, I noticed a striking similarity between many of the situations that these authors discussed; oftentimes these female characters were forced into working (despite their lack of skills, time-consuming family and household obligations, and the perceived damage their reputation might incur) because of the men in their lives. I began to notice that, in many cases, these female characters sought jobs because their husbands and the fathers of their children were not financially supporting the families as nineteenth-century patriarchal ideology necessitated. Unfortunately, this financial abuse was just one of the many types of abuse that I began to see. Women who were abused faced the difficult decision to either stay in their marriages and risk more abuse (which might extend to their children) or possible death or to leave and attempt to financially support themselves and their children (if they were even able to take their children, whose custody would likely go to their father, if he fought for it), which was just as impossible a task given the limited and low paying jobs available. I decided to find laws (both in the United States and England, as literature of both provide examples) affecting women and abuse and to try to understand why female authors were including examples of abuse in their fiction, the types of abuse they showed, how they shared this information with their readers, and to what purpose.

The goal of this dissertation is to examine nineteenth-century British and American fiction by female authors treating domestic abuse. The surprising prevalence of domestic abuse

in these novels shows that these authors believed the topic was significant and that their audience could directly benefit from knowing about the dangers of domestic abuse. A look at historical documents from the time reveals that domestic abuse was just as uncomfortable to address as it is now. Because there was not even standard terminology for discussing domestic abuse in this time period, situations where abuse is occurring are often less obvious to current readers inexperienced with the coded language used to describe them. Additionally frustrating, there is not even a set term or organizational category—as there is with, for example, “social reform literature” or “Condition-of-England novels”—to describe literature that addresses domestic abuse. This lack of a set term can make it difficult to find works of literature that other scholars have classified as belonging to this realm. Although other scholars have not made this classification, I believe that literature dealing with domestic abuse shares similar concerns with these more recognized categories while providing unique plots, characters, and situations and deserves a name of its own. Hence it is no surprise that this literature may be under-read, not recognized, or seldom grouped together into a common category.

For the most part, scholars have treated literature that deals with social issues as an organizational category that includes selective and commonly recognized topics such as slavery, alcoholism, and industrialization but seldom ventures into other, equally important social reform issues that writers were clearly concerned about. Of course, this is not to say that the social ills that more recognized categories of social reform literature address are not or were not important concerns worthy of critical attention, but, rather, that we should be aware of issues that are not being addressed sufficiently in literary scholarship.

Furthermore, nineteenth-century domestic abuse novels deserve attention because of how situated they are in their historical context and for the insight that they can provide readers on the

situation of domestic abuse at that time. The public interest in domestic violence in the nineteenth century not only ties into the increasing concern and debate about the role of women, but also into the increased interest in reading about violence and the discussion about how much the government should be involved in the lives of its citizens. In *The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher: A Shocking Murder and the Undoing of a Great Victorian Detective*, Kate Summerscale discusses Victorian England's thoughts on violence and government interference. She quotes an editorial in a July 1860 edition of the *Morning Post*: "every Englishman is accustomed to pride himself . . . upon what is called the sanctity of an English home. No soldier, no policeman, no spy of the Government dare enter it. . . . It is with this thoroughly innate feeling of security that every Englishman feels a strong sense of the inviolability of his own house" (37). Although a sense of pride in one's home, a place where one invests money, decorates to reflect their interests, and spends much time, is not out of the ordinary, when this pride extends to feeling that one's home cannot be broached and that whatever happens at home stays at home, the home becomes a potentially dangerous place removed from the law, for a man can do whatever he wants, including abuse his wife; the difficulty with patrolling domestic violence is that, by nature, it is a crime that primarily occurs in the home. Laws protecting women are certainly necessary, but if policeman are unable to stop husbands from abusing their wives simply because it is happening on private property, there is little hope for the effectiveness for any such laws. The newspaper author goes on to discuss the security in the uproar that would be raised against the violation of what "traditions and such long custom have rendered sacred" (37). This adherence to tradition or the "way things have always been done" works against the progress that reformers associated with the women's rights movement and movement to stop domestic violence.

Although domestic abuse can involve a victim or abuser of either gender, for the purposes of this study, domestic abuse or domestic violence will be examined from the context of men who abuse their female partners (in most cases their wives, although many times the women in these novels only think that they are legally married). In order to get at the heart of the many ways that a man can abuse a woman, I have chosen to apply modern definitions or types of abuse as a means of assisting modern readers in understanding the variance and differences between the types of examples of abuse that these authors share; these types of abuse include: physical, psychological, emotional, legal, and economic. These modern definitions provide a useful means of organizing the different types of abuse that these authors illustrate and the common effects that they have on the characters.

My goal with this project is twofold. This project is descriptive in that I want to show how authors use similar plots and characters to show abuse, in order to help build a potential canon of what domestic violence fiction looks like. As such, I include a brief plot summary for each novel when I initially mention it so that readers can see these plots and the relationships between characters. On the other hand, this dissertation is also analytical and discusses how these women authors talk about domestic abuse to make claims about what these authors are doing with their inclusion of abuse scenes and abused women. Therefore, each chapter will focus on a different aspect of what these authors are doing by including abuse.

This dissertation examines not only the similarity of abusive situations that different authors provide to show the frequency of this type of abuse and to acknowledge its effects on women, but also the ways that these authors talk about these situations. These women show how abuse works against the rigid gender roles and expectations of nineteenth-century England and the United States; that is, men who hurt their wives fail to fulfill their role as female protectors (a

role so important that for many decades laws gave women no legal identities because they were supposed to be protected by their husbands). For example, in Chapter Three I discuss how *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall's* Arthur not only does not protect his wife but often actually places her in danger such as when he invites his friends to take her with his blessing. Additionally, husbands make it difficult for women to fulfill their role of taking charge of elements of the domestic sphere such as the children, housekeeping, and servants because these women are physically or emotionally beaten down and unable to perform these tasks or even because their husbands place outrageous, unfulfillable demands upon their time. In Chapter Three, for instance, *Fettered for Life's* Mrs. Moulder is constantly belittled by her husband, who often unjustifiably accuses her of not meeting the demands of her work as mother and wife despite how hard she works to tend their three children and maintain their household with insufficient staff or equipment.

By showing examples of multiple types of abuse, these authors are providing evidence to their female readers that domestic violence occurs often, factors to watch out for, and the knowledge that this could happen to them or someone they know. Women cannot trust that they are immune from abuse or that they have chosen good husbands who would never hurt them; abuse is a very real fear for women of all classes and with all types of husbands. For example, in Chapter Two I discuss how *Bessy Conway's* Allie is married to and abused by Ned, a trusted family friend who is approved by her mother. I also show how characters of different social classes like the very wealthy Flora (*Fettered for Life*) and Claudia (*Ishmael* and *Self-Raised*) can be abused just as easily as socially disadvantaged women like Beatrice (*Lost and Saved*) and Mrs. Bludgett (*Fettered for Life*). An examination of these novels also reveals the variations in how these female authors describe abuse and their language choices. As the century progressed and after other women authors have published before them, women authors became more

comfortable with including graphic descriptions and more frequent examples of abuse in their works. Often times these authors, especially those earlier in the century rely on coded language to show abuse and warn readers.

Theoretical Application

A seminal work in New Historicism theory, H. Aram Veenser's collection of essays, *The New Historicism* (1989), provides further insight into how literature interacts and benefits from a relationship to history. Veenser writes that "literary and non-literary 'texts' circulate inseparably" (xi). In order to establish historical context for my project, I use the tools and strategies of New Historicism to see how nineteenth-century England and the United States socially and rhetorically dealt with domestic abuse, especially in relation to how the authors I discuss address it. Bringing in these additional texts furthered my understanding of the coded ways in which abuse was discussed in print and assist me in discovering the nuances of the language of an era.

Wai Chee Dimmock also sees a positive relationship between New Historicism and feminism, which she examines in her article, "Feminism, New Historicism, and the Reader" (1991). Similarly to Newton, Dimmock shows how both theories share commonalities and how each can benefit from a connection with the other. She believes that a feminist reading must also be a historicist reading because gender and gender differences/roles vary and must be understood in their appropriate historical context. Significantly, rather than subsume gender to history, she also cautions that historical analysis must also change and that gender must be understood to be a principle player in history. Throughout my examination of these novels, I work to show this gendered aspect of history, such as how laws were very much tailored to male interests.

Scope of this Dissertation

For this project I am examining only female-authored fiction because I believe that female authors, representative of those at most risk of being abused because of their gender, provide a unique perspective on the vulnerability of women exposed to domestic abuse. Although nineteenth-century male authors were certainly aware of the abuse that occurred during this time period (as evidenced by the frequent discussions of Charles Dickens in many of the existing sources on marital violence in literature), I believe that there was a disconnect between them and this topic because of their privileged positions as white males who were afforded the majority of legal protection and rights. Additionally, the sheer number of female authors who included examples of domestic abuse and abandonment in their writings justifies a study that only examines their works.

In her essay "Woman in France: Madame de Sablé," George Eliot touches upon a core belief of nineteenth-century reviewers and readers: that there are essential differences in the types and strengths of literature that women and male authors write because of gender:

In art and literature . . . woman has something specific to contribute. . . . she will necessarily have a class of sensations and emotions—the maternal ones—which must remain unknown to man; and the fact of her comparative physical weakness . . . introduces a distinctively feminine condition into the wondrous chemistry of the affections and sentiments, which inevitably gives rise to distinctive forms and combinations. (495)

Whether or not these differences exist and whether they can be scientifically proven to be gender-related is less important than the fact that this belief existed and would certainly play into female readers choosing female authors and their writing as being more representative of

female interests and, therefore, more relatable and realistic to the situations that female readers encounter. I have decided to limit my focus in this dissertation to novels in large part because of the acceptance of women as authors and readers of novels, especially in comparison to their participation in other genres of writing. I am choosing to focus solely on texts written by female authors because the topic of domestic abuse held more significance to the very population of people in nineteenth-century England and the United States, women, who were most likely to be its victims. The gendered ideas that Eliot discusses, such as the feminine nature of affection and sentiment, likely influence the effects that these authors and their works have on their readers; if female writers who are expected to write about feelings and sentimental situations are including harsh, ugly situations like domestic violence, it makes these inclusions even more jarring. Nicola Diane Thompson writes, "critics admired and endorsed writing by women that formed an extension of their domestic role . . . [women] were expected to preach morally improving lessons that featured self-sacrificing female characters in happy domestic settings" (16). These unexpected illustrations of abuse by female authors are much more significant coming from women because they were challenging what literary critics expected and thus taking a much greater risk than a male writer talking about such a topic. As Susan K. Harris reiterates in *19th-Century American Women's Novels: Interpretive Strategies*, "[w]hat's radical in women's texts . . . is conservative in men's: The differences between social definitions of men's and women's natures can be measured by the dreams—and the daring—of their fictional representations" (20-21). Although the female authors included in this study do not show dangerous physical escapades (with the exception of a few minor incidents in *Ishmael* and *Fettered for Life*) or the grand adventures found in male-authored texts, they dare to write outside the gendered conventions of sentimental depictions of happily-ever-afters. Additionally, female novel writers'

audience likely consisted in large part of middle-class female readers, which adds significance to these authors' decisions to discuss the controversial issue of domestic abuse. These authors are consciously choosing to write to an audience that is most likely to be concerned about and affected by this issue.

Although women of all races and ethnicities both in the United States and England were victims of domestic violence, I have decided to focus this study of domestic violence on white women as they were the women with the most legal rights (although they were still extremely limited in comparison to men)¹. As the novels that I am addressing are all written by white women (likely because of the increased opportunities that white women had to write novels), I also want to emphasize the connection that these authors shared with their readers, who are from similar backgrounds as the authors. It is important to remember that, although all women were at risk for abuse, the limited laws designed to protect women were primarily intended to protect white women.

The novels that I examine were all initially published between the years 1848-1889. Although this year range is based solely on publication dates of the novels that I was able to find for this project, it is likely not a coincidence that these novels were occurring beginning in 1848, which was a major moment for women's history with that year's first national women's rights convention, which was held in Seneca Falls, New York. This Convention gave women a public voice in sharing concerns about the limited state of women's social and legal rights and lead to further reform work on the cause of gender equality and women's rights.

Literature Review

Although critics have discussed the ability of novels to impact readers, the novel's ability to speak on contemporary social issues, and literature that works to address social problems, the

study of domestic abuse fiction deserves attention because of the lack of criticism addressing this important specific realm of literature. For instance, in *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America* (1984), Nina Baym focuses on nineteenth-century's ideas about how the novel functioned and what it was best at. Although Baym's work does not discuss any of the works or authors whom I treat in this project, nor does she discuss social reform, her book is useful for understanding why the authors I am using chose the novel as their preferred forum for discussing social reform and reaching an audience. Baym's research shows that reviewers recognized the novel's ability to portray true-to-life scenarios, tackle serious issues, keep readers' interest, and reach a large spectrum of readers, all of which made the novel the ideal form for female authors to address serious social reform issues.

Novels prove an excellent means for authors to impart important information and warnings about domestic violence because of their ability to connect with their readership; a relationship forms between the woman author and her women readership, who oftentimes come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds and can relate to the vulnerable situation of women in the nineteenth century. Nina Baym discusses this powerful connection in "woman's fiction" (a term that she prefers to "sentimental fiction"): "Each protagonist . . . exemplifies what every woman (almost every woman) may become" (xxxiii). The novels examined in this dissertation include relatable female characters who become the victims of abuse. These characters are from various classes and often are good girls from decent families who attempt to follow society's plans for proper young women; these characters are meant to look like the reader, the reader's sister, or the reader's friend to show that abuse is a very real danger. Given novels' (especially those classified as realist literature) devotion to portraying true-to-life scenarios and characters, in focusing on this genre, my research has shown that the most realistic, accurate, and detailed

portrayals of abuse as were available in the realm of fiction. Arlene Young's *Culture, Class and Gender in the Victorian Novel: Gentlemen, Gents and Working Women* states that the novel is shrewder than other genres such as pamphlets in spreading values and positions because of its indirect methods; she also discusses readers' emotional engagement with novels (1, 3-4). Novels are an excellent genre for discussing domestic abuse and calling for reform because of their ability to impact readers and impart knowledge in a way that no other genre can achieve.

In addition to fictional works, contemporary newspapers can help elucidate that domestic abuse was a significant concern during this time period of the 1840s through the 1870s and thus help explain the significance of authors including this theme in their works. A study of articles from the *New York Times* and *The [London] Times* reveals that domestic abuse is a topic that also appeared in nineteenth-century newspapers, usually as part of legal proceedings when the wife either sought a divorce or the husband was arrested for excessive abuse of his wife.

Although this study of newspaper articles is limited (largely because of the difficulty in finding examples with no definite search terms), there are some disturbing trends. Similarly to the novels examined in this project (thus showing the realism and relevancy of these novels), these articles mention various types of abuse in addition to physical violence, although they do not use our commonly accepted twenty-first century terminology. Husbands verbally abuse their wives with "language improper to be repeated," "coarse words," and "with disgust and rage in the presence of their children" ("Action" and "A Wife's Ill"). Additionally, several wives complained of financial abuse with their husbands not providing them resources to properly clothe themselves, feed their families, heat their homes, or pay for medical treatment ("Action," "Patience," "A Wife's Ill"). Like the novels examined in this project, the articles show how unpredictable or seemingly without a cause abuse can be. For instance, in an 1842 *The Times* article, the husband

attempts to justify his violence because of his anger at his wife staying up late chatting with a friend, which woke up the husband and thus he severely physically beats her ("Police"). As the level of the husband's anger seems unsuited to the supposed transgression of the wife, we are probably not getting the whole story in this brief article.

In her examination of nineteenth-century domestic murder, Bridget Walsh makes note of the usually incomplete picture of crime that newspaper articles provide:

trial transcripts and press coverage do not reveal the "whole picture." . . . works of fiction often revealed a more troubling domestic sphere than the press was willing or able to show. As such, literature is a crucial means of understanding these [domestic] crimes and the nature of the domestic. [W]orks of literature . . . are also vital documents for the analysis of social and cultural life, and for the way they can register wider shifts in structures of thought and feeling, often in advance of what might be perceived as the more "truthful" or "representative" works of the press. (Walsh 2)

The one thing that all of the newspaper articles I found have in common is that the domestic violence only comes to light and receives the public's attention when the husband is arrested because the abuse reached an excessive level, the husband is charged with attempted murder, or the wife files for divorce (usually after years of increasing violence). What is missing from these articles are the minor incidents of abuse that women readers might dismiss in their own lives. Furthermore, from reading only the accounts of the most severe situations, readers may get the impression that their own situations are not that bad; they do not see the toll that each abusive incident, each day, and each year takes on these women in the newspaper. Unlike novels, which spend hundreds of pages developing characters, so that readers feel as if they know these

characters personally and are able to identify with them, much like the power that Baym attributes to novels, articles are lacking the emotions and present rather matter-of-fact accounts of these situations and these women. Another advantage of novels in their ability to connect with readers is how they show women characters prior to marriage and these moments of abuse, so that readers see these characters as more than victims; they are kind, hard-workers, creative; they strive to be good mothers and wives.

Another way that newspapers prove inferior to novels is how these articles oftentimes seem written for shock value and not necessarily to best represent the facts or the victim's situation. It is clear from the headlines that these articles are meant to emphasize the scandal or, even more disturbingly, the humor of the situations of their reports with such titles as “Starved by Her Husband: Pitiable Condition of the Wife of a Brooklyn Miser” (1893), which comes off sounding like some sort of caricature with a Scrooge-like figure and his pretty young wife and thus fails to emphasize the numerous ways that this man has hurt this woman. Additionally, “Action for Divorce—No Happiness Without Beefsteak” (1861) plays into the trope of a woman’s materialistic greed and the idea of her frivolously spending her husband’s hard-earned money; although the husband’s limits to his wife on how much food she can purchase causes her distress, she also endures other abuse as well, including verbal abuse and at least the threat of physical abuse. Finally, the headline “A Woman’s Desperation: Mrs. Heilburn’s Attempt to Shoot Her Husband in a Police Court” (1879) clearly wants to emphasize the shocking situation of a wife going against her feminine, compassionate nature and trying to kill her husband. Despite the dismissive title, the situation of this wife is one of the worst of the articles; she endures years of physical violence to the point of attempting suicide, all issues which are just briefly mentioned in the article showing the author's and the article’s focus. In contrast, the novels that I examine do

not fall into these traps because they present a developed narrative where the violence is part of the larger story and the characters and relationships are witnessed over longer period of time.

Another lack in the current criticism is that the primary works that I have chosen for my dissertation have not been examined together; in fact, no critical work addresses more than one or two of these works. The majority of the novels that I address are not by well-known authors and certainly are not canonical, which helps explain why they have not received the critical attention that they deserve. One text that does address less-known authors is Kalsem's *In Contempt: Nineteenth-Century Women, Law, and Literature* (2012), which can be considered part of the women's recovery movement, as her text treats lesser known works by authors such as Annie Besant and Jane Hume Clapperton. However, Kalsem also includes numerous well-known texts, including several by male authors, rather than giving due attention to the multitude of texts by women that are lacking critical attention. Additionally, Kalsem's text, although it discusses legal issues, gives little attention to domestic abuse, an important legal issue of the time; this indicates a significant gap in literary criticism that deserves to be rectified and leads to the important question of what other topics are missing from teaching and scholarship.

An additional gap in the current research of social reform fiction is evidenced by the fact that no extant scholarly study addresses domestic abuse in both American and British literature. Clearly, domestic abuse was an international problem in nineteenth-century England and the United States, and a joint study proves to the scholarly community that this is a frequently occurring trope in women's literature that deserves attention. Although there were minor legal differences between the countries and the protection that they afforded women in the nineteenth century, for the most part, the situation of the women in both countries was more alike than it differed. Amanda Claybaugh's *The Novel of Purpose: Literature and Social Reform in the*

Anglo-American World (2007) does deal with transatlantic depictions of social reform. She effectively justifies why the social reform movements and writings of both England and the United States are connected. Unfortunately, her text only discusses extremely well-known authors firmly situated in the canon. Additionally, although Claybaugh discusses a variety of reform issues including slavery, temperance, sufferance, and the right to divorce, less-studied reform issues like domestic abuse and abandonment are ignored, despite their connections to these issues.

In order to show emphasize the prevalence of female authors discussing abuse and in their writings, I have chosen to examine the literature of both England and the United States. Although there are some obvious legal differences affecting the role of women that vary between the two countries, the women of both countries were similarly repressed by patriarchal societies. The overall situation of women in both countries and the way that both British and American authors discuss domestic abuse and abandonment are so similar that the scholarship on one country's texts can be used to illuminate aspects of the other country's texts.

Although it deals with a time period before the nineteenth century, David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick's *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (2002) does an excellent job of defining what it means for a history to be Trans-Atlantic, "the history of the Atlantic world told through comparisons," a definition which is useful when applied to a comparison of British and American fiction (20). Meaningful comparisons can be made between the novels of these two countries because both treat domestic abuse and abandonment and use similar techniques, such as linguistically coded language, to present these important social issues. Thanks to the advances in technology and transportation, communication between these countries was even more

pronounced in the nineteenth century than in previous times, so it is no surprise that the literature of both countries share similarities despite the differences in laws.

One of the first examples of a full-length study to examine domestic violence in Victorian literature, Lisa SurrIDGE's *Bleak Houses: Marital Violence in Victorian Fiction* (2005) does an excellent job of discussing examples of abuse that surface in fiction between 1828 and 1904. Similarly to my project, she contextualizes this abuse by analyzing numerous historical, sociological, and legal sources. However, her work only addresses British fiction and focuses solely on physical abuse, which disregards the numerous other types of abusive behavior that the authors I have chosen reveal. SurrIDGE's introduction is especially useful as she explains how she contextualizes the novels' interactions with their current events. Additionally, SurrIDGE provides an entire chapter discussing Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, which I also address in this dissertation. But, whereas this dissertation focuses on examining mostly unknown works by female authors, SurrIDGE's book deals with both male and female authors, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Charles Dickens, Anne Brontë, and George Eliot.

Constance Harsh's *Subversive Heroines: Feminist Resolutions of Social Crisis in the Condition-of-England Novel* (1994) examines seven condition-of-England novels over the course of the years 1839-54. Like SurrIDGE, Harsh deals with both male and female authors, all of whom are fairly well known names in nineteenth-century literature. Although Harsh does discuss the "covert feminism" involved in these novels and the associated empowerment of women (8), she does not focus on domestic abuse, which was such an important issue for women writers and readers. Instead Harsh focuses on industrial novels, which are outside the scope of my project. However, Harsh does address class concerns in this novels and how the genre of the novel was

particularly useful for examining social concerns of the century, which are two considerations of this dissertation as well.

As with SurrIDGE and Harsh, María Carla Sánchez's *Reforming the World: Social Activism and the Problem of Fiction in Nineteenth-Century America* (2008) also deals with only one of the countries that this project examines. In addition to her discussion of slavery and prostitution reform, Sánchez does address reform associated with poverty and temperance; however, she does not connect them to domestic abuse, even though they are very often interconnected.

Although criticism of social reform fiction in nineteenth-century England and the United States is certainly growing, there remains a gap in the scholarship that this dissertation attempts to fill. It is important to fill in this gap because of the tendency of the literary canon to privilege certain voices and stories, while disregarding ones that speak against the status quo like the sentimental novel or the happy marriage plot. There remains a need for scholarship that considers the fiction of both countries, examines only female-authored texts, and looks more closely at the issue of domestic abuse. Elaine Showalter discusses literary scholarship's exclusion of works by unknown writers and the negative effect this missing literature by "render[ing] invisible the daily lives, the physical experiences, the personal strategies and conflicts of ordinary women" (9). This dissertation answers this call by presenting this ugly side of what it often must have been like to be a woman in the nineteenth century. The risk and fear of domestic violence is an important aspect of understanding their daily lives and their struggles to remain safe and happy even in their own homes; this topic is just as crucial as learning about more discussed aspects like marriage laws, women in the workforce, and courtship. Even in modern times, domestic violence continues to be a topic that is under discussed and not

adequately understood; perhaps this would not be the case if more works like the ones in this chapter were still in print, being taught in class, and part of scholarly discussions.

Chapter Overview

Chapter Two discusses physical abuse in the following novels: Emma Robinson's *Mauleverer's Divorce: A Story of a Woman's Wrongs* (1858), Mary Anne Sadlier's *Bessy Conway; Or The Irish Girl in America* (1861), Lillie Devereux Blake's *Fettered for Life or Lord and Master* (1874), and Constance Fenimore Woolson's *Jupiter Lights* (1889). As the century progresses, these works depict increasingly violent depictions of physical abuse. The authors show the unmanliness of men physically abusing their wives. These authors also use their novels to warn their readers not to fall prey to unrealistic romantic notions presented in popular fiction marketed towards young women and to be alert for abusive husbands (who even good girls might marry).

Chapter Three discusses emotional and psychological abuse in the following novels: Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), *Mauleverer's Divorce* (1858), Caroline Norton's *Lost and Saved* (1863), E.D.E.N. Southworth's *Ishmael or Lost in the Depths* (1863-64), E.D.E.N. Southworth's *Self-Raised or From the Depths* (1863-64), and *Fettered for Life* (1874). These authors speak against the popular ideology of the "angel in the house" figure and show how even the most faithful and committed wife is likely to be unable to fulfill these unrealistic expectations, if her husband becomes patriarchally demanding.

Chapter Four discusses legal and economic abuse in the following novels: *Lost and Saved* (1863), *Ishmael* (1863-64), *Self-Raised* (1863-64), and *Fettered for Life* (1874). Although legal abuse (men using their knowledge of laws and access to legal representation to hurt women) is not recognized as a common type of abuse in modern definitions, it shares similarities with

economic abuse because of the many ways that men could legally control their wife's finances and limit her access to resources. These novels show readers that, despite the seemingly positive progression of laws designed to help protect women legally and financially, women still faced tremendous danger from their husbands, who, according to societal expectations, were supposed to be the main protectors of married women. These authors also make a point of showing how vulnerable women are because of the lack of laws that truly protect their interests; these patriarchal laws endanger the ideology that husbands will protect their wives and act in their best interests.

In Chapters Two through Four, I discuss the numerous types of domestic abuse that these authors and their novels illustrate. Although these examples are certainly part of larger ideological and critical arguments, many of the authors do not really provide much in the way of solutions, with the exception of Southworth and Blake. Chapter Five discusses how *Ishmael's* Ishmael and *Fettered for Life's* Frank offer examples of advocate figures who actively and incessantly work to help women, many of whom are in extremely vulnerable situations. Significantly, both characters triumph over numerous personal hardships to achieve a societal and economic position in which to help others. Interestingly, Frank and Ishmael also are both gender-bending characters, who find success because of their ability to encompass both masculine and feminine qualities.

Finally, Chapter Six, the conclusion of this project, discusses the development of this project, including my initial hypotheses and surprises that I encountered as I wrote this dissertation. In addition, I provide ideas for further research in the realm of domestic abuse fiction, including the creation of a canon of domestic abuse fiction and additional voices and works that could be added to this study. I also discuss my experience teaching one of these

novels, *Fettered for Life*, and my students' responses to the text and abuse scenes. I draw a connection between the current situation of domestic abuse/assault and how nineteenth-century novels like those discussed in this project can serve as an important means of beginning the needed conversation in the college setting about domestic abuse.

CHAPTER 2

PHYSICAL ABUSE

"And he uses his strength against you! Is that manly, is that noble?' At this last insinuation, Mrs.

Bludgett drew back somewhat angrily: 'He's my husband'" (Blake 18).

Whether they excused their husband's behavior because they believed it within their wifely duty or simply because they felt they had no means of preventing abuse by their husbands, nineteenth-century women often were the unfortunate victims of their husbands' physical violence. Emma Robinson's *Mauleverer's Divorce: A Story of a Woman's Wrongs* (1858), Mary Anne Sadlier's *Bessy Conway; Or The Irish Girl in America* (1861), Lillie Devereux Blake's *Fettered for Life or Lord and Master* (1874), and Constance Fenimore Woolson's *Jupiter Lights* (1889) all provide graphic descriptions of women who are violently abused by their husbands. All of these authors depict male violence against women as not only unchivalrous, but also unmanly. Although men are physically stronger than women, these women authors prove that violence is emasculating by showing how this violence contradicts the supposed masculine role of being protector of women. Along with their depictions of violence, the authors in this chapter manipulate the traditions of sentimental literature and temperance literature to didactically warn their readers that they should be wary of novelistic notions of romance and must be alert for abusive husbands.

The United States' Department of Justice's webpage on Domestic Violence offers up the following definition of physical abuse, which will be used in this chapter: "Hitting, slapping, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, hair pulling, etc. are types of physical abuse. This type of abuse also includes denying a partner medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use upon him or her" ("Domestic"). Although applying this definition of abuse to the nineteenth century may

seem anachronistic, this definition provides a common language to use when forming a canon of domestic abuse literature and provides a way for modern readers and students to discuss these texts in scholarship and classrooms. Additionally, it allows for comparisons between modern and nineteenth-century abuse situations.

Historical Overview of Physical Abuse in the Nineteenth Century

Unfortunately, a clear definition of physical violence did not exist for nineteenth-century women, as it was often considered within a husband's legal right to discipline his wife. Although some frowned upon the use of excessive violence against a woman, again there was no clear definition of what excessive meant. Heather McIntosh provides a succinct overview of what constituted domestic violence in the United States in "Domestic Violence, History of":

Legislation throughout the early and mid-1800s started with reinforcing the husband's right to beat his wife and eventually moved toward criminalizing the act of wife beating. An 1824 case in Mississippi upheld that a husband could beat his wife only in cases of emergency. In 1857, a Massachusetts court acknowledged marital rape. In 1871, Alabama became the first state to withdraw a husband's right to beat his wife, while in 1882, Maryland became the first state to make it a crime. Other states followed suit in the late 1800s, but the punishments for these crimes were weak or remained unenforced. Women faced difficulties in getting divorces during the 1800s, and getting them on grounds of domestic violence proved even more challenging. . . . Not until 1895 did abuse become grounds for divorce. (479)

McIntosh's history shows the root of the problem for nineteenth-century abused women who needed help; the law throughout most of the period was extremely vague on what constituted

domestic violence and when it was unnecessary or too harsh. McIntosh also shows how slow laws were to change and how laws differed between states; astonishingly, although a variety of people (such as the women authors discussed in this project and various reform groups) were starting to recognize that domestic violence was a problem that needed rectified, it took almost to the end of the century until the *first* state even declared it a crime. The difficulty in women seeking a divorce on the grounds of domestic violence (as well as their difficulty in securing employment to support themselves and their children) helps put into perspective why nineteenth-century women would be unlikely or unable to leave abusive husbands. The authors discussed in this chapter offer a way to identify and call attention to abuse that is considered "extralegal," given the vagaries of the law.

In addition to the vagueness of what precisely constituted domestic abuse in the nineteenth-century, there was also disagreement on whether or not this abuse was something that should be punished. This disagreement is evident in the *New York Times* article, "Wife-Beating," published on February 1881:

Few people will deny that the unnecessary beating of horses is a cowardly crime, and deserves to be severely punished. When, however, Mr. Bergh² steps out of his zoological province and undertakes to meddle in the domestic affairs of his fellow citizens, and to inhumanely punish the man who may in the heat of argument or in the recklessness of high spirits lay a fist upon a woman save in kindness, he must expect the execration of the class at whom his disgraceful attempt at legislation is directed. . . . Any punishment which tends to degrade an offender, either in his own estimation or that of others, is not to be tolerated in a civilized and humane community. (4)

Shocking from a twenty-first century perspective, the author of this piece recognized the wrongness of animal cruelty; however, the matter of domestic violence is not so clear cut. Although the author does not mention his beliefs on whether or not domestic violence is wrong, readers can presume he places less importance on it as he rallies against people like Mr. Bergh who interfere in domestic matters; the author believes that domestic violence is not worthy of public attention or outsider influence. This reluctance to even discuss the issue of domestic violence undoubtedly relates to the vagueness of what constituted domestic abuse. The author of the article shares reasons a man might abuse his wife, including getting caught up in an argument or "high spirits," which, he feels, is a justification for a man hitting his wife. More shocking, the author worries or fears the effects of punishment not on the abused women, but on these male abusers if prosecuted, as they might be emasculated or ridiculed by others. The author goes on to say that society should work to reform these men, not so they realize the wrongs of hitting women, but so that he may be improved and thus become a "respected member of society" (4).

Similarly to their American counterparts, nineteenth-century Britons also framed domestic violence mostly in terms of its effects on men. According to Phillip Mallett in his preface to *The Victorian Novel and Masculinity*, the Victorian era signaled a change in ideas on masculinity away from the Regency era and its association between masculinity, rank, honor, and aristocracy. Instead this new era's ideal of masculinity featured:

an emphasis on self-discipline, and in particular the learned ability to control potentially disruptive male energies Victorian representations of manliness abound in metaphors of iron restraint, patience and reserve, opposed to images of volcanic chaos or excess. The more intense the conflict, the more manly the

victory . . . the struggle for self-mastery could itself be construed as a sign of masculinity. (vii)

The male abusers featured in the female-authored novels studied in this chapter belie these modern ideals of manhood. The physical violence shown by the men examined in these novels illustrate a clear lack of self-discipline and an inability to control their "disruptive male energies." By resorting to physical abuse of their wives, in a way, these men emasculate themselves by their inability to control their strength and anger; in fact, if they had resisted the temptation to abuse their wives for whatever offenses that these husbands felt that their wives committed, these men would be more manly, according to modern Victorian ideals. Thus, these authors are not only making a point about domestic violence as a cause for concern, but also demonstrating that domestic violence emasculates the abusers. Additionally, by abusing their wives, British men would further emasculate themselves by violating the important code of propriety as male restraint was expected of gentlemen of the upper class and middle class, which increasingly molded itself after the upper class. In the absence of laws, this code along with novels like those examined in this project helped regulate male behavior. Through their use of character development, novels lead readers to care about these abused women and gives a face to these victims unlike other genres. The evidence of violence is necessary because of the impact that it has on readers for conveying the pain and damage of domestic abuse; these depictions enable readers to picture themselves or their loved ones in the situations of these fictional characters, which further adds to the impact of these novels.

The Temperance Movement and Its Connection to Abuse

Closely related to the culture of male propriety and self-restraint, which recognized the resulting chaos such as domestic violence that would likely ensure, a much discussed topic of

nineteenth-century reform-oriented texts by both male and women authors was male temperance, which originated in the early part of the century in both England and the United States. The temperance movement was especially important because it allowed for the expression of the disgust that was often lacking in the discussion of violations of male propriety and male violence. The authors examined in this chapter all adopt conventions of the temperance movement and its fiction while also adapting their fiction to focus on the domestic violence that results and how it is a particularly damaging consequence of alcohol abuse. Time and time again, women authors of abuse narratives associate the abuse that occurs with male perpetrators who turn violent from alcohol, which makes an understanding of the contemporary temperance movement important for understanding why these authors speak out about domestic violence. Although this large-scale reform movement recognized the potential dangers of alcohol abuse and its effects on not only the abuser, but also his family, oftentimes research into reform writings focuses on authors' attempts to draw attention to alcoholism while ignoring or underplaying the important related topic of domestic abuse and the consequential vulnerability of women in these situations. In the introduction to *Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century* (2008), Holly Berkley Fletcher includes an overview of the temperance movement in the United States, which began gaining the notice of historians in the 1970s. She presents the movement as a series of phases. Prior to the 1820s, the movement was led by the elite class, which worked to reduce alcohol consumption instead of eliminate it. Thanks to the influence of an increasing industry-oriented economy and evangelical Christianity, the decades leading into the Civil War saw the involvement of the middle classes in the movement, which then pushed more towards the total eradication of alcohol (1). The increasing inclusion of the middle classes in the movement led to a plethora of temperance-related

publications that focused on such middle-class values as religion and family, as seen in the anecdote that Alexander Henry shares in *An Address to the Citizens of Philadelphia on the Subject of Establishing an Asylum for the Cure of Victims of Intemperance* (1841), delivered at one of its gatherings and later published:

There, for example, is the only son of a widow, a widow by intemperance. At her lap he often knelt in childhood and learned the prayer which many mothers teach their children. She felt he was her hope and consolation; and to self-denial upon self-denial she cheerfully submitted, in order to train him up to manhood. Her object was accomplished. He became to her and to his sisters an honour; their support and their pride.—But, alas! he became, also, intemperate.—And sorrow came upon that family, more than when the husband and father had fallen into the drunkard's grave. What shall be done for such a family! The evil is not only moral but it is likewise physical. (4)

As part of the larger speech, which was designed to express the imperativeness of establishing asylums where alcoholics (much like those who suffer from other illnesses) could go to recover from and escape the tempting influence of alcohol, as with most temperance-related literature, this anecdote is clearly intended to appeal to the audience's sympathies. The story shows that alcoholism is not only a reoccurring problem, but also one that occurs in decent or God-fearing families. The increasing emphasis by the reformers on the connection between family values and temperance can be seen in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, where Brontë includes a child character and shows just how damaging the father's alcoholism is on his well-being and how this child's mother has a more difficult time being a good parent as she suffers the toll of abuse.

Significantly, as with the literature examined in this chapter, the speaker draws attention to the suffering imposed on the alcoholic's family, who through no fault of their own must endure the

alcoholic's inability to hold a job and support the family. In light of alcohol's widespread negative effects and the inclusion of more and stronger temperance reformers, eradication of alcohol seemed like the only method of alleviating this familial problem.

The push towards eradication in the mid nineteenth century relates to the statistics that David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal share in *The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature* (1997). They write, "By 1830 the average American consumed the equivalent of over four gallons of absolute alcohol a year—an astonishing amount, especially since many liquors were adulterated by brain-ravaging additives" (2). Fletcher states that the 1840s saw increasing numbers of working-class Americans, including women, becoming more active members in the movement (2). Significantly, this is the period when the works examined in this chapter are published. Although the Civil War took attention away from the movement, it was renewed in the 1870s by women and, in large part, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (2). As we will see, *Bessy Conway* makes clear the correlation between the temperance movement and Christianity.

The temperance movements in England and the United States progressed in similar fashions and both invoked concerns related to religion and class. As the movements were similar, it is not surprising that the texts discussing alcoholism and its resulting domestic abuse are also similar in form. Brian Harrison's *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815-1870* (1971) includes the interesting insight, likely applicable to both England and the United States, that "The Victorians often failed to distinguish between alcoholism, drinking, and drunkenness. Temperance reformers argued that drinking inevitably led to drunkenness, and society at large failed to distinguish between drunkenness and alcoholism" (21). Indeed all of the novels examined in this chapter seem similarly unable or unwilling to make this distinction as

the reader only really sees the abusive characters drinking, but no characters who do not have serious drinking problems or who do not become abusive from alcohol; therefore, readers may get the impression that all alcohol drinking is problematic. Although drinking any amount is certainly a serious matter if the drinker becomes violent, this lack of acknowledgement between casual drinking and alcoholism would make it difficult for most people to ever recognize that someone had a problem or needed any sort of medical intervention or to cut off drinking all together, which emphasizes the important work of temperance reformers who tirelessly worked to get this potentially lifesaving information disseminated. The central male characters in these novels consume multiple drinks at a time, resulting in negative behavior such as the abuse of those around them. The novelists show that alcohol consumption can be nothing but problematic by increasing the odds of the drinker becoming abusive towards his wife.

Echoing the perceived importance of the temperance movement and the necessity of abolishing alcohol, Samuel Couling emotionally appealed to empathetic readers in his 1855 publication, *The Traffic in Intoxicating Drinks; Its Evils and Remedy: Or A Maine Law, The Only Hope for England*. Living in a time of immense technological development and growth, Couling believed that the temperance cause was an important one if England was to maintain its place as an important and enlightened empire:

We have left off shooting one another on matters of insignificant importance. . . . We have sent Bibles and Missionaries to the uttermost parts of the earth. . . . Pugilism has ceased to be a profession, and man stealing a trade.—We have become professedly more religious; and we have certainly become a thousand times more humane and more enlightened. But notwithstanding all this manifestation of real progress we regret that it has still to be said that “we are yet the most drunken people on earth.” (iii-iv)

Discussing such important British developments as the propagation of Christianity around the world, the end of boxing as a moneyed sport in 1861, and the end of legal slavery in 1833, Couling finds it difficult to imagine how one of the greatest and most enlightened empires is still blind to the evil and immense effects of alcohol on its people. Couling further emphasizes the need for immediate and profound temperance reform by including statistics, taken from a parliamentary paper, on the number of people arrested in the year of 1851 for public drunkenness or disorderly conduct in the city of London and its greater metropolitan area. Some simple math reveals that, in this year alone, 17,707 people were arrested for either of these charges, which Couling associates with alcohol consumption (18-19). Although these numbers seem impressive, Couling reminds his audience, “Fearful, however, as these numbers are, it must be remembered that they do not even approximate to the true state of the case. It will be observed, that, it is only the number of arrests for drunkenness and disorderly conduct that is enumerated; it takes no notice of the great number of persons who get drunk, but who never fall into the hands of the police” (19). Although 17,707 may represent a small percentage of the total population of London at the time, Couling’s research and publication is still significant in that it represents the fear that many temperance reformers of the time had about the increasing consumption of alcohol as well as the correlation between alcohol abuse and criminal activity.

Reynolds and Rosenthal define common characteristics of the temperance literature that prove useful for examining novels that include both alcoholism and domestic violence:

Often didactic, and sometimes insufferably so, temperance literature preached the values of sobriety and castigated the evils of drunkenness. The drinker in the typical story is often either an inexperienced young man who is seduced into the deceptively attractive life of drink, or a miserable father who batters his family physically and economically. . .

. nineteenth-century temperance stories understood inebriation as a sign of moral weakness and the drinker as the subject of a moral defect. (3-4)

It may at first seem that the four novels that I examine in this chapter have little to no connection to the traditional nineteenth-century temperance literature genre because they do not focus on the problem of alcohol; however, they all include a male character who is an alcoholic and who has some importance to the novel's protagonist. True to Reynolds and Rosenthal's description, the authors of the majority of these novels have included a didactic message for their readers, oftentimes in their preface. Specifically, they intend to warn their readers about the domestic abuse of the family of men with drinking problems. Although the authors of these novels may not directly preach about alcoholism as a sign of moral weakness, it is clear that they want their readers to see these characters in some way deficient by choosing this path of alcoholism and abuse. By drawing attention to this issue, authors can hope that their female readers will be more educated on the issues of alcoholism and domestic abuse as well as to enlighten them on the commonality of alcoholic men abusing their spouses. Using this knowledge, their readers will recognize the warning signs of abuse and hopefully be able to avoid becoming the victims of domestic violence.

Rather than think solely about what has traditionally been known as the nineteenth-century temperance novel, Elaine Frantz Parsons in *Manhood Lost: Fallen Drunkards and Redeeming Women in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (2003) provides a useful expansion of this definition or genre of literature involving alcoholic and abusive male characters. She discusses the prominence of the "drunkard narrative" that began in the 1830s and continued throughout the nineteenth century. Growing out of the century's temperance movement, it was so widely used by writers that even people who did not consider themselves part of the movement

were very familiar with its components, and authors could refer to the narrative without needing to provide much explanation (3-4). Through her research into this drunkard narrative both in fiction and non-fiction, Parsons compiled a list of six common elements of this body of literature:

First, the drinker, before his first drink, is a particularly promising young man. Second, the drinker falls largely or entirely because of external influence. Third, if the story blames the drinker for contributing to his own fall, his weakness is a desire either for excitement or to please his ill-chosen friends. Fourth, after he begins to drink, the desire to drink overcomes all of his other motivations. Fifth, he loses his control over his family, his economic life, and/or his own body. Sixth, if the drinker is redeemed, it is through a powerful external influence. (11)

This list provides a good context for identifying similarities amongst the four novels that I have chosen to examine in this chapter. Although not all of these elements can be found in these novels, most of them hold true. For instance, most of the female characters who are later abused by their husbands choose to marry men who are seemingly good financial providers. Moreover, although these men's alcohol abuse leads them to physical violence, where they attempt to exert their control over their wives and children, this violence actually leads to a weakening of their families, as their wives and children grow to fear them.

In addition to providing insight into the effects of alcohol on male characters, Parsons' list proves useful for examining the connection between alcohol and domestic abuse in the nineteenth-century novel, as the narrative of male characters becoming alcoholics also often directly correlates with them becoming more and more abusive of their spouses. This is especially relevant for steps four through six. In addition, a "promising young man" makes a

convincing domestic violence perpetrator because readers may find similarities with the men around them who may also seem like delightful men yet turn violent against their families as a result of alcohol. This makes the male character much more relatable to female readers who will likely also attempt to marry a “promising young man,” a familiar trope to female readers of sentimental fiction. The authors treated in this chapter often create what initially appears to be the typical hero of the sentimental novel, only to ruin this heroic image when the character descends into alcoholism and abuse. Although the readers are not privy to the motives of each of the male characters’ reasons for turning to alcohol, in several cases it is clear that their desire to fit in with those around them plays a large role in why they drink. The authors studied in this chapter draw on temperance fiction but do something slightly different in focusing on its connection to physical abuse.

Sophia's Struggle to Leave Her Abusive Secret Marriage in Mauleverer's Divorce

Despite being published years after a law designed to prevent assaults upon women, Emma Robinson’s British novel, *Mauleverer's Divorce: A Story of a Woman's Wrongs*, focuses on the domestic abuse of Sophia by her seemingly charming husband, Luxmoor, who violently tortures his wife as a result of his alcoholism. Hugh-Helena, the protagonist, narrates the dramatic story of her courtship, marriage, and her separation from her husband, as well as the story of her friend, Sophia Sutcliffe, the abused woman, whose narrative becomes entwined with Hugh-Helena's. Hugh-Helena begins by recounting her upper-class childhood as the Mauleverer heiress with a strong-willed father who realized too late that he had chosen the wrong marriage partner in Hugh-Helena’s seemingly dull, passive mother. One day Sophia Sutcliffe visits Hugh-Helena’s mother to share a letter with her from Sophia’s deceased father. Sophia quickly charms Hugh-Helena and her mother, who finds Sophia a position with the nearby Suett family. Tired of

the rules imposed on her by her father and governess, the fifteen year-old Hugh-Helena runs away from home and finds refuge with Sophia, who devises a plan to hide Hugh-Helena in the Suett household as her “sister” while they await the results a letter of conditions that they send to Hugh-Helena’s father. While there, Hugh-Helena also encounters Carolus Luxmoor, the Suett family’s tutor, whom Sophia pretends not to have known prior to their time at the Suett residence. Sophia, who is likely involved in a conspiracy with Luxmoor and Scarlatt Suett, convinces Hugh-Helena to marry Scarlatt without Hugh-Helena’s father’s approval. This marriage is the beginning of Hugh-Helena’s downfall, as she eventually is tricked into signing her inheritance over to her husband. She also later discovers that her beloved “friend” Sophia has actually been married to Luxmoor for years and, unfortunately, is the victim of her abusive, alcoholic husband. Hugh-Helena’s marriage grows increasingly worse as her husband takes control of their finances and disregards her opinions on all matters. The marriage is completely ruined when Sophia reenters the scene and begins a relationship with Scarlatt. Scarlatt eventually accuses his wife of adultery and is able to secure a divorce, which leaves Hugh-Helena with no money, a destroyed reputation, and no access to her own children.

Sophia is clearly the victim of numerous instances of physical abuse from her husband. Soon after the novelty of their marriage dies off, Luxmoor begins to neglect Sophia, and she quickly finds out about his alcohol addiction. Luxmoor is a violent drunk with a temper and often beats Sophia. Sophia tells Hugh-Helena that she was once beaten so roughly that she still bears the marks. The abuse was so physically hurtful that Sophia has been told that one of these marks could develop into cancer (324). At one point in the novel, Hugh-Helena accidentally stumbles upon a drunken Luxmoor beating Sophia and provides a graphic description of the victim and her attacker: “[Sophia was] bleeding profusely, as it seemed to me, from the eyes!

And a demon in human form—in the form of Luxmoor!—who held her by the disheveled hair—and was redoubling blows upon her with his unmanly fist up to the moment when I threw myself between them!” (82). Robinson does not spare her readers from a horrific description of physical abuse. After reading such a realistic depiction of domestic abuse, Robinson’s readers would be unlikely to doubt the seriousness of domestic abuse or the correlation between alcohol abuse and wife beating. Significantly, although previously in the novel Luxmoor is described as charming and intelligent, this violent episode shows an entirely different side to the man as he turns to the dark side and becomes like a monster. Emphasizing that Luxmoor’s behavior (regardless of the legality) is inappropriate and should not be condoned, Robinson refers to him as both a “demon” and calls his fist “unmanly,” which paradoxically goes against the more traditional definition of manliness involving brute force. Hugh-Helena, too, points to the unmanliness of Luxmoor’s actions. After witnessing Luxmoor physically abuse Sophia, Hugh-Helena remarks that she is thankful that Scarlatt was too busy to accompany Hugh-Helena on her visit as “no man could have seen Luxmoor’s brutality—and not have broken every bone in his skin” (179). Here Hugh-Helena distinguishes Luxmoor by his unmanly behavior; true men detest men physically abusing women and that the only time that violence is appropriate or masculine is when it is justifiable and between men.

Although the novel takes place several years after the adoption of the 1853 Bill for the Better Prevention and Punishment of Aggravated Assaults upon Women and Children, which recognized the need for distinct legal protection of women and children and allowed for stricter sentencing of perpetrators, it is clear that the potential consequences of the bill are not enough to deter men like Luxmoor from severely assaulting their wives. In *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895* (1989), Mary Lyndon Shanley discusses the Matrimonial

Causes Act of 1878, which seemingly allowed more protection for married victims of domestic abuse. However, although the Act “helped lay to rest the notion that a husband’s authority over his wife’s body gave him the right to chastise her physically” (169), female victims were still in a precarious situation, as the Act “did not give a wife the *right* to leave a brutal husband, but to *appeal* to a court to be allowed to do so” (174). Clearly, although Sophia (representative of the average nineteenth century, lower-to-middle class woman) may have wanted to leave her husband, she would likely have faced a difficult battle to gain a legal divorce. Scarlatt speaks to Hugh-Helena about the difficulty of women being granted divorces at this time: "if Luxmoor behaves himself so atrociously, I suppose he comes pretty well up to the standard at which they grant divorces to women. And though it might be a difficult matter, . . . if Sophia is thoroughly well backed with money and influence, she may obtain a divorce" (217). Even if Luxmoor is as cruel as Sophia claims and Hugh-Helena witnesses, Scarlatt expresses doubt that this would be enough to guarantee Sophia a divorce. Scarlatt indicates that a more sure route for women seeking divorces is to be backed by wealth or a powerful supporter, which, for most of the novel (until her relationship develops with Hugh-Helena's father), is certainly not the case, as she struggles to support herself and erase Luxmoor's debts. Moreover, Sophia would stand to lose the right to remarry if a divorce was granted. Although Luxmoor may be within his legal rights to beat his wife, Hugh-Helena sees a discrepancy between how Luxmoor is legally allowed to act and how he should behave as a gentleman, and this is certainly not it, which is similar to the discrepancy that Sadlier's Bessy sees in Ned and Sally's husband abusive behavior and proper male conduct.

Physical Abuse and the Pressures of Husband Choosing in Bessy Conway

Sadlier's American novel, *Bessy Conway; Or the Irish Girl in America*, is a strongly didactic novel that juxtaposes multiple female characters who end up abused against the angelic title character to show the difficulty of choosing good husbands (who are not alcoholics who are violent towards their wives) and how a woman's lack of informed decisions or poor character can lead to suffering from horrible marriages. The novel follows Bessy Conway, a young girl who emigrates from Ireland in search of adventure and a better financial future in the United States. Thankfully, rather than having to face the new country on her own, Bessy is fortunate enough to travel over with several acquaintances from her hometown, some of whom, like the Murphys, struggle with the temptations that the new country presents not only to immigrants, but also to devout Catholics, who find themselves at odds in their more liberal and Protestant surroundings. In order to support herself, Bessy goes the route of many young Irish immigrant women of the time and becomes a domestic servant. According to David M. Katzman in *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (1981), people born in Ireland or those with Irish immigrant parents comprised a large percentage of domestic servants in nineteenth-century America. According to Katzman, by 1900 "Of the 320,000 foreign-born servants in 1900, 41 percent had been born in Ireland. . . . In New York City they comprised 42 percent of servants; in Philadelphia, 38 percent; and in Chicago, 21 percent" (66). Although Katzman was unable to find comparable earlier statistics, the number of Irish female servants was likely even higher at the time Sadlier published her novel, as 1900 was past the peak of Irish immigrant to the United States, which occurred between 1846 and 1854 and saw the arrival of 100,000 to 200,000 Irish immigrants a year (66).

Like her fellow servants, both in the novel and in reality, Bessy encounters numerous temptations such as skipping church, becoming more Protestant-like to better fit in with her employers, spending her wages on frivolities, and cavorting with men. However, unlike the many other servants that Sadlier presents in the novel, Bessy never misses church, even when it is quite inconvenient to attend; she loses a position rather than trade her Catholic ways for Protestant ways; she sends most of her wages home to her struggling family; and she repeatedly refuses the advances of Herbert, another Irish immigrant from her town, who it seems, for most of the novel, has less than honorable intentions towards Bessy. Sadlier makes the consequences of one's devotion to Catholicism and morals clear: Bessy triumphs with multiple good job positions, becomes engaged to the reformed Herbert, and is even able to return home to Ireland to see her family. On the other hand, women like Ally Murphy (who falls prey to the temptations of materialism and the profits available in alcohol sales), Sally (who slacks off in her work and enjoys company with men before marriage), and Mary Mulligan (who runs away with a man and marries him against the wishes of her family) end up in unhappy relationships with abusive husbands.

Of the women who are married in Sadlier's novel, Ally seems the least likely to end up the victim of spousal abuse because she not only marries someone who is Irish, but who also has a close, family-like relationship with Bessy, our trusted narrator. Ally marries Ned Finegan onboard the ship to the United States, and it seems as though she has found a good match and that the couple is destined for years of happiness. As a person who vows to look out for Bessy's welfare and a fellow townsman of Bessy, Ned is initially presented to the reader as a likeable, trustworthy character. He genuinely appears to care about his wife and family and to financially support them. True to Parson's explanation of the drunkard narrative, Ned truly is a promising

young man before his involvement with alcohol. Ned and Ally's marriage takes a turn for the worse when Ned, seeking an easy road to wealth, decides to get into the liquor business and open a pub, a major warning sign in a didactic Catholic novel. As Ned's business grows, unfortunately so does his drinking, as he often joins his customers for a drink.

On one such occasion, in front of other men who have come to drink at the pub, Ally tells Ned that he cannot have a drink, at which the other men laugh. Sadlier writes, "Roused from his torpor by the mocking laughter of Dixon and Herbert, and the good-natured raillery of one or two others who chanced to be present, Ned raised his foot and gave poor Ally a kick that sent her far enough out of his way, and in he marched with the air of a conqueror, followed by the two worthy, associates" (217). Interestingly, Sadlier describes the abuse in a very matter-of-fact manner, whereas she uses several descriptive words—e.g. "mocking," "good-natured"—in the previous sentence. It is as though her tone suggests that this abuse is an inevitable, natural consequence of a husband who drinks. Although it seems unlikely that this is the first or last occasion that Ally is abused by Ned (despite this being the only instance the reader sees), this is the most vivid example Sadlier provides. Even though it is not clear how much Ned has had to drink at this particular moment, he is seen drunk at several other points in the novel as his alcoholism worsens. Additionally, even if Ned is not drunk in this instance, his involvement in the liquor business, including his drinking with customers, shows that alcohol has a direct correlation with the abuse that occurs. Ned bows to peer pressure and attempts to assert his masculinity in front of the other men by putting his wife into her "proper" submissive position. He attempts to conquer his wife through physical abuse. Ned preserves his masculinity in front of his clients by quickly shutting down his wife's objections to drinking; Ned's actions not only insult his wife, but prove symbolic of his disdain for the entire female-driven temperance

movement. Significantly, none of the men intervene on behalf of Ally, even though she is a vulnerable female suffering at the hands of a stronger male. Unfortunately, Ally's position as Ned's wife leaves her similarly unable to intervene on her own behalf by ending Ned's connection with the tavern or seeking medical support.

In comparison to the other novels examined in this chapter and dissertation, *Bessy Conway* takes the harshest view of the abused women characters to the point where the women are meant to be blamed for the abusive marriages in which they end up. Likely owing to the strong Catholic overtones of her novel, Sadlier seems to emphasize how each of her abused characters made poor decisions in choosing a spouse or preventing his behavior. Unfortunately, she seems to fall into many stereotypes of domestic violence and Irish Americans. Although Ned is the alcoholic and abuser in their relationship, according to Liz Szabo Hernadi in her article, "Mary Anne Sadlier's Advice for Irish Catholic Girls" (2001), the downfall of the Finigans "is presented as largely Ally's fault. Sadlier suggests that Ally, as a Catholic wife charged with saving her husband from sin, must assume the role of social reformer and household conscience" (201). Although, as the male and the bread winner of the family, Ned has the ultimate word in such important decisions as where the family will live and how he will financially support the family, it is significant that Ally can be seen as equally, if not more, at fault for allowing the family to fall prey to the dangers of alcohol and its consequential moral corruption. If she had spoken up against her husband's plan to go into the tavern business, she would likely have been ignored because of the limited rights of a woman in this time period. Further showing the limitations she faces, Ally's temperance remonstrations and her attempts to be a social conscience are responded to with violence. As laws of the time would prevent her from easily getting a divorce, refusing conjugal rights to her husband, or having guaranteed

access to her children, it is probable that she would be unable to prevent her husband from going into the liquor business. Given the strong patriarchal nature of Catholicism, Ally would likely have even fewer rights than many other nineteenth-century women. According to McDannell, although Protestant women also lived by the cult of domesticity, at the time of this novel, Catholic women were very aware of the pressures to conform to these feminine ideals because of increasing indoctrination in the way of novels, newspapers, and advice books aimed particularly to Catholic women, especially recent immigrants like the Irish (Sadlier herself being a leading writer in this movement of articulating proper domestic culture) (52-54). However, Catholicism poses an impossible binary for Ally; she is supposed to oversee the morals of her family, yet she has little to no way of stopping her husband from acting against their faith and ethics or her wishes. Hernadi's (and Sadlier's, to some extent) inclusion of Ally in the blame for the Finegans' downfall fits with Parsons' suggestion that women in drunkard narratives are partially at fault for their situations because they had made poor decisions in choosing their husbands (88). However, Parsons, and to some extent Hernadi, fail to consider that oftentimes women can be mistaken about their husbands, as Ned does seem like good husband material prior to his marriage. Ally chose a fellow Irish immigrant who her family approves of, and he seems to genuinely care about her. Sadlier has posed her novel as a warning to her fellow Irish immigrant sisters to put careful consideration into choosing husbands who have both good morals and good financial sense and to avoid getting involved with the evils of alcohol; Sadlier can see no alternative but to posit some responsibility on Ally; Ally along with her husband is ruined by alcohol and, even after his death, her reputation is destroyed. Sadlier shows her young female readers that some decisions are in their control (such as who they marry), but they must be warned that, no matter how vigilant they are, they may find themselves the victims of domestic abuse.

Out all of the abused women characters that Sadlier presents, Sally bears the worst fate and the most blame for the abuse that she suffers; Sadlier makes it clear that Sally has played a large part in ending up in an abusive relationship. Sally, a fellow house servant of Bessy, finds herself with a shattered reputation and seems destined to find herself in a bad relationship because of how the novel portrays her as a servant who seems more interested in figuring out ways to get out of work than in performing her job to the best of her abilities. Eventually Sally loses her position because she is caught leaving work to socialize with her suitor, Jim, when she is supposed to be at work or church. Bessy loses touch with Sally until months later when she encounters a beggar at her employer's door, a "tall, emaciated woman, with a wretched-looking infant in her arms, and one a couple of years older clinging to her skirt" (225). Without a doubt, Sadlier wants her readers to know that Sally's actions, most especially her poor choice of a husband, have had horrible results, as there is no need for Sally's character to return in the novel. Bringing Sally back provides further warning to Sadlier's readers about what happens to women who are not good Catholic girls who choose proper husbands. Although Ally seemingly does make a much better and more informed decision about a husband than Sally does, both women suffer physical abuse, suggesting that a woman must do her best to make an educated choice in husbands, but that there is no guarantee that it will be the right decision. Sally is clearly suffering from her poor decisions and the actions of her alcoholic husband. After Sally begs Bessy for food for herself and her children, Sally's daughter reveals the likely cause of Sally's husband's poor care of his family when she remarks, "Ha! ha! mother, I guess we shunt give father any — shall we? he's so drunk, you know, he can't eat — can he?" (225). Like the other husband characters examined in this chapter, Sally's husband has problems with alcohol, which not only leads to him being unable to properly care for his family, but also to abusing his wife, as

evidenced in the child's pleading to her father when Sally returns with the slice of meat and bread that Bessy provided, "Oh! daddy! don't beat mammy! She ha'nt got noting— noting at all!" (226). Sadlier provides a rather vague description of the abuse that Jim commits on Sally:

To his harsh demand for money she gave a flat denial, accompanied by some epithet true enough in its application, but not very complimentary. That and his disappointment so exasperated Jim that he first applied his foot and gave her a kick which almost threw her to the ground, then, before she recovered her balance, followed it up with a blow that would certainly have left its mark had it reached its destination. (228-29)

Bessy watches this abuse from afar and, therefore, distance is placed between our faultless protagonist and the existence of abusive relationships. The description of the abuse that Sadlier provides seems detached because of its lack of in-depth description and its matter-of-fact tone, almost as if it is no surprise that this was the outcome of Sally's choices. Significantly, in what could be a very dramatic moment in the novel, Sadlier shows a lack of sensationalism; rather than attempt to shock the reader with strong, grotesque imagery, she instead moves to conditional language such as "a kick which *almost* threw her" and "a blow that *would* certainly *have* left its mark." This shows Sadlier's desire to talk about domestic violence while, at the same time, perhaps being uncomfortable or timorous of going into great detail on the subject, unlike the authors in the later years of the nineteenth century. But, to make sure that there is absolutely no confusion on whether Sally chose the wrong path, Sadlier tells the reader, "Jim's brutal assault coming at such a moment, completely paralyzed her. She succeeded in reaching her dreary abode, and lay down on a bed of sickness from which she never rose" (229). Sadlier shows that the psychological or emotional effects of abuse also adversely affect abused women;

unfortunately, even unfilled blows and beatings can result in harm to the victim, as Sally clearly suffers tremendously from just the threat of her husband's abuse.

Another way that Sadlier demonstrates her disapproval of Sally and her role in how she ended up in an abusive relationship is by not providing Sally peace even in her final moments; tellingly, Sally does not get a good death, which would mean a sort of forgiveness. In *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (1996), Elisabeth Bronfen discusses the prevalence and importance of death scenes in nineteenth-century literature. As part of this convention, “the dying have a vision of the after-life, of dead kin waiting for them on the other side. At the same time a central part of the deathbed ritual includes the farewell greetings from kin and friends Notions of ‘good death’ were introduced into Christian culture to suggest that the moment of death be seen as the correct fulfillment of and so a judgment on a person’s life” (77-78). Significantly, although the novel includes very strong overtones of Christianity and Catholicism, Sadlier does not give Sally the standard nineteenth-century redemptive death wherein she realizes the error of her ways and regrets not living a more Christian life. Sadlier provides a very quick, glossed-over death for Sally, especially in light of other nineteenth-century literary death scenes such as Flora's in Blake's *Fettered for Life*, which occupies more than five pages. Sally’s death “without priest or sacrament” seems a further attempt to place the blame primarily upon the victim of abuse (229). Sadlier does not provide Sally the opportunity to repent her poor decisions or to achieve justice by Jim needing to account for the harm that he has done to Sally and their child. Instead, Sadlier uses Sally's death as a means of providing a didactic message to her readers to be careful about the decisions that they make, especially as relate to choosing marriage partners.

Husbands Using Abuse to Correct Their Wives' "Improper" Behavior in Fettered for Life

Of all of the novels discussed in this dissertation, Lillie Devereux Blake's 1874 American novel, *Fettered for Life or Lord and Master* presents the most vivid and gruesome illustrations of physical abuse. Although the naive, compassionate Laura does her best to aid the novel's numerous abused women, she and her unrealistic ideas are no match for allegiance that wives feel towards their husbands; the monstrous, continuous abuse these women face; or the inevitable consequences of vulnerable women standing up to their much stronger husbands. Similar to Sadlier's Bessy, who is tired of being a financial burden on her father and, thus, sets out on her own, Laura Stanley, the heroine of the novel, leaves home and moves to New York City, determined to support herself. The naïve young woman struggles in the big city and ends up in the jail on her first night because she can not find a safe place to stay. In court the next day, Laura has the misfortune to attract the attention of Judge Swinton. Although he appears to most as an upstanding representative of the courts, it is clear that his career has flourished from his shady and corrupt dealings with a team of men who use force and bribes to help the Judge. Swinton sends the newly arrived young lady to board at the Bludgetts, where she meets the abused Mrs. Bludgett, who suffers frequently at the hand of her cruel husband, one of the Judge's henchmen. Fortunately, Laura makes some friends, including a doctor, Mrs. D'Arcy, and a journalist, Frank Heywood, who serves as a protector for the young woman. Needing a place to stay in the strange city, Laura boards in two different households, the Moulders and the Bludgetts, both of which feature a husband who abuses his wife, before she eventually moves in with Mrs. D'Arcy. In addition to struggling to find a safe and comfortable place to reside in the city, Laura spends most of the novel attempting to find work to support herself. Being a female severely limits the jobs that are seen as suitable, and employers refuse to either hire Laura or to

pay her as much as they would a comparable male employee. While scraping by with her money earned from teaching drawing at a local school and private lessons, Laura must avoid the frequent romantic/sexual propositions made by the Judge, who becomes so obsessed with Laura that he attempts to kidnap her. As Laura learns to navigate her new world, she also finds a male suitor, Guy Bradford, a man with progressive views on women's equality, who is precisely the opposite of the controlling, patriarchal Mr. Le Roy, whom Laura's friend, Flora, ends up with.

The inconsolable Flora tells Laura: “[Mr. Le Roy] thinks he has a right to dictate all my actions. Oh, I see you look as if you thought I ought not to give up. I know I ought not to sometimes, and I don't always, I can tell you. We have had some bitter scenes already . . . but in these he always conquers in the end; I am so miserably weak, you know, and he—you don't know how hard he is!” (265). Although Flora does not have a job (other than her short, secret stint as a writer), Le Roy, by limiting Flora's access to such hobbies as sewing or drawing, by taking away the supplies necessary or forbidding her to spend time on these activities, further emphasizes the control that he yields over his wife; he gives no consideration to how miserable Flora becomes from having no activities to fill her lonely and isolated days. Flora initially attempts to stand up for herself to Le Roy, but quickly realizes that she is fighting a losing battle. Although it is unspoken what exactly Flora means when she says Le Roy “conquers” her and mentions her weakness, she may be indicating that Le Roy physically abuses her. While proposing to Flora, Le Roy “put out his hand and laid it on hers with a firm grasp”; when Flora instinctively “recoils” from his touch, Le Roy “drew his grasp closer about her The forceful eyes were close to hers; the strong detaining hands held her fast, and the man pressed his lips to her cheek, while she remained passive, unable to escape” (128). Once Flora assents to marriage, Le Roy continues his physical hold over her and “laid his hand on her again . . . and before he

would let her go, he forced her to let him touch her lips with his" (128). Part of the power in this scene lies in the dichotomy of terms that Blake utilizes for discussing Le Roy versus Flora. Le Roy is described using very physical terms that emphasize his strength: "conquer," "grasp," "detaining," "fast," and "forced." These terms are also strongly associated with traditional masculinity and could very well be terms of praise for a man's sportsmanship or business prowess. In contrast, the terms used for Flora illustrate Flora's weakness and vulnerability: "recoil," "passive," and "unable." These terms, in a way, emphasize Flora's femininity and might be taken from an etiquette book for how a proper nineteenth-century woman should act while courting (recoil from any undesired suitors, act weak, do not be too assertive). Through the abuse that occurs, Blake shows the disastrous consequences of this gendered behavior. Le Roy's frequent use of strength against Flora makes it highly likely that would resort to physical violence against his wife. Le Roy's proposal shows how he exerts his strength to emphasize to Flora that he is not only physically stronger than her, but that he also expects his wife to recognize his power and accept a submissive position in their relationship. Whether or not he has physically hurt his wife, Le Roy's exertion of his physical strength during incidents like his proposal and his later tracking down of Flora, who attempts to run away the night before her wedding, when he strongly grasps her arm and then moves her by wrapping his arm around her waist, show that physical abuse is highly likely to occur in their relationship, even if it has not already (241). Flora is too weak to defend against her husband's psychological or physical abuse.

Like Flora, Mrs. Bludgett is also shown as being physically weaker and much more passive than her husband, which also results in her being physically abused by her husband. Whereas the abuse that Flora suffers is only lightly touched upon, Mrs. Bludgett's abuse is described in vivid detail. Perhaps indicating the confidence she felt in being a female writer

towards the end of the century in 1874 and the growing realist movement, Blake not only hints at Mr. Bludgett's physical abuse of his wife but also places the reader in the very same room as witnesses to the graphic cruelty he inflicts upon the poor, vulnerable woman. Unlike earlier novelists who only hint at the existence of physical abuse, Blake makes no qualms about vividly describing the bodily abuse that her female characters incur. After Mrs. Bludgett questions her husband about the bar fight that he was involved in, which resulted in someone's death and Mr. Bludgett being sent to jail (a visit ended by his corrupt friend, Judge Swinton's influence), the angry Mr. Bludgett assaults his wife for her nagging regarding the truth about what went on that night, a topic that he told her to not speak about:

As he spoke he raised one hand and seized her by the hair, then lifting the other hand, his eyes glowing red with passion, he dealt her a heavy blow across the face. She would have fallen with the force of the shock, had not his cruel grasp upheld her; as it was she swayed away with a low cry, the blood flowing from a gash in her cheek, the rest of her countenance ghastly white with fear. . . . He struck her again and again as he spoke, his dark brow knotted, his face purple with his insane anger. At first the poor creature replied with wild appeals for mercy, but these died away presently, and there was no sound as he flung her from him to the floor. She fell and lay without motion, but even yet, the man's fury was not spent, he kicked the prostrate form more than once, his heavy boots making the strokes almost murderous. (62)

Significantly, like Sadlier, Blake describes the abuser in the midst of a scene of abuse as un-humanlike, which indicates his monstrous, unmanly behavior towards his wife; Blake's description of glowing eyes and purple face could just as easily be describing an out-of-this-

world creature. It is clear from the description of Mr. Bludgett here that he physically dwarfs Mrs. Bludgett in strength and size and that she has little chance of defending herself. Blake's use of the term "insane" highlights not only how crazed Mr. Bludgett is acting, but also the incomprehensibility of Bludgett's treatment of his wife. Interestingly, Mr. Bludgett supporting his wife and Mrs. Bludgett's swaying reads almost like a dance between the couple, which further highlights the enormous gap between the romance that Mrs. Bludgett craves (which she only finds in the flashy romance novels that she devours) and the violence that is synonymous with Mr. Bludgett (indeed it is embedded in his very surname).

Blake's gruesome and detailed word choice places her in the tradition of "dark reform," as defined by David S. Reynolds in his *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*. According to Reynolds, this sub-category of reform literature formed from "vociferous reformers whose loudly announced goal was to stamp out various behavioral sins or social iniquities" (55). As with the other women authors examined in this project, Blake uses her writing to call attention to domestic violence and legal inequalities that women face in order to enact reactions in her readers. Reynolds states that these dark reformers probed "the grisly, sometimes perverse results of vice, such as shattered homes, sadomasochistic violence, eroticism, nightmare visions, and the disillusioning collapse of romantic ideals" (59). By illustrating the disintegration of numerous marriages, Blake certainly shows that marriage is much more complicated than simple romance and happy-ever-afters. Husbands who exercise their legal and physical dominance over their wives demonstrate the grisly side of these supposed partnerships.

As with her encounters with Flora and Mrs. Moulder, the kindhearted Laura attempts to encourage Mrs. Bludgett to stand up to her husband to secure more rights for herself:

"Have you ever thought of it, Mrs. Bludgett, what good reason is there why you should not have the same right to ask him questions, that he has to ask you?"

"But he is a man, you know," as if the answer were a sufficient argument against all heterodox inquiries.

"A man! . . . Suppose he is, why should that give him any right to rule over you?"

"But men are so strong."

"And he uses his strength against you! Is that manly, is that noble?"

At this last insinuation, Mrs. Bludgett drew back somewhat angrily: "He's my husband." (18)

Here Mrs. Bludgett represents the voice of conservatism and acquiescence to patriarchy while the younger woman, Laura, shows liberalism and advocacy for women's rights. Mrs. Bludgett and the patriarchy present what appears a ridiculous, illogical argument: men deserve to have more power and authority in marital relationships because their sex makes them physically stronger. Like Sadlier, Blake shows that men using physical violence against women is not only unchivalrous, but also unmanly, in the sense of masculinity pertaining to the male responsibility to take care of women, such as their wives, for whom they are responsible. Similarly, Blake illustrates that masculinity involves more than merely being a man; men have a moral obligation to fairly treat the vulnerable women that rely on them for protection. Although less blatant than Sadlier, Blake provides a didactic message to readers not to fall for "manly" men or to confuse violence or control as masculine. Neither Mrs. Bludgett nor patriarchy offer supporting evidence, and they present a rather weak case regarding gender equality and rights. Mrs. Bludgett, society, and the legal system know that husbands often abuse their wives, yet still they argue that men deserve the right to rule their wives simply because they are male. Although Mrs. Bludgett is

certainly aware of the painful consequences to herself when her husband utilizes his strength against her, significantly, she still defends her husband against Laura's accusations. Mr. Bludgett may be a poor excuse for a husband in his failure to keep his wife safe; however, Mrs. Bludgett is an excellent example of an obedient, loving wife, to the point where, seriously injured, she still makes sure that her husband's meal is ready for his arrival home for the evening: "Left to herself, Mrs. Bludgett, as evening approached, made shift to prepare a meal, though it was evidently a pain to move about much, for she rested her head on her hand many times, as if dizzy or faint" (60). Here Mrs. Bludgett does her best to fulfill the role of the angel in the house figure, despite the tremendous pain she feels.

In her "Killing the Angel in the House: The Autonomy of Women Writers," Elaine Showalter quotes Virginia Woolf's views of this figure as an "oppressive phantom" whose goal was to "[b]e sympathetic, be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own" (340). Although this angel-like behavior is likely prominent in the romances that Mrs. Bludgett loves to read, wherein the narratives revolve around tender women flattering men in an attempt to be chosen as their wives, this behavior clearly serves as a poor *modus operandi* for Mrs. Bludgett; try as she may, no matter how sympathetic, tender, or flattering she is, her husband still mistreats her. Resorting to other female tricks would likely be just as ineffective against a physically stronger man, who means to hurt a woman. Although Mrs. Bludgett is never witnessed standing up to her husband (as Laura wishes her to), doing so would likely have no positive outcome, as evidenced by Flora's attempts to speak up to her husband.

Mrs. Bludgett likely also deals with the fear that her noncompliance with her husband's dinner demands of his meal being prepared on time and to his liking may result in further abuse.

Mrs. Bludgett seems to struggle with conflicting emotions towards her husband. She lives in fear of him and hates the abuse that she receives at his hand, but she also wants to take care of him and fulfill what she sees as her roles as his wife. Violence makes Mrs. Bludgett's role as a wife difficult to fulfill because of the pain, which angers her husband and, thus, perpetuates a circle of violence. After an especially violent session of abuse, she still tends to her husband, even though she is physically suffering: "She looked around at him, an expression, not of anger or of hatred, but of anxiety, crossed her face, and tottering painfully into the other room, she brought a blanket and with it covered the sleeping man" (63). Although Mrs. Bludgett certainly has every right to be upset with her husband for the battering he just dealt her, she uses her remaining energy to ensure that her husband sleeps warmly. Unfortunately, this incident summarizes the Bludgetts' relationship; Mr. Bludgett abuses his wife, she slowly recovers to take care of him, and then the cycle continues.

Upon visiting Mrs. Bludgett after moving out, Laura finds Mrs. Bludgett recovering from the latest round of physical abuse: "Her face was paler even than when Laura had last seen her, a large patch of plaster was spread on her temple, and the blood had settled in black circles under her eyes" (55). Significantly, although it is likely clear to both Rhoda and Laura what has happened to Mrs. Bludgett to cause these injuries, Mrs. Bludgett cannot or will not confess to these women (both of whom she is on friendly terms with and seems to trust) that her husband has hurt her. Instead, even in what should be a comfortable, safe environment, Mrs. Bludgett declares that the cause of her injuries was a fall (66). Similarly, Mrs. Bludgett attributes injuries she receives later on in the novel to having sprained her wrist (166). It appears that Laura's earlier ideas about the need for women to form a network of support for each other must remain a dream until women like Mrs. Bludgett can learn to set aside their ideas about gender propriety

and support their fellow women. Even progressive female thinkers like Laura or Mrs. D'Arcy can never help the women's and marital rights cause enough if women like Mrs. Bludgett do not trust them.

Another barrier in the way of ending domestic violence and laws that condone it is men like Mr. Bludgett who see no fault with their own actions. Disgusted by what he perceives as her non-stop nagging into his business and whether or not he is guilty of murder, Mr. Bludgett decides he must discipline his wife and use his strength to make her realize that she must obey his orders:

"I told you t'other day I'd kill you if you didn't drop it. . . . I'll teach you how to talk so to me." The poor woman gave a wild shriek as her husband came towards her; but this seemed only to inflame his rage. He struck her a fearful blow with his clenched fist and she staggered and fell. . . . "don't kill me! don't kill me!" swaying feebly and looking at him, pitifully; "I love you John, and I—I pray for you, every day" . . . He rushed upon her and beat her down; then setting his teeth hard, while his eyes glowed blood-red with fury, he seized her by her hair and pounded her head against the floor. . . . After this there were only moans, growing fainter and fainter; but the man, like one possessed by some fiend, struck and kicked the poor helpless body long after all motion had ceased, and until the crushed spirit had escaped from the tortures of this life through the terrible gateway of death. (374-75)

By mentioning that he had previously told her not to bring up the topic of his possible criminal involvement, Mr. Bludgett attempts to blame his wife for the abuse that she is about to receive, implying that she deserves it for a fault on her part; as Mr. Bludgett's continued beating "long

after all motion had ceased" further shows that the abuse is detached from Mrs. Bludgett's behavior. Significantly, even at this moment when one would expect her to hate her husband and his monstrous behavior, Mrs. Bludgett vows her love for this man; however, her love and even her religion are not enough to convince her husband not to abuse. Here Blake shows that love and religion are not enough for a woman to either reform her husband or prevent abuse. In this moment, Mr. Bludgett is less like a man and more like a demonic beast with his ferocity, his glowing eyes, and his possessed-like behavior. Mr. Bludgett not only physically injures his wife, but has also "crushed" her spirit, which shows the numerous ways that domestic violence affects the victim, not only physically, but also psychologically and emotionally. Unfortunately, for a woman like Mrs. Bludgett, who has no legal or economic recourse, death is her only escape from domestic violence.

Through his reprimanding of his wife speaking out, especially on a topic that he has forbidden, Mr. Bludgett attempts to not only assert his control over his wife, but to also push her into submissiveness, passiveness, and quietness, three traits for which traditional patriarchal society desires in feminine women. Although some readers might mistakenly think that being the ideal angel of the house will keep them safe from abuse, Blake proves this as false with the examples of abused women that she discusses. For instance, Mrs. Bludgett is frequently shown as very meek and concerned about her husband's wellbeing, and Mrs. Moulder is also very passive and submissive to her husband; as much as these women try to emulate this angel figure, they still are frequent victims of abuse by their husbands. Blake shows that although women may do their utmost to fulfill the feminine roles of being the ideal woman, men often do not hold up their end of the bargain and fulfill the role of being a man (a protector of weak women). Significantly, even in this awful moment of abuse and pain (when she might love her husband

the least), Mrs. Bludgett declares her love for her husband, which encourages the reader to further empathize with Mrs. Bludgett. Again, Blake's vivid description unfortunately makes it clear what can happen when a man uses his strength against his wife. The weak Mrs. Bludgett does not stand a chance of defending herself against her husband's force, and there certainly is no one there to help her or protect her (roles which the legal system naively thinks that husbands will provide). To the end, Mrs. Bludgett attempts to be a loving wife and a Christian woman, but it is all for naught because even good women and wives get abused and get killed by their husbands.

Significantly, Mrs. Bludgett was holding one of her beloved romance novels in her hand until her husband's beating forced her to drop it. Clearly, Blake reveals one last time that women should be weary of notions of romance and escapes from reality because they will not protect them against the ugly truth of domestic violence. Romance novels clearly are not the solution; they are part of the problem because of how they propagate ideology like the angel of the house figure and the idea of marriages always working out. These notions cause female readers stress when their own marriages are not as perfect and they have difficulty living up to the expectations of the angel figure, which may lead women like Mrs. Bludgett to defend their abusive husbands because they feel they deserve the abuse for not fulfilling these unrealistic ideologies. The multiple instances of Mrs. Bludgett hiding her novels from her husband show that these books are yet another thing that angers him and likely causes more abuse (153, 338). Blake shares the titles of several of these showy works that Mrs. Bludgett enjoys reading: "'Berenice the Beautiful,' the heroine of an astounding tale of mystic combinations and thrilling adventures"; "'Boundless Blunderbuss, or Cunning Crucified' [which is] awfully exciting"; and "'The Haunted Behemoth, or The Hellhound of Andalusia; A Tale of Spain and the Alhambra'" (60, 219, 338).

Ironically, the titles of these works read how Blake's own readers might describe the story of Mrs. Bludgett as a beautiful heroine who faces conflict, Mrs. Bludgett who might easily be described as a fool or blunderbuss, Mrs. Bludgett who faces crucifixion or extreme pain and suffering at the hands of her husband, and Mr. Bludgett who clearly is a hellhound in his abusive treatment of his wife. Significantly, Mrs. Bludgett has a difficult time seeing the relationship between fiction and reality: she has an unfortunate amount of tragic excitement and conflict in her own life, she believes in the fiction that her husband loves her and that her love for him will prevent abuse, and she naively thinks that escaping into a world of fiction will help her current situation. In contrast to readers who may think the romances that Mrs. Bludgett enjoys are reality (woman meets handsome, charming man, falls madly in love, and lives happily-ever-after with the man of her dreams), Blake illustrates her own gritty realism of the often violent nature of relationships. Mrs. Bludgett finally gets an escape from her tortured life, but only through her death, which is a fate that seems very likely for Woolson's Cicely over a decade later.

Ferdie's Alcoholic Abuse of His Family, Which His Wife Excuses in Jupiter Lights

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator of Constance Fenimore Woolson's 1886 American novel, *Jupiter Lights*, Eve Bruce, arrives in the southern United States from England in order to visit her young nephew, Jack, who lives with her brother's widow, Cicely Abercrombie. Before she even meets her nephew, Eve is determined to find a way to convince Cicely to allow her to take the child, her only remaining link with her dear, departed brother, and raise him as her own. The uptight, set-in-her ways Eve has difficulty fitting in with the Abercrombie family, consisting of Cicely, Jack, Cicely's grandfather, and Cicely's aunt. Eve soon discovers that Cicely remarried six months prior. Her new husband is Ferdinand Morrison, whom she married while away from home for a short time and whom her family has never met.

Thinking that it will help with her scheme to gain custody of Jack, Eve writes Cicely's new husband and convinces him that Cicely misses him and that he should come and live with his wife. However, at the time of this letter, Eve was not aware of the information that Cicely later reveals about Ferdie, as he is referred to. Cicely reveals that Ferdie not only has a drinking problem, but that he also becomes abusive towards those around him.

Like Blake, Woolson also shows the potential consequences and negative influence that an alcoholic and/or abusive father can have on the children in the family. While drunk, Ferdie has injured young Jack, in addition to his wife. Although Eve is initially skeptical that Cicely was telling the truth about Ferdie, who seems a well-mannered, charming man, he soon becomes drunk and out of control. One night, Eve is woken by a frantic Cicely, who seeks Eve's help in getting Jack out of the house before Ferdie finds and injures them. They successfully escape the house, but just as Eve is getting the pair onto a boat to hide them out across the lake, Ferdie spots them. Seeing the enraged Ferdie and believing that he is about to attack her nephew, Eve shoots Ferdie. Ferdie falls into a serious illness as a result of the shooting, and it is unknown to the other characters that Eve was the shooter. Eve spends the majority of the novel feeling horribly guilty that she has shot and killed him (Ferdie later dies after a long illness). However, at the end of the novel, it is revealed that the bullet left only a minor wound that he recovered from, and that alcoholism was the real cause of his death. Eve's guilt over the supposed murder becomes a problem after she falls in love with Ferdie's brother, Paul, and decides that she could never marry the brother of a man that she almost killed.

Not long into the novel, Cicely tells her visiting sister-in-law (from her first marriage) that her new husband of about six months, Ferdie, is physically abusive to her. Although he does not currently live with his wife when Eve first comes, Ferdie has hurt Cicely before and she has a

significant scar to prove it (78). When Eve expresses concern, Cicely explains that he only does it after he has been drinking. Further alarming Eve, Cicely also tells her that Ferdie has hurt Jack, her toddler son, and actually broke his arm. Unfortunately, for Cicely and Jack, Ferdie eventually does return to live with his family and once again poses a danger to them because of his alcoholism. Offering brotherly advice, Ferdie tells Eve, “don’t be a forlorn old maid . . . All women ought to marry; it is better for them” (94). When Eve questions whether these women will be happy, even the ones who are married to brutes or madmen, Ferdie responds, “Oh you wouldn’t select a brute. As for the madmen, they are all locked up” (94). Significantly, Ferdie echoes the widespread nineteenth-century expectation of women marrying, which seems ridiculous in light of what Eve and the reader know about his past abusive behavior towards his wife and stepson. Ferdie disassociates himself from madmen, who are presumably locked away in asylums due to their mental illnesses. This suggests that Ferdie either is unable to recognize the problem with his behavior or that the alcohol he consumes before the abuse prevents him from recalling the abusive incidents. Unfortunately, the violence continues, as seen when Cicely frantically seeks Eve’s help to escape with the child from the house and Ferdie, who Woolson notes has a possessed look: “his eyes fierce and fixed At that moment his beauty was terrible; but he saw nothing, heard nothing; he was like a man listening to something far off” (98). As with the examples of physical abuse illustrated by the author authors in this chapter, Ferdie in the moment of abuse is a very different man from the charming, handsome Ferdie that Cicely loves; this is a scary, demonic stranger that threatens his wife and stepson. Significantly, Woolson’s use of demonic-like hallucinations here fits with a turn towards sensationalism in temperance literature in mid to late nineteenth-century American literature. David S. Reynolds argues that temperance literature moved from more conventional fiction towards sensational

beginning in the 1830s because of the influence of fiction found in the popular penny papers (*Serpent* 25). Reynolds goes on to note that delirium tremens were so common in these darker temperance novels that they were almost required (28). As Ferdie has been drinking heavily, Cicely rightfully fears that he will hurt her and her child. Challenging the nineteenth-century idea of the angel of the house and the idea of women belonging in and being safer in the private sphere of the home, Cicely and Eve flee the house and begin a wild escape from Ferdie outdoors. Cicely explains to Eve that Ferdie wants to kill Cicely and Jack because he thinks that they are strangers who want to hurt his family: "he thinks that I am some one else, a woman who is going to attack his wife; and he thinks that Jack is some other child, who has injured *his* Jack" (100). Ironically, Ferdie fears for his wife and stepson's safety, not realizing that his alcoholism and abuse makes him their worst enemy and the biggest threat to their wellbeing. Although Ferdie's fits cause him to not properly see his family, it is his family that has been duped into not seeing the real Ferdie up until this point; they were all blinded by his charm. Indeed, Cicely has cause for alarm as he has already cut Cicely on the throat and she is bleeding heavily from the wound. The situation becomes so dangerous and Ferdie is so crazed from the alcohol that Eve ends up shooting him when it appears that he is about to attack her nephew.

Throughout Woolson's novel there are strong overtones of temperance literature, which suggests a connection between Ferdie's drinking and his abusive behavior towards his wife. However, Caroline Gebhard, in her article "Romantic Love and Wife-Battering in Constance Fenimore Woolson's *Jupiter Lights*," (2001) refutes the connection between Woolson's *Jupiter Lights* and the temperance movement. She writes, "Although, like the popular tradition of temperance literature, it features a drunkard and his battered wife, it does not demonize alcohol nor advocate temperance reform" (83). Does Woolson outright discuss the evils of alcohol or

distinctly state that alcoholism is the reason for Ferdie's downfall? No. However, it is clear that alcohol is seen in a negative light in the novel, and the only character that we know who drinks also happens to be the novel's antagonist. Given that Woolson wrote this novel during the apex of the temperance reform, it hardly seems coincidental that she features a man with a drinking problem who becomes violent as a result of his alcohol consumption. Woolson was also likely familiar with the temperance reform movement thanks to her communication with her former teacher from her Cleveland Female Seminary days, Linda Guilford. In *The Complete Letters of Constance Fenimore Woolson* (2012), editor Sharon L. Dean includes several letters either written to Guilford from Woolson or referring to Guilford, indicating that they corresponded decades after Woolson's departure from the school, from at least 1887 through 1890. According to *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* (2012), Guilford was an active participant in the Young Women's Temperance League and also served as president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Although Woolson does not clearly discuss the need for temperance reform, it seems doubtful that readers would not see a connection between Ferdie's drinking and the cruel, dissociative state that he enters as a result of the alcohol. Rather than see alcohol as the reason behind Ferdie's abuse of his wife and stepson, Gebhard believes that Woolson blames other sources: "Woolson makes it clear that although alcohol plays a crucial role in Ferdie's battering, it is not the simple cause. His brother believes his behavior goes back to childhood and may be genetically influenced; moreover, Ferdie takes responsibility for his actions, writing to Paul about the injuries he has inflicted upon his wife and nephew" (87). Although I agree with Gebhard that Ferdie's violent nature stems from multiple sources, I think Ferdie's drinking is the main impetus for his abuse of his wife and stepson, especially since Woolson does not include instances of other male characters drinking. Ferdie's problems in his past may affect how he

handles his alcohol, but they do not seem to be enough, on their own, to lead to this abuse.

Alcohol abuse is clearly an important issue to Woolson in this novel; however, by also including the physical abuse that Ferdie inflicts upon his wife (and almost upon his stepson), Woolson is making a clear statement about the relationship between alcohol abuse and domestic violence and the cruel effects of both.

Most novels of the nineteenth century do not show graphic illustrations of physical abuse; although each of the novels discussed in this chapter include women characters who are abused by their husbands, the authors oftentimes shy away from graphically describing the abuse and only mention the effects of this physical violence. As Lynn M. Alexander writes of *Fettered for Life*, “Typical of subversive fiction, Blake offers a nonthreatening, seemingly innocuous story that shades her text's more radical nature. This technique encodes the novel's more radical stance in order to reach a broad audience” (601). Writing for women readers who were used to popular sentimental novels, these authors managed to subvert the norms of this genre and its expectations of marriage leading to happily-ever-afters by exposing readers to instances of physical abuse in as strong a manner as they can for their time. In contrast to earlier women-oriented novels (which tend to end with the marriage of the protagonist), these authors chose to focus on what happens after the marriage ceremony; although one's suitor usually works diligently to first win the favor and then their hand in marriage of their intended lady, these novels show that this romance is certainly not guaranteed and very difficult to find in actual marriages, where societal and gender expectations create situations where alcoholic abuse and physical violence are likely and common. For example, these authors show that husbands, who are given the role of being overseer of their wives and children, are seldom satisfied with their wives' fulfillment of their roles as housekeeper, which often leads them to physically abuse these vulnerable women; these

relationships are far from the marriages that the young women in sentimental novels yearn for. As the century advanced, abuse narratives became progressively more graphic as readers became more accustomed to realistic works. Whereas *Mauleverer's Divorce* (1858) only discusses one instance of the physical abuse that Sophia incurs, which is described from the perspective of an outsider, the narrator, the later novels, *Fettered for Life* (1874) and *Jupiter Lights* (1889), include much longer and more graphic descriptions, which are more direct and more frequent; these later authors feel a freedom to share with their readers the gruesome violence of abuse. Future chapters will also show how these authors point out less obvious types of domestic violence to which readers should be aware. *Mauleverer's Divorce: A Story of a Woman's Wrongs*, *Bessy Conway; Or The Irish Girl in America*, *Fettered for Life or Lord and Master*, and *Jupiter Lights* all depict male violence against women as unchivalrous and unmanly, which, although showing that men are biologically physically stronger, demonstrate how violence emasculates men who commit physical violence against their wives. Furthermore, this male physical violence violates the code of propriety that expected men to restrain their strength and not harm the women whom they are charged with protecting.

CHAPTER 3

EMOTIONAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

As is often the case in modern society, although physical abuse is more easily recognized as a form of domestic violence, there are other, more subtle forms of abuse that are just as harmful to women. Even though they may not have had a term for this type of abuse and there were even fewer legal protections against it, numerous nineteenth-century women authors were aware of and wrote about the many other ways that husbands can abuse their wives. Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), Emma Robinson's *Mauleverer's Divorce* (1858), Caroline Norton's *Lost and Saved* (1863), E.D.E.N. Southworth's *Ishmael or Lost in the Depths* (1863-64), E.D.E.N. Southworth's *Self-Raised or From the Depths* (1863-64), and Lillie Devereux Blake's *Fettered for Life* (1874) all demonstrate how psychological and emotional abuse of wives by their husbands poisons the allegedly ideal, matronly space of the home, the realm of the "angel in the house" through negative influences such as insults and vulgarity.

According to Joan M. Hoffman in "'She Loves With Love That Cannot Tire': The Image of the Angel in the House Across Cultures and Across Time," the "angel in the house" concept derives from a popular poem published between 1854-1862 by a British nineteenth-century poet, Coventry Patmore, and idealizes a woman as a "selflessly devoted and submissive wife and mother" (264). In the poem, the narrator discusses his courtship, love, and eventual marriage to Honoria, who is described in very idealistic terms, such as being "not of the earth" (Patmore 91). Patmore highlights Honoria's "mildness," "her modesty, her chiefest grace," and her simplicity (62, 64). All of these traits add up to a very passive, meek wife, who is unlikely to exert her opinions or to speak up to her husband. This idea of the ideal woman being submissive to her husband poses an enormous threat to women's safety and is tantamount to abuse. Although this

angel figure was likely not a character that most women living in the nineteenth century would recognize as a model (indeed the very idea of this "angel" has gained much, if not most of its popularity, from critics long after the nineteenth century), it is a term that stands for numerous stereotypes imposed upon women which would have been recognized and pushed upon women during this time; consequently, this myth summarizes generalized beliefs which frequently appear in literature.³ Nineteenth-century novels, especially those earlier in the century, propagate this gender myth through their heroines who are taught that they must not be too assertive (which might be a turn-off for men, who believed that they must be the head of the household and exert control over their wives to keep them in line) and must utilize their womanly charms to attract and please husbands. The women characters examined in this chapter all initially attempt to fulfill this angel role with much difficulty and unfortunately find that portraying this character offers no protection against abusive husbands; the authors examined in this chapter problematize this common trope through these characters.

Although these authors may not have had an exact terminology to describe it, they illustrate numerous examples of emotional and psychological abuse. The United States' Department of Justice's webpage on Domestic Violence defines emotional abuse as follows: "Undermining an individual's sense of self-worth and/or self-esteem is abusive. This may include, but is not limited to constant criticism, diminishing one's abilities, name-calling, or damaging one's relationship with his or her children" ("Domestic"). Psychological abuse is defined as "Causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner, children, or partner's family or friends; destruction of pets and property; and forcing isolation from family, friends, or school and/or work" ("Domestic"). Although these definitions and terms are from a later period, through the multiple examples that can be found in these novels and the dramatic

negative effects that they produce, it is clear that these authors recognized the inherent threat that these forms of abuse posed to married women. Thus, by calling attention to this abuse, these authors through their narratives provide a sort of virtual support system for victimized women readers where they can see that they are not alone in their abuse and be warned about the potential risks marriage entails. Through the act of reading, young women feel that they are connected to the characters, the author, and each other. Additionally, by showing that the rules of domesticity do not always work, and may even result in domestic violence, these authors are in a sense anti-domestic and writing against the tradition of sentimental novels.

Blaming the Wife for Not Fulfilling Her Role in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

Although at first it is not known to the reader of Anne Brontë's British novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Helen Graham, the quiet, unassuming, and new-to-town widow with a young child is actually Helen Huntingdon, a woman in hiding from her abusive, alcoholic husband, Arthur. However, Helen's past is soon revealed to the reader by the novel's narrator, Gilbert Markham, a curious man who quickly becomes infatuated with Helen. Helen's story is told through several layers of removal, as it is Gilbert, not Helen, who will share her story; additionally, Helen does not directly tell Gilbert the story of her past; rather, she gives him her diary to read. Furthermore, even Gilbert does not straightforwardly share Helen's story with the reader; rather, the entire novel is posed as a letter from Gilbert to someone else. Lorene M. Birden discusses the framing structure that the letter or diary format provides and quotes Vladimir Pozner, who writes, "the reader is displaced, forced to see a question from a different angle, and therefore to perceive the new elements in it" (qtd. in Birden 266). By utilizing this distancing technique, Brontë mimics the fear, anxiety, and shame that victims of domestic

violence feel about sharing that they have been abused with others because they feel that they will be seen as weak or be negatively judged for not having left the abusive relationship.

To readers familiar with some of the frequent conventions of nineteenth-century marriage plots, there are some clear signs that Helen's marriage is doomed from the start. Brontë's readers have likely seen this plot numerous times in their reading: a young, naive woman searches for a suitable spouse; her criteria for a husband likely consists of what she has been indoctrinated with through reading: a handsome, well-to-do man who treats the woman like a queen through his adamant attention and abundant compliments. According to the typical plot, the young woman will triumph in her search to find her prince and then presumably live happily-ever-after with her man, whom she marries at the conclusion of the novel. Readers and Helen should be quickly troubled by Arthur's behavior: he is a selfish man who is entirely too invested in having a good time and is often seen flirting with another woman in order to get Helen's attention to convince her to marry him; this is certainly not the attention that young women should expect from those interested in marrying them. Although Helen sees these aspects of Arthur's character and behavior, she agrees to the marriage, all while naively thinking that she can reform him once they are husband and wife. However, once Helen gives birth to their son, she has someone else to pay attention to, and her jealous husband seeks amusement elsewhere. Arthur spends more and more time in London drinking and carousing with his friends while his worried wife remains at home (a familiar marital situation as seen in the marriages examined in Chapter Two). He frequently leaves his wife at home and goes away for months at a time to London to party and drink with his friends. Alcohol plays a major role in these outings for Arthur. His friends pressure him into drinking and carousing, and he readily concedes. As if this were not bad enough, soon Helen is not even safe from the negative effects of alcohol, as her domestic sphere

is invaded when Arthur invites his friends over for alcohol-filled stays that often last for days. Arthur also has no qualms about inviting his mistress to stay at their house. During all this, Helen deals with a tremendous amount of emotional and verbal abuse from her alcoholic husband. Finally, after noticing the harmful influence that her husband is having on their young son, who is encouraged by Arthur to imitate his behavior, Helen flees with their son (350-1,389).

It is clear that Arthur has an alcohol problem and is more than merely a social drinker, which is evident in his sickly appearance during his reappearances at home. At first Helen blames herself for his frequent trips because Arthur indicates that he is bored at home, and she feels she has failed in her wifely duties because she cannot keep him entertained or fulfill his expectations of a good wife. According to M. Jeanne Peterson's "No Angels in the House: The Victorian Myth and the Paget Women," the angel of the house myth promoted the idea that a wife "provided a haven from its [(the world's)] worst pressures through her sound household management and sweetness of tempter She obeyed her husband [and] adored him . . . and became the devoted and loving mother of a large Victorian family" (678). From Arthur's prospective Helen fails at these duties because she does not promote a peaceful home environment with her disapproval of his behavior nor by her lack of entertainment (whether it be by piano playing or pleasant conversation) to keep his mind off of his troubles. By constantly leaving his wife alone for such long periods of time to seek amusement elsewhere and making her feel like a failure, Arthur undoubtedly harms Helen's self-esteem. However, Helen realizes her husband is the problem when both her and her child's safety become endangered. Arthur Jr. adores his father and quickly sees and begins to imitate his drunken behavior. Even more alarmingly, Arthur actually encourages this behavior and even allows the child to also consume alcohol (350). It is unlikely that Arthur does not realize that alcohol consumption would be

unhealthy for such a young child, yet by encouraging his son's emulation, Arthur psychologically abuses Helen by threatening the health of their son, whom Helen, as a good mother, will do anything to protect.

In addition to the psychological abuse that Arthur inflicts, there are also obvious signs of emotional verbal abuse. At one point, Arthur declares to his visiting friends, "I have no wife . . . or if I have, look you gentlemen, I value her so highly that any one among you, that can fancy her, may have her and welcome—you may, by Jove and my blessing into the bargain" (355). Helen, who despite all of Arthur's awful behavior is still concerned about him, cannot help but be hurt and embarrassed by her husband's declaration. In her influential 1845 work, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, Margaret Fuller discusses the nineteenth-century woman's "belief that she must marry, if it be only to find a protector, and a home of her own" (35). As a nineteenth-century married woman, Helen's biggest protector and advocate is supposed to be her husband, yet this is the very person who places his wife in a very vulnerable position when he openly declares, to a group of men, that he will not intervene if one of them sexually pursues his wife. Significantly, this abuse occurs within the home, the domestic space where Helen, as a wife and mother, should be the safest.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated example of Arthur's abuse, as evidenced by the following: "addressing me in a low voice, scarcely above his breath, [he] poured forth a volley of the vilest and grossest abuse it was possible for the imagination to conceive or the tongue to utter" (359). As both a woman and someone from an upper social class, Helen is no doubt shocked by her husband's verbal insults. The language that Brontë uses here is significant; rather than tell the reader what exactly Arthur says in these moments of verbal abuse, she simply tells the reader that it was terrible. By not specifying what Arthur says, Brontë places her readers in

Helen's position; readers can imagine that Arthur spewed the worst verbal abuse that they or someone they know has personally experienced. Brontë wants readers to learn from the example that Helen provides and to find men that treat them with the proper respect that they are due.

Although it is quite clear throughout the novel that Helen disapproves of Arthur's drinking, especially in excess because of the consequent negative change in his behavior, Arthur feels that Helen is actually the leading cause of his alcoholism. She writes in her journal, "when he is under the *depressing* influence of the after consequences [of alcohol], he bemoans his sufferings and his errors, and charges them both upon me; he knows such indulgence injures his health, and does him more harm than good; but he says I drive him to it by my unnatural, unwomanly conduct" (321). Again Arthur's emotional manipulations, his constant criticism and name-calling, diminish his wife's self-esteem by declaring her not only a poor wife, but also less than a woman. One would think from the amount of blame that Arthur places upon his wife that Helen is physically pouring the alcohol down Arthur's throat. Significantly, this passage reveals that Arthur accepts no personal blame for what he recognizes is a problem with alcohol consumption; instead he blames both the suffering that he incurs as a result of drinking too much and any mistakes that he makes as obvious results from being married to a woman. However, despite her husband's lack of appreciation for anything that she does, Helen faithfully works hard to fulfill the role of wife and mother by providing a comfortable home for her husband to return home to after his trips to London. Through Arthur, Brontë shows the danger that influences like alcohol can have on men; women need to be cautious that even seemingly decent men can turn verbally and psychologically abusive. Although readers might believe that Arthur would be fine if he just stopped drinking, his lack of accountability and his lack of respect for his wife indicates that Helen or women in similar marriages have little chance of fixing their husbands.

Husband Abusing His Wife By Public Exposure in Mauleverer's Divorce

Much like Brontë's Helen, who must deal with her husband's undesirable visitors, in *Mauleverer's Divorce* (which is also examined in a different context in Chapter Two) Sophia encounters dangerous situations as a result of her husband's excessive drinking when he starts bringing riotous young men to visit their home. Recalling these incidents, Sophia states, "I was exposed to insults which a husband, with the proper feelings of one, would never have allowed his wife to run the danger of encountering" (324). Even more alarming than inviting his alcoholic friends into their home, Luxmoor allows these men to openly insult his wife and never once steps in to protect her. Whether or not Sophia values the opinions of these friends of her husband's, hearing constant and likely rather vulgar criticism of herself from such low, objectionable men, must be emotionally difficult as Sophia tells Hugh-Helena "of course my temper was roused," which leads to frequent disputes between Sophia and Luxmoor and him physically abusing her (324). Furthermore, according to the domestic ideology of the nineteenth century, a woman's home, her private sphere, should be the one place where in she feels safe and comfortable; the violation of Sophia's home, especially at the invitation of her husband, makes this breach even more difficult.

In another similarity to *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall's* Arthur, Luxmoor also places the fault for his dissatisfaction with his life upon his wife. Luxmoor too claims that he is driven to drink because of domestic unhappiness:

He would have had it believed that Sophia—who seemed to every one else so mild and patient in her temper—was a perfect fury to him! He had even the grotesque absurdity to declare that she could scold worse with her silence, than other women with their tongues. Then again I heard that Luxmoor should aver she had become an insupportable

pendant!—refused him any comfort of society—and had in fact taken to bury herself among books, like a German professor! (143)

It is important to remember that the novel is told from a first person point of view; Hugh-Helena narrates the story about what has happened to her in the past. It is she who relays the story of Luxmoor abusing Sophia based on information that Sophia has told her and therefore the information is removed by several layers from the reader, and it is potentially biased based on Hugh-Helena not being very well acquainted with Luxmoor. Interestingly, Luxmoor feels it will be easy to convince others that Sophia suffers from a bad temper, even though this impression conflicts with how she portrays herself in public. Robinson, through Hugh-Helena, makes her thoughts on Luxmoor's attempts clear with the strong language that she uses to express the ridiculousness of Luxmoor's plan. Her use of the term "grotesque" suggests that it verges on monstrous or inhuman. Interestingly, she mentions how Luxmoor professes that his wife is not even human, but instead objectifies her as an "insupportable pendant." Although those who know Sophia may find Luxmoor's declarations preposterous, his status as a respected intellect might give some credit to his character judgments to those who have not met her. Given Luxmoor's views of Sophia as an unbearable decorative item, it is not surprising that he feels free to abuse her for such a seemingly ridiculous issues as spending too much time reading and not condoning his socializing. Significantly, by calling attention to enjoyment of reading and solitude, Luxmoor draws attention to the discrepancies between what is seen as acceptable behavior for women and men. Reading and preferring not to socialize are hardly absurd behaviors; however, they are seen as atypical for women, and, thus, by spreading such comments about Sophia, Luxmoor is also publicly ridiculing his wife's femininity. If Sophia attempts to remain in the private sphere where she "belongs," she will have no means of rectifying the

damage that Luxmoor has done to her name and reputation. Sophia has no good way of fixing the situation, a fact that shows the vulnerability of all women's positions. Both Sophia and Brontë's Helen suffer similar abuse from their husbands, who make their wives feel inadequate by questioning their ability to fulfill their role as a good wife and purposely expose their wives to public ridicule and harassment.

Emotional Abuse Via a Secret Marriage in Lost and Saved

Caroline Norton's British novel, *Lost and Saved*, begins with Beatrice Brooke living a quiet, idyllic life with her widowed father, Captain Brooke, older sister Mariana, and younger brother Owen, who is a sailor. Their world is forever changed by the chance arrival of the lost Montagu Treherne, who is searching for the home of his nearby relatives. Treherne quickly develops a friendship with the entire Brooke family and a romantic relationship with the young, beautiful Beatrice.

Although he knows that he will likely never marry Beatrice, Treherne does use his persuasive powers over her to convince Beatrice to run away with him, an act that puts her reputation in incredible danger. During their flight, Beatrice falls ill, and when it appears that she may not recover, Treherne convinces a doctor to pose as a chaplain to "marry" the couple. In addition to being ill, Beatrice most likely lacks the wisdom to ascertain whether or not she is participating in a legitimate marriage ceremony (148-49). Treherne seems to be a wise man of the world who should know what constitutes a legal marriage ceremony. Beatrice requests that she tell her father and siblings about her "marriage," while agreeing to keep it a secret from the rest of the world. Treherne convinces her that her father would disapprove of the match because of the legal issues surrounding his inheritance, and so it would be in her father's best interest to not hear about his beloved daughter's marriage until it is sorted out (156). As a daughter who

dearly loves her father and wants her father and her husband to get along, of course Beatrice agrees to keep her marriage a secret, especially as Treherne leads her to believe that he is working on getting his inheritance sorted out and that there is a definitive timeline for when she can tell the world. Treherne goes one step further to ensure that Beatrice protects their secret; he tells her, "My gentle fervent Beatrice . . . if ever man loved woman, I love you. If I thought the day could come when you would speak of me in coldness, or anger, or alienation, I would shoot myself this hour!" (157). Beatrice swoons at Treherne's seemingly romantic declaration.

Significantly, Treherne's words could be straight out of the romance novels that Beatrice and the novel's readers would be very familiar with; it is no surprise that Beatrice has difficulty seeing past the Prince Charming facade to his troubling untrustworthy and controlling side because she (and the readers) have these familiar romance novel tropes ingrained. Beatrice cannot see, however, that Treherne's words are a thinly veiled form of psychological abuse; he threatens to injure himself if ever she should stop loving him. Although it may seem that Treherne is confessing Beatrice's power over him in their relationship, Treherne's comment actually serves as an intimidation technique that reveals his power over her; at any time, Treherne could call into question Beatrice's affection and frighten her into compliance by threatening to hurt himself. Needless to say, that is an enormous amount of pressure, being responsible for another's life. Treherne basically tells Beatrice that she must either always love him (or at least pretend to) or bear the responsibility and guilt for him injuring or killing himself.

Although she certainly wants to forgo secrecy and live as any other husband and wife, Beatrice initially assures Treherne that she will not tell anyone that they are married until he can resolve his inheritance in two years: "Believe me, your will shall be my will; what you decide shall satisfy me. I love you; I trust you; I anchor every hope on earth in your heart and its

affection for me. I swear to wait what you shall think our best time" (157). Although she does not yet know that Treherne is probably the last person she should trust given his propensity towards lies and abuse, Beatrice is committed to her "marriage" and determined to be an obedient wife to her husband, which includes obeying his commands and relying on Treherne to do what is best for her; this obedience includes parting from him and returning to living with her father and siblings for the duration of the two years. He attempts to reassure Beatrice with examples of "instances of historical secret marriages and romances, and his assurances . . . that she was far better off than deserted Arabella Seymour, and only one degree worse off than, Anne, Duchess of York" (166). Beatrice only smiles at Treherne's dubious examples, which calls into question whether this young woman with a limited education really understands how Treherne's models prove the problematic nature of secret marriages. First, both Arabella and Anne were married in the 1600s, which makes the practice of secret marriage seem outdated over two hundred years later.⁴ Although Treherne may tell Beatrice that her situation is better than Arabella's, the unknowing Beatrice will soon be similarly abandoned by her lover, Treherne. Beatrice may not be locked away for life, but her miserable living conditions in isolated poverty do not seem much better. If Anne is the example of a woman with a worse experience of a secret marriage, it is difficult to see how; in fact, she seems to have fared far better than what occurs to Beatrice ending up poor and abandoned.

Like Sophia, Beatrice quickly experiences her "husband's" neglect once the novelty of their relationship wears off. For the two years that she is told by her husband that they must wait before declaring their marriage to the public, Beatrice returns to her father's house to live. Eventually, Treherne moves Beatrice into an apartment besides his when she becomes pregnant and must leave her father's house. Although she is then geographically closer to Treherne, they

must still maintain the illusion of being unconnected and, thus, their time living apart is far from ideal for Beatrice, as she grows miserable while he spends more and more time away from home socializing and maintaining his bachelor image. Although Beatrice tries to be a good wife, she finds the role difficult to fulfill when her husband is so often away from home and has little interest in spending time with her. Little changes for Treherne after his "marriage" with Beatrice, whereas her life grows increasingly more despondent:

To have to meet him as if he were only an acquaintance; to walk with him now and then, as if she had no right to walk with him, — making arrangements and appointments for that purpose; to steal, at rare intervals, to his house in guilty secrecy; to receive him as a mere visitor at her own home; to know the major part of his days and evenings spent with other people; to sit reflecting on all this, while he was keeping engagements as a bachelor in the society he was accustomed to.
(165-66)

The once-spirited young woman becomes a shell of her former self. She loves Treherne and is proud to be married to him. However, missing Treherne is the least of Beatrice's worries when it becomes clear that she is expecting his child. Ashamed of his daughter's condition, especially in light of her refusal to name a father, Captain Brooke is heartbroken (183).

While Beatrice stays at home with their sickly child and a servant (a woman employed by Treherne and who thus can never be completely trusted as a confidante) as her only company, Treherne continues his carefree living. He spends his evenings dining out, visiting with friends and attending the theater. Unsurprisingly, he keeps Beatrice a secret from all of his acquaintances. Beatrice can only fill her role as a wife at most a few hours a day, when her "husband" can spare some time for her. Beatrice genuinely believes that she is married, yet,

because of their so-called secret marriage, Treherne forces her to live as though she is his mistress. Although she should feel that she has done nothing wrong (visiting her husband), Beatrice clearly has internalized Treherne's treatment of her and she actually feels guilt for even visiting with him.

In this way Norton shows how easily and quickly psychological and emotional abuse becomes internalized by the victim and causes them further distress. By coercing Beatrice into a secret marriage, forbidding her to tell her friends and family that she is married with a child (he even forbids his staff to tell Beatrice's worried father about her where she lives, which is in an apartment Treherne rents for her), and keeping her generally isolated from the world (other than the short, controlled outings that he permits her), Treherne furthers his psychological abuse of Beatrice. Although readers might question why Beatrice gives in to Treherne's numerous (and oftentimes outrageous) demands, Norton makes it clear that Beatrice loves her "husband" and takes seriously her promise to obey his wishes; she is simply being a good wife and acting as society encourages her. Beatrice attempts to follow the angel of the house ideal even in this situation where her "husband" denies the possibility. Significantly, Beatrice is willing to deny her own happiness and desires to fulfill this ideal in her attempts to be a good wife and to make Treherne happy. Beatrice's conforming to this ideal is extremely dangerous for her and her son's wellbeing, as she clearly becomes more and more depressed by trying to live up to these expectations. Unfortunately, this angel ideal does not have a male counterpart, which men like Treherne work to fulfill to make their wives happy and to keep the household running smoothly; Treherne (and society at large) have few expectations for men and he worries about pleasing no one but himself. Additionally, Treherne effectively cuts off his victim from the world. As the narrator reminds the reader, Beatrice clearly anguishes about her disconnection with the world

around her: "To 'keep a secret' among strangers and indifferent persons, who have no claim on our confidence, or sympathy with our feelings, is the easiest thing in the world. But to keep a secret . . . from those with whom we dwell in love, intimacy, and the bond of near and dear connection, is the most restless of human trials" (160). Beatrice has no one with whom to share even the most monumental occurrences in her life such as the birth of her son, an occasion that a proud mother wants to share with everyone. Furthermore, Treherne's imposed isolation of Beatrice allows him to control her without any of her potentially pesky friends or family interfering and perhaps alerting her that something is wrong in their relationship. Beatrice's father and siblings, if they knew where to find her, would likely find Treherne's treatment of her preposterous, as he acts as though she is someone to be ashamed of. Although, when we first meet Beatrice she is surrounded by what appears to be a very close knit family that loves and protects her, Norton shows her readers how easily an abusive man like Treherne can use affection to isolate a woman.

Mauleverer's Divorce and *Lost and Saved* share similar plots about a woman who is lured into a secret "marriage" by a man who claims that it is only short-term. This plot serves as an excellent means for authors to expose abuse because of the very vulnerable situation that it places a woman in; if women are supposed to rely on men to protect them from the "evil" that exists out in the public sphere, they are left defenseless when their "husbands" are the very men who expose them to this danger. By not being legally married, these women have little (if any) recourse to protect themselves. These authors show that these women are perhaps victims of even more abuse than their legally married counterparts because of their vulnerable situations of being entirely unable to seek legal help or even support from their friends and family, who are unlikely to know about their "marriage" or even mistakenly judge these women as immoral

women who engage in relations with men without marriage (a situation that is extremely likely to occur to women like Beatrice who end up pregnant). The "husbands" of these women hold even more power over their "wives," which makes abuse more likely to happen because they know that these women have no other options.

Another Secret Marriage Leads to an Abusive Situation in Ishmael

Originally published in serial form from March 1863 through April 1864 along with its sequel, *Self-Raised*, as one continuous work, E.D.E.N. Southworth's 1876 American novel, *Ishmael; Or, Lost in the Depths*, begins with two sisters, Nora and Hannah Worth, good women who struggle financially, but have an abundance of faith in God. Hannah is like a mother to her younger, more naïve sister. In a plot twist very similar to the charming, rich Treherne's arrival in Beatrice's quiet neighborhood (clearly charming, wealthy men who suddenly appear in the worlds of naïve, lower class women should be taken as a warning sign for women readers), the Worths' peaceful world is forever changed when their wealthy landlord Herman Brundell takes notice of Nora at a gathering the Brundell family holds for their tenants. Provoked by no action or noticeable interest from Nora, the beautiful woman catches Herman's attention and he becomes infatuated and then obsessed with her, even though it is clear to both sides that someone from his class should not be associating with someone from the lower classes. It is hardly surprising that young Nora enjoys Herman's attention and soon falls in love with him.

Although Herman Brundell genuinely seems to love Nora, their time together is fraught with Herman's harsh treatment of her. He pursues Nora to the point where his infatuation becomes an obsession. Despite the fact that he must realistically know that no one will support his relationship with Nora (much less a marriage), he continues visiting Nora daily, which, not surprisingly, causes her feelings for him to grow stronger. Although Nora is a devout Christian

(and likely to be adamantly against an adulterous affair), Herman encourages their romantic relationship despite the fact that he is actually already married to another woman, which he keeps secret from both his family and Nora. Eventually, after seeing a mistake in the paper that leads him to believe that his first wife has died (a revelation which he fails to double-check, mourn, or arrange a burial for), Herman proposes to Nora and begins yet another secret marriage. Herman appears to be a gentleman by giving Nora their marriage certificate, so that she holds the proof of their marriage. However, Herman harms Nora because of the secrecy and speculation that she is forced to bear from others. In a situation very much like that of *Lost and Saved's* Beatrice, Nora finds her secret marriage especially difficult after she becomes pregnant and must endure the gossip and scorn from others because she cannot reveal that she is married and that her child is legitimate. Both Beatrice and Nora must deal with the social stigma of being unwed mothers and therefore supposedly unscrupulous women; in contrast, both men who are responsible for luring these women into secret marriages and impregnating them completely escape any social harassment and have no difficulty shirking their responsibilities. Although it could be very easy for Norton and Southworth to present Beatrice and Nora as young women who deserve what happens to them for getting into these situations, both authors make a point of showing the naiveté, innocence, and trustworthiness of these young women (as compared to the shady, immoral behavior of Treherne and Herman) to emphasize that the abuse that these women go through is unwarranted. Herman denies Nora the opportunity to celebrate her love like other women. He knows that his family will never support his marriage to someone as poor and unknown as Nora, yet he still furthers this relationship. Prior to their marriage ceremony, Herman states that marrying without his mother's consent "would give her great pain. It . . . would wound her in her tenderest points—her love of her son, and her love of rank; it would

produce an open rupture between us. She would never forgive me, nor acknowledge my wife” (71). Despite Herman’s insight into his mother, he decides to go through with the marriage and to delude Nora into thinking that she will ever be accepted by his family and enjoy a peaceful marriage.

Unfortunately, Nora is not the only woman who falls victim to Herman’s abuses; his legal wife, Countess Bernice of Hurstmonceaux, also suffers from Herman’s selfishness. Although she has been separated from her husband for an extended period of time, after recovering from injuries she sustains in a railroad accident (the incorrect report of which leads Herman to believe she has died) and no doubt having a rough time after the loss of her parents, Berenice leaves her native country and seeks out Herman’s company. She loves her husband and goes to him as a dutiful wife. However, their reunion is extremely short-lived, as Herman immediately leaves when she arrives; he abandons her without any explanation and leaves her with his mother and sister, who are complete strangers to Berenice. As Southworth describes it, “From the time of her sudden arrival at her husband’s house, every hour had been fraught with suffering to Berenice” (190). Bernice's arrival should be a joyous occasion for Herman, Berenice, and Herman's family, but Berenice finds no happiness there; she is in a foreign environment surrounded by strangers. Herman’s mother and sister leave the estate, and Berenice is left alone in a foreign country without any friends. Herman is careless towards Berenice, maintains no contact with his wife, and refuses to let her know his whereabouts. Uncertain about where her husband is or what to do until he returns, and confused about her role as a husbandless wife, Berenice decides to remain at her husband’s estate.

In "Engendering American Fictions" Martha J. Cutter and Caroline F. Levander discuss ideas circulating about women's roles in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: "Women

are not to enter the public sphere, but are (rather) 'domestic saints' located in the 'private sphere' of the home, separate from the real world. They exercise power not through direct action or voice, but through indirect influence and moral persuasion of their sons and husbands" (43). Although she is technically the wife of the master of the estate, Berenice struggles with insubordinate household servants who refuse to obey her, believing that she is not really in charge; the domestic sphere is once again endangered. Adding to Berenice's isolation, she grapples with an entire town's distrust of a foreign stranger who seems an imposter, as she has not been properly introduced into society by Mr. Brundell. Due to the absence of her husband, Berenice feels forced to take control of his estate, and, in doing so, must enter a more public sphere. Unfortunately, Berenice is stuck, as she wants to ensure that the Brundell estate is maintained, but society sees her as acting out of place.

Over the years that she resides at the Brundell estate, Berenice splits her time between expectedly awaiting her husband's return at the front gate, improving her husband's property, and performing charitable acts throughout the town so as to better the Brundell name. Everything she does is with the thought, "will Herman be pleased?" (234). Although Berenice should be praised for the vast improvements that she establishes using her own money, her first correspondence from her husband after years of silence demands that she quit his estate at once.

He writes,

you, I know cannot be hurt; you are callous. If you had not been so insensible to shame as you are to remorse, how could you, after your great crime, take possession of my house, and, by so doing, turn my mother and sisters from their home, and banish me from my country? . . . Nay more--while you reside in America, I must remain in exile in Europe. The same hemisphere is not broad

enough to contain the Countess of Hurstmonceux and Herman Brundell. I have given you a long time to come to your senses and leave my house. Now my patience is exhausted, and I require you to depart. (239)

Herman angrily accuses his wife of taking advantage of him by moving into and remaining in his estate after his family left. Shockingly, as saintly and perfect as the Countess seems, her husband still does not love her and she is abused like many other women, despite her goodness and privileged position in society. Clearly, Southworth shows that husbands oftentimes abuse their wives through no fault of the women. Although women readers may assume that, if they perform the role of the angel in the house well, they will be rewarded with husbands who treat them with respect and love, Southworth destroys this notion by providing numerous examples of faultless wives and mothers who are abused by their husbands. Southworth shows that, for women, following the rules of domesticity does not always work out; even women who tirelessly work to obey these rules find themselves abused. Interestingly, although the Countess is merely a woman highly restricted by nineteenth-century laws, Herman attributes agency to his wife in this situation. He renounces responsibility for any part in his disastrous marriage. He seems disinterested in the fact that his wife has a right to live there. Although it is clear to the reader that the Countess is the victim in this scenario by informing the reader that the Countess has wealth and numerous other properties at which she could reside (places which are likely far more hospitable than living at the Brundell estate, with staff who ignore her in a town where she is a foreign stranger) and thus making the Countess' sole reason for staying what she considers her wifely duty, her brutish husband clearly sees himself in the right and it is only decades later that he finally listens to her side of the story, which he hears from Ishmael.

Seclusion and an Affair Lead to Abuse in Self-Raised

Southworth's *Self-Raised or From the Depths* continues the plotlines that *Ishmael* introduces. Claudia has gone away after being married to Viscount Vincent, and Ishmael (who will be examined in greater detail in later chapters) who had a childhood crush on Claudia, Bee's cousin, is at first heartbroken until he accepts Bee's longstanding love and becomes betrothed to her. Ishmael decides to continue his solo legal practice, and his fame in the field is growing exponentially. Ishmael's father introduces himself to his son (Ishmael had no idea who his father was until this point), and they continue a friendly relationship with Ishmael choosing to keep his mother's name and to forgo publicly acknowledging his father. Throughout the novel Ishmael continues his advocacy for women (Ishmael as an advocate figure is studied in greater detail in Chapter Five). The narration leaves Ishmael and then follows Claudia and her new husband, who are on their honeymoon trip through Europe and on their way back to Vincent's familial estates in Scotland, where they will reside.

Throughout their marriage, Lord Vincent revels in creating situations that leave his wife uncomfortable, worried, and/or fearful, such as the hotel he chooses for them during their honeymoon. Lord Vincent books a stay for them at the Crown and Mitre, a "dark, dingy-looking inn" located in the midst of "dilapidated and dirty buildings and ragged and filthy people" (141). Knowing that his wife was raised in a privileged, upper-class home, there can be no doubt to Lord Vincent that his wife will detest staying in such a dirty environment. Indeed, Claudia is so distressed that she fears eating dinner there and breaks down crying. There are certainly plenty of other hotel options available, many of which would undoubtedly better suit Claudia, but Lord Vincent wants to remind his wife that he is in charge; he expects her to comply with his wishes, regardless of her feelings on the matter.

Another way that Lord Vincent ensures that he has complete control over his wife is through his abusive isolation of her. Unbeknownst to Claudia, prior to their arrival and despite having access to other familial estates, Lord Vincent decides that he and his new bride will reside in Scotland at Castle Cragg, which presides over a "drear, desolate, awful rock" (155). Adding to its gothic dreariness and sense of foreboding, the rocky peninsula is connected to the mainland by a thin strip of land; during high tide, Castle Cragg "must be entirely cut off from the coast and become, to all intents and purposes an island" (155). Unfortunately, this separation foreshadows rough times ahead for Claudia, as she is already in a foreign country without friends and family; if Claudia needs help, she has no one to turn to. The horrified Claudia realizes that the castle "had evidently been built rather for a fortification than for a family residence" (155). Her husband intends to barricade his wife from the protection and companionship of the world. Although the location of his home physically isolates him as well, Lord Vincent, in contrast to Claudia, has the means of leaving whenever he chooses, plus he has company there in the form of his mistress (unlike Claudia, who only has her servants, who are eventually taken away from her). Lord Vincent's enforced isolation of his wife serves as a form of psychological abuse. He knows where she is at all times. He allows her no privacy; even what she thinks of as her own space, her bedroom, is invaded by him and his henchman in Lord Vincent's plot to accuse his wife of adultery (317-18).

Claudia's lack of a voice in her marriage is further evident in her husband's disregard for his wife's disapproval of their houseguest, Mrs. Dugald. Soon after arriving at Castle Cragg, Claudia is introduced to Vincent's widowed "sister-in-law." As she is aware that Lord Vincent has no brothers, Claudia knows that her husband is obviously lying (164). Vincent's blatant ruse shows how little he regards her feelings. Although Vincent denies it, Mrs. Dugald is clearly

Vincent's mistress and, to Claudia's dismay, Vincent attempts to force Claudia to accompany Mrs. Dugald on outings so that he and Mrs. Dugald can maintain the appearance of social propriety. Once again Vincent resorts to psychological abuse as he attempts to intimidate his wife to obey his orders through threats:

Mrs. Dugald must and shall be treated by you, as well as by others, with the courtesy and consideration due to her rank and position. Many abuses must be reformed. And among them is this one—your constant refusal to appear in public with her. Ever since your arrival here Mrs. Dugald has been a prisoner in the house, because she cannot go out alone; and she will not go out attended by me unless *you* are also of the party, for fear that evil-minded people will talk. (286)

Both Vincent and Claudia know that Mrs. Dugald, who is a former opera singer, does not belong to their upper social class. Thus Vincent's orders to give Mrs. Dugald respect are all the more insulting and abusive to Claudia. Whereas Vincent proves multiple times throughout the novel that he could not care less about how he has wronged his wife or what angers her, as soon as his mistress complains about Claudia's treatment of her, he bows to Mrs. Dugald's pressure and quickly complains and threatens his wife; according to the notion of separate spheres, as Vincent's wife, Claudia should be in charge of the affairs of the household, but, instead, she finds her opinion and authority constantly undermined as Vincent prefers to keep Mrs. Dugald content and to put her ideas first. His clear preference for his mistress over his wife is also revealed in his concern about Mrs. Dugald's lack of social outings; Claudia is a prisoner in her own home and has no desire to go out if it means recognizing her husband's mistress, which would be socially humiliating. Interestingly, Vincent disassociates himself from "evil-minded people," despite having a mistress.

The sentimental/domestic elements of the novel further disintegrate as Claudia's situation goes from bad to worse when she accidentally overhears her husband and his mistress plotting to get rid of her by convicting her of adultery and then securing a divorce so that Mrs. Dugald can assume the role of Vincent's wife after he has successfully taken Claudia's vast fortune. In contrast to her husband, who makes no attempts to be a good husband to his wife, Claudia initially attempts to fulfill the role of being a decent wife to her husband (despite her lack of love for him); however, soon after their marriage, Vincent becomes very abusive towards her. Southworth shows the incredible danger that Claudia has put herself into through her very poor choice of a husband; young women must not underestimate the importance of ascertaining the character of their intended husbands before marriage. Alone in a foreign country without friends, Claudia suffers increasingly and rightfully fears for her life, especially after one of the household servants is murdered and her three servants mysteriously disappear; she suffers the ultimate psychological abuse of thinking her life is endangered because she knows that her husband is willing to murder those with whom he disagrees (such as his wife). In not allowing his wife to leave the Castle alone, Lord Vincent virtually assures that his wife will not establish any friendships; he knows that his wife's pride will not allow her to publically associate with Mrs. Dugald, the only person besides himself that Lord Vincent permits Claudia to go out with. Later on Lord Vincent further isolates his wife by getting rid of her loyal servants, the only members of the household staff that Claudia could ensure would obey her, which leaves her completely and utterly alone, furthering his psychological abuse. Additionally, Claudia has an equally difficult time remaining in contact with her family back in the U.S. Lord Vincent's control over his wife extends to her correspondence with her family, which also ensures that she will have a nearly impossible time escaping from his abuse and his heinous plot. Once Claudia becomes

aware of how dangerous it is to remain in Lord Vincent's house and her own inability to escape or seek local help, she sends an urgent letter to her father asking for assistance. To even get this letter into the mail, she must get her servant, Jim, to sneak out of the Castle, walk to the nearest inn, rent a horse, and ride to another town to post the letter, which demonstrates how isolated she is and the difficulty of seeking help (181). Given her husband's nature, Claudia rightly assumes that her husband would censor her letter or stop her from sending it all together. Lord Vincent controls nearly every aspect of his wife's life, creating tremendous psychological abuse for Claudia. Through this plot Southworth shows how easy it is for a husband to isolate his wife and, thus, force her to be completely reliant upon him for everything. Even with all of Claudia's wealth, self-confidence, and intelligence, she still is no match for an evil husband like Lord Vincent, who is intent on disarming and destroying his wife (to take her vast fortune), a trope which Blake would later utilize in her novel while also showing (unlike Southworth) how abuse is not limited to a specific class.

Abuse By Husbands Unsatisfied with their Wives' Behavior in Fettered for Life

As a stranger to the city, Laura requires a place to live; throughout the course of the novel she resides, as I mentioned in Chapter Two (where the physical abuse in the novel is examined), in the homes of two abused women, Mrs. Moulder and Mrs. Bludgett, where she gains an intimate look into the situation of domestic violence and its effects on not only the wife, but also, in Mrs. Moulder's case, their children. Laura additionally encounters an example of an abused woman in her college friend Flora (the only person Laura initially knows in the city). Laura provides the common connection through which the reader meets all of these abused characters and serves as a sort of stand-in for the reader. Although the Moulders are far from the social class of Claudia and her husband, in *Fettered for Life* Mrs. Moulder too suffers psychological

and emotional abuse, in addition to the physical abuse that she incurs, because of her inability to stand up to her husband and defend herself. Blake illustrates that physical and psychological abuse are often experienced simultaneously and that both can be just as painful for the victim. Mr. Moulder works in the construction industry, likely as a foreman, as Biddy mentions that her son works for Mr. Moulder, who is a "boss carpenter" (32). They appear to lead a comfortable middle-class lifestyle; they need the additional income from renting out a room in their home, but do not appear to be struggling to provide basics like food or housing. While Mr. Moulder works, he expects Mrs. Moulder to tend to their three children and their household, work which is likely to increase by bringing in yet another person (Laura, their boarder) to whom she must provide meals and cleaning services. Mr. Moulder cannot understand the difficulty of her wife's daily tasks to the extent that he wonders if she even does any work at all. This is evident in just one example of their frequent disagreements:

"Have you finished my new dressing gown yet?"

"No, Alexander, I have not had time; I have extra sewing to do just now, you know, and I thought you could wait for this awhile."

"That's always the excuse! . . . Don't have time. You women potter about all day and yet don't manage really to do anything. It's preposterous!" (84)

Although Mr. Moulder's dressing gown seems a fairly low priority in comparison with Mrs. Moulder's various other tasks, clearly Mr. Moulder does not agree. He not only is upset that his wife has not finished his gown, but apparently with Mrs. Moulder's entire work ethic. Mr. Moulder cannot understand the time-consuming and often difficult work that goes into running a household, preparing meals, and tending to three children; he does not comprehend how hard it is to be the angel of the house figure. This lack of comprehension is at the heart of the

psychological abuse that he inflicts on his wife; until men understand what it is like to fulfill the angel or wife's role, they are unlikely to appreciate their wives work or to stop judging or abusing her for supposed inadequacies. Mr. Moulder thinks his wife is a lady of leisure (which their class status or her numerous responsibilities would never allow) and fails to recognize or appreciate his wife's hard work. As much as he takes his wife for granted, Mr. Moulder is very quick to realize and angrily complain when, on a later occasion, Mrs. Moulder falls behind in her daily chores and his dinner is slightly delayed. Mr. Moulder's attitude towards his wife not only upsets her, it also qualifies as emotional abuse.

According to Grace Farrell, Moulder practices more conventionally subtle forms of abuse—overworking, undercutting, and invalidating his wife (384). Although Blake does not mention that Mr. Moulder physically abuses his wife, she certainly shows the toll that any form of domestic violence has on a woman's self-confidence and wellbeing. From the first time that the reader and Laura encounter Mr. Moulder, the man's overwhelming and repressive impact on both his wife and children is clear; as soon his wife reveals that her husband is at the door, their youngest daughter instantly stops crying, their older daughter obediently begins her sewing work, and Mrs. Moulder loses the carefree and spirited attitude she exhibited just minutes before when discussing her beloved bird and assumes a tense, frightened demeanor as she rushes to open the door for her husband, who angrily pulls the bell again before anyone could possibly get to the door (82). Although Mr. Moulder certainly has a key to his own home, he angrily scolds his wife for not opening the door sooner for him (unbeknownst to his wife, he has forgotten his key). Mrs. Moulder lives like a prisoner in her own home; when her husband is there, she exhaustingly maintains a facade of passive, complacency as well as immediately responds to and anticipates her husband's every want and need.

Juxtapositions between Mr. and Mrs. Moulder's days abound; after a day out at work, he returns home to a prepared dinner and then spends the remainder of his evening relaxing in his armchair, reading the newspaper. When he is not at home relaxing, Mr. Moulder goes to his club or political meetings, further illustrating the abundance of free time that he has in his day (133, 158). In contrast, Mrs. Moulder, who has already spent the majority of her day overseeing their three children and tending to household duties, spends her evening closely watching over their unskilled servant (likely doing much of the servant's duties herself), getting all of the children tucked into bed, and then sitting down to work on a pile of sewing, which takes twice as long to finish than necessary because her husband believes a sewing machine an unnecessary expense (157). Whereas her husband enjoys a lovely, peaceful evening, unsurprisingly, Mrs. Moulder is "pale and exhausted" from her busy day (83). For Blake's reader, just reading the account of Mrs. Moulder's day, her constant flitting back and forth and her never-ending, colossal amount of work, feels overwhelming. Although it is more than clear that Mrs. Moulder works incredibly hard at taking care of the home, her children, and tending to her husband's many demands, Mr. Moulder shows no appreciation for his wife and oftentimes makes her tasks even more challenging. Through his lack of appreciation for all that his wife does to manage their household and children and his frequent complaints about her inadequacy, Mr. Moulder emotionally abuses his wife by destroying her self-esteem; nothing that Mrs. Moulder can ever do will be satisfactory for Mr. Moulder, no matter how hard she tries to be a good wife and mother.

Mr. Moulder consistently chips away at Mrs. Moulder's sense of self-worth with his constant criticism of how she tends the house and raises their children. His behavior negatively affects Mrs. Moulder's relationship with their son, Aleck. Mr. Moulder's young son imitates his father's patriarchal and abusive behavior and treats his mother in a similarly disrespectful and

demeaning manner. For example, Mrs. Moulder requests a simple task of her son, to grab the dinner plate that she has prepared and left in the kitchen. Aleck adamantly refuses to do what he sees as a girl's task and instead he annoys his mother and family by loudly beating a metal grate. Rather than discipline his son or support his wife's request, Mr. Moulder refutes his wife's authority over their son by taking his son's side and reiterating his son's notion that only girls are meant to perform domestic tasks (210-11). Mr. Moulder's psychological abuse of his wife poisons the allegedly ideal, matronly space of the Moulder home. Mrs. Moulder clearly will never have any control over or respect from her son, as he knows that he always has his father's support, regardless of whether or not he deserves it. As one of Mrs. Moulder's main tasks in the family is rearing the children, having her children see and emulate their father's lack of respect leaves her with little ability to be an effective role model or disciplinarian to them. Mr. Moulder's influence over his son also shows how abusive treatment of women is perpetuated over generations and how the cycle of domestic violence continues.

Blake makes fitting use of the family's pet bird as a symbol for Mrs. Moulder; both creatures are prized for their beauty, but become nuisances to Mr. Moulder once they no longer fulfill what he perceives as their functions. Mr. Moulder expects the bird to remain quiet, stay out of his way, and not take any of his wife's time that should be devoted to him. Mr. Moulder expects his wife to be submissive and to be attentive to his needs without interruption. Significantly, Mr. Moulder assigns roles to both the bird and his wife that neither chose for themselves; they are also tasks that neither can realistically execute. The bird can no more remain quiet on command than Mrs. Moulder can tend to her husband's every need, especially when exhausted and overworked from tending to their household and three children. According to the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, molder means "to crumble into particles:

disintegrate or decay." As his name allegorically suggests, Mr. Moulder is a person who causes decay to Mrs. Moulder and his family. After the mischievous Aleck releases his mother's pet from its cage, Mr. Moulder reacts to the chaos of the family trying to catch the bird with little concern and no offers of assistance, "Bird out? well, what if he is? squalling little beast! He's always a plague" (289). Mr. Moulder clearly attaches no importance to a situation that is causing his wife and children so much distress that Mrs. Moulder is practically in tears over concern for her bird, not because it may injure itself, but because she knows her husband's anger may result in him hurting her beloved pet. Unfortunately, Mrs. Moulder has genuine cause for worry, as her husband soon becomes impatient because the bird episode is delaying Mrs. Moulder from serving dinner:

Mr. Moulder seeming to be enraged by the bird's escape, beat the cloth at him viciously, and presently with some effect, he hit the fluttering yellow wings; struck them again and again, and in a moment, brought a mere ruffled mass of feathers to the floor. . . . Mr. Moulder at first seemed half shocked at his own action; he stood looking at his wife in silence for a moment, then he said, roughly: "What a fuss over a silly bird! Come children, we'll go down to dinner." (290)

Mr. Moulder's anger seems drastically out of proportion to the situation. The bird clearly does not stand a chance against a grown man's violence, and it is no surprise that Mr. Moulder quickly, mortally wounds it. Mr. Moulder does not even care enough about his wife's feelings to apologize for his horrible actions nor does he protect his children from witnessing his brutality. The fragile, helpless bird represents Mrs. Moulder. Like her beloved bird, Mrs. Moulder needs protection from her husband and similarly has no one to count on for protection from his abuses.

The bird symbolizes Mrs. Moulder's vulnerability and fragility; a thing of beauty, Mrs. Moulder can only thrive when properly taken care of and provided a healthy habitat.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Moulder's bird was doomed from the start. According to Leonard Lutwack's *Birds in Literature*, "The problem with making pets of birds is that most species, especially those valued for their singing, cannot be wholly tamed either by training or breeding and consequently must be kept under restraint of some sort" (151). Although Mrs. Moulder's bird appears tame and content confined to its small cage, it still yearns for freedom, as seen in its refusal to return to its cage when Aleck allows it to escape. A slight switch from the term bird to woman in Lutwack's statement could easily be a concise version of how abusive men like Mr. Moulder attempt to confine, restrain, and control their wives. Mr. Moulder realizes that allowing Mrs. Moulder greater freedom would likely mean that she would not be as easily controlled and that she would be unsatisfied with his overbearing, patriarchal control. Lutwack further writes: "To romantic sensibilities the caging of birds was particularly offensive because the power of flight had grown to be such a powerful symbol of freedom that to deny a bird flight seemed the grossest violation of both nature and philosophical principle" (153). The caged bird becomes a powerful symbolic representation of women because of their shared lack of freedom, an image that Blake's women readers would likely have seen in other works or be able to connect with because of their familiarity with their own birds. Bird owners, like abusive husbands, commit the cruelest crime against nature through their extremely restrictive control that severely limits the natural freedom due these creatures.⁵

Blake shows the power of threatening physical violence, which also causes psychological harm to women. By including a beloved pet, Blake strengthens her outreach to her readers, many of whom are likely to have had a pet or to understand the strong connection that a person

(especially a lonely woman like Mrs. Moulder) can form with a pet. Even if her readers have not experienced physical abuse from a romantic partner, Blake ensures that they can empathize with Mrs. Moulder, who must accept the death of her cherished bird, and they will recognize the toll that any form of abuse can have on a woman. Her husband sees her as a nuisance, and it is just a matter of time before she too bothers Mr. Moulder to the point of suffering physically. Although Laura may hypothesize Mrs. Moulder standing up to her husband or even escaping his control, doing so, escaping her metaphorical cage, only stands to lead to injury or death.

Although it might seem that Flora (Laura's friend from their time at Essex College) might have more voice in her marriage because she is upper class and perhaps might have more favorable options in husbands, her marriage is just as fraught with psychological abuse and an overwhelming lack of freedom. Once Flora and Le Roy are married, Le Roy increases his strict control over his wife, abuse which is evident even with Le Roy's proposal to Flora where he physically holds her with a "firm grasp" and promises to "never again" let Flora go (128). It is three weeks before Laura and Flora can meet again because Flora has to carefully plan out when her friend can visit, as her husband does not want the two meeting. In addition to the physical abuse that he inflicts on Flora (which was examined in Chapter Two), Le Roy utilizes psychological abuse by limiting whom his wife can interact with, likely because he realizes that Laura would comfort his wife, as well as negatively influence Flora with advice that might make her realize her husband is abusive or offer her resources for once again escaping, which Le Roy knows that she is capable of because she previously attempted to run away with Laura's help right before the wedding (236). Indeed, Laura does attempt to comfort her friend by suggesting that Flora find new hobbies and ultimately accept her situation. Perhaps serving as a stand-in for Blake and her fellow women authors, Flora finds respite in writing, and it enables her to deal

with her unhappy marriage. As a wealthy, married woman without children to rear or any real household duties (thanks her husband being able to afford household staff), Flora has a lot of free time and should theoretically be able to fill her time with harmless hobbies such as writing. Given the unpleasantness of Flora's day-to-day life, writing undoubtedly grants her the ability to step outside of her world and to forget about that pain that she experiences. When she gets her work published, Flora's writing also serves as a way for her to reconnect with other women in a sort of pseudo friendship and perhaps as a means of inspiration, encouragement, or entertainment for women who are stuck in similarly abusive relationships. However, Flora's situation shows the difficulty of women authorship and the lack of respect that still existed (especially within the rigid limits of acceptability for women in the upper classes) for nineteenth-century women. Therefore it is unsurprising when Le Roy showcases his cruelty by refusing his wife her writing materials. Upset by what he perceives as Flora's shocking impropriety in publishing her writings, Le Roy bans his wife from further publishing: "I cannot do it . . . I have a horror of women's rights, in every form. I think that women should be quiet and retired . . ." (345). Although Flora tells her husband that returning to writing is the only way that her health will improve, her husband adamantly refuses her simple request; ultimately, this denial leads to Flora's demise as she attempts to kill herself by jumping off a cliff (which ultimately leads to the illness that does kill her) (348). The confinement and restrictions of Flora's marriage are so overwhelming that she sees death as a more favorable option than continuing her abusive relationship with Le Roy. Even now, Le Roy cannot help but judge his wife, as he is shocked not by how close his wife is to death, but by her impropriety at attempting suicide and being rescued by a stranger. After declaring to her mother that her marriage has killed her, Flora tells her, "if my fate can save any one else, it will not matter. There are the other girls, you know, and I want

you to remember this, . . . marriage without love, is worse than death” (351). Although Flora was pressured into a loveless and abusive marriage, Blake here offers hope for the future.

Perhaps the novel's readers can learn a lesson from not only Flora's marriage, but also those of Mrs. Moulder and Mrs. Bludgett, and realize the importance of choosing a kind husband and marrying for love.

Laura meets another abused wife, Mrs. Bludgett (also previously discussed in Chapter Two) soon after arriving in the city. After her first night spent in the jail, Judge Swinton kindly (or so it seems to the naive young woman at the time) suggests that Laura board with his friends. Laura's few days in the household are enough for her to realize that Mrs. Bludgett is severely abused by her husband, from whom she lives in constant fear of angering. Mrs. Bludgett's only coping mechanism exists in her precious romance novels, which she escapes into whenever her husband is not around. She tells Laura, "It is my only pleasure . . . when I read them real exciting stories, I forget everything else" (16). Significantly, Mrs. Bludgett sees romantic stories as an escape or contrast to her every day, abusive life; however, for characters like *Lost and Saved's* Beatrice, falling under the spell of romance is precisely what leads them into their abusive relationships. Blake's mention of romance novels is also significant because her novel utilizes an overarching romantic plotline often found in women's nineteenth-century literature: the protagonist negotiating growing up and relationships while searching for the man that she will ultimately marry. However, Blake distinctly and sharply parts from the standard romantic woman novel and presents numerous challenges to the perceived happily-ever-after marriage ending of these books by showing the dark side of marriage.

Like the other abused women analyzed in this chapter, Mrs. Bludgett remains largely isolated from friends and family. When asked about her social circle, Mrs. Bludgett responds,

"Friends? nobody, only perhaps, Rhody. You see Bludgett do'nt [*sic*] like for me to go out much" (18). Mrs. Bludgett only manages to sneak out of the house when her husband is at work or out socializing and she must always remain extremely cautious that her husband does not find out that she left the house without his knowledge. Understanding the importance of women supporting each other, Laura tells Mrs. Bludgett, "We women ought to stand by each other, and care for each other" (18). Mr. Bludgett's forced isolation of his wife serves as psychological abuse, which prevents Mrs. Bludgett from forming or seeking out a support network which could give her the confidence and resources to leave her abusive relationship. Here too Blake shows the power of female relationships. Neither Mrs. Bludgett nor Laura find much protection from the various males of the novel. However, both have women who unfailingly stand behind them in support; Mrs. Bludgett has Laura, Laura has Frank and Mrs. D'Arcy, and Rhoda has Maggie. Unfortunately, although each of these characters has woman friends, Frank and Mrs. D'Arcy are the only women who are shown having any sort of ability to help their friends; Frank is able to use her "male" gender and job and Mrs. D'Arcy is able to use her wealth/social status. As helpful as Laura attempts to be, she has little ability to help anyone as she herself is struggling financially and to remain safe. Although Laura asks Mrs. Bludgett about any friends that she might have (presumably to serve as this support network that Laura feels is needed), Mrs. Bludgett only lists Rhoda, who is in an even worse financial situation than herself, is just as naive about laws, and would certainly be unable to assist.

Although oftentimes less visible to outsiders than physical abuse, psychological and emotional abuse and the significant and terrible impact that they have on women are illustrated in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Emma Robinson's *Mauleverer's Divorce*, Caroline Norton's *Lost and Saved*, E.D.E.N. Southworth's *Ishmael or Lost in the Depths*, E.D.E.N.

Southworth's *Self-Raised or From the Depths*, and Lillie Devereux Blake's *Fettered for Life*.

Through such actions as diminishing their wives self-confidence, constant criticism, causing fear or intimidation, and isolating their wives from friends and family, these husbands attempt to force their wives into complete submission. Through their emotional and psychological abuse of their wives, these husbands make a mockery of the angel in the house ideal by creating shams of marriage relationships. Although the popular nineteenth-century doctrine of separate spheres advocates for women remaining in the home and finding fulfillment from being good wives and mothers, abusive husbands make these roles very difficult to execute. As a result of their inability to fulfill these roles and their husbands' expectations that they do, these women cannot win. By including examples of this abuse, these authors show their women readers that abuse happens to women of all classes and all intelligence levels.

These authors not only warn their readers about the potential abuse that results from marriage. By showing that the rules of domesticity do not always work, they are also writing against the tradition of sentimental fiction in order to give women readers a dose of reality. In *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels By and About Women in America 1820-70*, Nina Baym discusses the overarching goal of women's fiction (the term she prefers to the problematic "sentimental") to entertain its women readers with the story of the heroine's triumph over adversity (17). Although some of the novels in this project (such as *Ishmael*, *Bessy Conway*, and *Fettered for Life*) share similarities to a typical sentimental plot where a young woman faces some sort of difficulty related to a change in finances or family situation, there is a significant departure in all of the works examined because of the lack of triumph evident in their protagonists' stories. Many of the woman characters that these authors include end up abused and many dead; although there are certainly woman characters that do survive until the end of the

novel, they are a rarity and oftentimes their lives have drastically changed. Additionally, these authors show how quickly psychological and emotional abuse can develop and escalate and how thoroughly this often publicly unseen abuse can hurt women. Furthermore, these authors oftentimes use parallel plots in these novels by featuring a naïve young woman who gets persuaded (through notions of improving their situation, infatuation, or outside influence) into a romantic relationship with an older, wealthier man and then ends up suffering abuse from this man, all plots which undercut sentimental tropes of woman being courted and marrying a nice, handsome man who treats her well.

CHAPTER 4

LEGAL & ECONOMIC ABUSE

"Nature is hard enough upon woman . . . giving her a weaker frame and a heavier burden than is allotted to man! but the law is harder still! taking from her the sacred rights with which nature in compensation has invested her!"(Southworth, *Ishmael* 594).

Although women of the latter half of the nineteenth century had more legal rights and greater freedom than their predecessors of earlier decades, numerous novels of this time period reveal that women were still in an extremely precarious situation because of the legal complications facing women who tried to leave abusive men. Unfortunately, many of England and the United States' laws also gave men control of their wives' financials, which often times included property inheritances, financial inheritances, and earnings from their employment. Husbands also had the ability to limit their wives' and children's access to money for living expenses. Many nineteenth-century women novelists, in order to highlight the contemporary laws and how they differed from or continued previous legal restrictions, made a point of having their women characters directly interact with these laws. This chapter will examine Caroline Norton's *Lost and Saved* (1863), E.D.E.N. Southworth's *Ishmael* (1863-64), E.D.E.N. Southworth's *Self-Raised* (1863-64), and Lillie Devereux Blake's *Fettered for Life* (1874) to consider their treatments of the domestic abuse that males exert on their female partners economically and legally. These authors show their readers that, despite the seemingly positive progression of laws designed to help protect women legally and financially, women still faced tremendous danger from their husbands, who, according to societal expectations, were supposed to be the main protectors of married women. Hence, the ease of circumventing these laws leaves women vulnerable and endangers a core aspect of nineteenth-century gender and marital relationships.

The Department of Justice's webpage on Domestic Violence offers up the following definition of economic abuse, which will be used in this chapter: "Economic Abuse is defined as making or attempting to make an individual financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding one's access to money, or forbidding one's attendance at school or employment" ("Domestic"). Although the site does not include legal abuse as one of its types of domestic abuse (likely due to the greater legal rights and equality that women now experience), a woman's limited financial means often also played a significant role in their economic abuse. I am defining legal abuse as making or attempting to make an individual legally dependent through taking advantage of laws or limiting knowledge of laws so as to give the abuser a legal advantage. Although these are modern definitions that are being applied to an earlier time, they offer a means of terminology and understanding to what these authors clearly saw as abusive and improper behavior of husbands towards their wives.

Men Using Legal/Economic Means to Take Advantage of Women in Ishmael

Even before Ishmael's decision to pursue a career as a lawyer, it is clear that legal and economic abuse play a prominent role in Southworth's *Ishmael* (another element of which was discussed in Chapter Three). The worst of Herman's misdeeds towards Nora occurs when he abandons her and their soon-to-be-born child. Even if Herman's actions can be excused when he does not check to see if his first wife, the Countess (whom he married in secret) has indeed died, it is difficult to absolve him when, after finding out that the Countess is alive and returned to him, he panics and abruptly runs away to parts unknown. In doing so he inflicts tremendous pain upon Nora, who finds out about Herman's first marriage and the return of his wife from a third party. Despite his earlier admission and belief that Nora is emotionally fragile, Herman does not even attempt to break the awful news gently to the woman he supposedly adores.

Furthermore, by abandoning Nora without explaining to anyone the confusion that led him to marry two women, Herman leaves Nora in a very precarious situation socially and legally. Herman returns just in time to say goodbye to Nora moments after her death in the birthing of their son. Interestingly, although Hannah is obviously grief-stricken and vents her sorrow verbally, Southworth says of Herman, "the sorrow of the young man, deepened by his remorse, was too profound for such outward vent" (161). Here there is a clear gendered distinction between the female and male handling of sorrow. Whereas Hannah's sorrow is expressed in emotion that one might stereotype as female, Herman quickly manages to compose himself and to remind Hannah that "there are some things which should be remembered even in this awful hour" (162). He assumes his role as the strong man and turns to business when he recognizes that something must be done for supporting the child: "Your [Hannah's] necessities and —Nora's child must be provided for," which he aids by writing out a check and offering the advice that Hannah and her boyfriend should take the child and raise him in the West because Herman plans on never seeing them again (162). As she will later in the novel when discussing Mr. Walsh treating his children as possessions, Southworth here paints the relationship between Herman and his (or as he prefers to consider it, Nora's) child as a business transaction; Herman biologically fathered the child and now he assumes that he can pay off his debt to Nora and the child via a onetime payment. He takes no consideration that his check may not be sufficient for the child's entire lifetime or that the child may require support that goes beyond financial. Although Herman has very little of a relationship with his legal wife, Berenice, the law also affects their relationship.

Interestingly, although Herman seemingly wants nothing to do with his wife, he does request her assistance in order to sell his estate, which he plans on doing in order to raise funds to

support his overspending mother and sisters; Herman must deal with a law that seemingly economically protects wives, although its effects are questionable. During his long absence, he writes to Berenice, “you doubtless have informed yourself before this time, that by the laws of the State in which my property is situated, a man cannot sell his homestead without the consent of his wife” (239-40). Unable to imagine that his wife remains on Brundell property for any other purpose than freeloading, keeping his family away from their home, or destroying the value of his estate, Herman assumes that his wife must have an evil ulterior motive and made herself aware of her legal right to remain there.

Although Southworth earlier states that the Brundell estate is in Maryland, she does not identify which law she is referring to. However, it is significant that such a law could feasibly exist, which no doubt relates to numerous laws that Richard H. Chused in "Married Women's Property Law: 1800-1850" states began appearing in the first half of the century:

the acts were passed in at least three waves . . . The first group of statutes, passed almost entirely in the 1840's, dealt primarily with freeing married women's estates from the debts of their husbands. . . .The second wave of legislation, the most frequently discussed, established separate estates for married women. These statutes appeared over a long period of time beginning in the 1840's and ending after the Civil War. The third set of statutes took the important step of protecting women's earnings from the institution of coverture. These laws generally did not appear until after the Civil War. (n.p.)

Although these laws focused on protecting the assets that women brought into a marriage along with any wages that they might earn from employment, the law Southworth refers to adds to this security for women by ensuring that their husbands could not leave the families homeless

without a wife's consent. Whether or not such a law existed in Maryland at the time is less important than the fact that Southworth seemed to imply that such a law was needed everywhere. Unfortunately, even laws that appear designed to protect women's interests were faulty, as a husband could pressure his wife into giving consent to sell their home; for instance, he could convince his wife (who may not understand financial matters) that they needed to sell their property to support themselves or, as with the case of Herman, he could use alienation of feeling to persuade his wife to do as he wishes. Without a legal advocate, such as a lawyer with her best interests in mind, a woman would be unlikely to prevent any decision of such magnitude of their husband's. This fits into the numerous examples throughout the novel of abusive men using their positions and power to take advantage of female legal and financial vulnerabilities. Through her characters' actions and her musings on law, Southworth once again makes her readers aware that they cannot count on their husbands to operate with their families' best interests in mind, as the very house they live in may be sold by him to pay for debts.

Southworth further emphasizes the connected economic and legal vulnerability that wives incur with marriage through Mrs. Walsh's legal case against her husband. By far the harshest examples of domestic abuse in the novel occur in relation to Mrs. Walsh, the woman whom the lawyer Ishmael represents against her husband. Judge Merlin, Ishmael's mentor, tells Ishmael that the Walshes have been separated for some time and that Mr. Walsh has been living in the South. Recently, Mr. Walsh returned and tried to reconcile with his wife, but was refused. He then tried to "get possession of their children, in order to coerce her through her affection for them; but she suspected his design and frustrated it by removing the children to a place of secrecy" (582). Neither Judge Merlin nor Mr. Walsh seems terribly concerned by Mr. Walsh's use of his own children to manipulate his wife. Mr. Walsh plans on suing for custody of their

children, and Judge Merlin believes he will win the suit because "the law always gives the father possession of the children, unless he is morally, mentally or physically incapable of taking care of them; which is not the case with Walsh; he is sound in mind, body and reputation; there is nothing to be said about him in either respect" (582). In a novel that shows numerous examples of corrupt or unethical men lawyers, Judge Merlin, because of his familial relationship to Ishmael's beloved Claudia and his mentorship of Ishmael, is supposed to be different, to be a positive representative of the legal system. Unfortunately, Judge Merlin shows himself similarly controlled by very unfair, gendered ideas (showing just how deeply rooted these ideas are) and a questionable interpreter of justice. Although he has not seen Mr. Walsh in years nor knows Mrs. Walsh's side of the story, Judge Merlin confidently assumes that Mr. Walsh has a solid case and will be granted custody of the children because of the simple fact that he is a man. Judge Merlin's assessment of the situation also calls into question the standards by which the law judges a parent's fitness; Mr. Walsh may be medically sound, but Mrs. Walsh's perspective on the situation paints a drastically different picture of her husband and showcases his inaptness as a parent and spouse. Unfortunately, the unfairness of the legal system and its preference towards fathers shows that even when there are laws on the books to protect women, they are often easily gotten around. Much like the law, Judge Merlin sees the case as clear-cut: Mr. Walsh is the children's father, he is not legally incapable in mind or body, and the law says that fathers should have legal custody of their children. According to Glenda Riley in her *Divorce: An American Tradition*, judges in the early decades of the nineteenth century "also considered the matter of guilt in making child custody decisions. If a female petitioner could prove her husband's guilt to a judge's satisfaction, she was likely to receive custody of their children" (52). Although Mr. Walsh is clearly the guilty party in their case because of his abandonment of his family and his

gambling vice, Mrs. Walsh would have difficulty producing evidence to this effect, especially enough to overrule Mr. Walsh's expensive team of lawyers. Unfortunately, the unfairness of the legal system and its preference towards fathers shows that even when there are laws on the books to protect women, they are often easily skirted, to the misfortune of women, who need the law's protection most.

Significantly, the language that Southworth uses as one man speaks to another man is that of the male-oriented business world, highlighting the impenetrability of this world for women like Mrs. Walsh. Judge Merlin sounds as though he is discussing a matter-of-fact business transaction; the law states that Mr. Walsh has possession of his children as though they are property, like a business or house. Although Judge Merlin points out three potential reasons that a man like Mr. Walsh might lose possession of his belongings or children (by being unsound in mind, body, or person), these traits are rather vague and difficult to ascertain, which is evident in how Mr. Walsh manages a solid legal case despite what Mrs. Walsh reveals to Ishmael about her husband's true nature; there may be nothing to say about Mr. Walsh in terms of "mind, body and reputation," but Southworth's language suggests that there are certainly other negative things to be said about him. Furthermore, the contexts of unfitness vary amongst contexts; although Mr. Walsh may be involved in a successful business or have a sufficient income to care for his family, be able to carry on intelligent conversation, have people who like him and thus, may appear of sound mind, body, and opinion, in the context of the home, fatherhood, and marriage, he may be completely devoid of these traits. Unfortunately for Mrs. Walsh and other women, the court and society perceive the home as a private realm and, thus, are unlikely to really know if Mr. Walsh is as sound in this context.

Besides her obvious legal struggles as a woman, Mrs. Walsh is at a disadvantage in the

case against her husband because she cannot afford a lawyer to represent her; once again her husband's economic abuse causes her suffering. For nine years Mr. Walsh abandoned his family to travel and did not provide financial support for his wife and children. Mrs. Walsh had to seek help from friends and work to provide; undoubtedly for a proud woman like Mrs. Walsh, resorting to begging is just as difficult as her economic struggle. Unfortunately, Mr. Walsh is not content just leaving his wife and children destitute once; when he returns from his long absence, he repeatedly takes his wife's meager earnings from her hard work to the point where she is forced to rely on numerous friends to help set her up in business until they all realize that she is a financial risk (thanks to her husband's philandering and his need to pay off his debtors), at which point no one wants to help her anymore. As the novel is set prior to the Married Women's Property Acts,⁶ Mr. Walsh has every legal right to appropriate his wife's wages. It is hardly surprising that the poor woman realizes that she must hide herself and her children's whereabouts from her husband, or risk losing her teaching position and income. Whether or not he realizes it (although it would be difficult to imagine that he would be so ignorant of the economic situation of women at the time), by constantly taking her wages and causing her to lose her positions, Mr. Walsh leaves his wife friendless and without a support system. Mr. Walsh repeatedly abuses his wife through his thievery of her earnings and her means of supporting herself and their children. Given that he provides no child support to her, he must realize that he is leaving his family extremely susceptible to hunger and homelessness. Additionally, Mrs. Walsh lives in constant fear from the numerous threats of her husband that he will force her to return to him, seek out her new location, take her wages, and/or take her children from her.

In "Who Gets the Child?: Custody, Guardianship, and the Rise of a Judicial Patriarchy in Nineteenth-Century America," Michael Grossberg examines the development of custody laws in

the United States. He explains that traditionally American laws gave fathers all rights to the custody of their legitimate children. "The law assumed that the interests of children were best protected by making the father the natural guardian and by using a property-based standard of parental fitness. Custody law considered children to be dependent, subordinate beings. They were assets of estates in which fathers had a vested right" (238). The precedence of law, which gives preference to the interests of men (regardless of their character), bestows both Judge Merlin and Mr. Walsh with the assurance that Mr. Walsh will have no difficulty gaining custody of his children. To these men, it seems that Mr. Walsh is sure to win his legal fight based on nothing other than his gender. Although it is highly questionable exactly how financially fit Mr. Walsh is (he only now has money for legal expenses thanks to gambling wins), especially as he has frequently robbed his wife of her meager income, apparently his potential ability to own property and earn an income is enough for an educated man like Judge Merlin to consider him a more suitable parent than his wife, who actually has a job and a place to live. Given Mr. Walsh's lack of interest in his children, which is demonstrated by his abandoning them for most of their young lives, his lack of financial support, and his willingness to use them as a bargaining tool to get his wife back, it is not surprising that this legal system shocks the women's rights advocate, Ishmael, who, despite the odds and lack of remuneration, determines to fight the law and win the case for Mrs. Walsh. In terms of Reynolds' ideas of dark reform, the corruptness of a legal system that makes such important decisions based on such a questionable merits as gender is part of the vice that Ishmael, the reformer and representative of Southworth, must fight; he must change how justice is dealt out. His opinion of the current way of making legal decisions and women's disadvantages in said system is reflected in Mrs. Walsh's hatred for the legal system: she complains, "Nature is hard enough upon woman . . . giving her a weaker frame and a heavier

burden than is allotted to man! but the law is harder still! taking from her the sacred rights with which nature in compensation has invested her!"(594). Mrs. Walsh has fulfilled her duties as a mother and a Christian to the utmost degree, yet she still finds herself very close to losing her children.

Significantly, in an era when gender divisions and restrictions are so rigid, Mrs. Walsh risks losing her job as a mother, a role which many at the time would see as a woman's main source of fulfillment and dedication. If nineteenth-century society saw women best suited as caretakers, this posed a serious problem when the laws of the time gave child custody preference to fathers. Although the novel's women readers may have confidently assumed that their lives were planned out as wives and mothers running the household, Southworth puts doubt into readers' "guaranteed" plans by forcing them to consider how they can fulfill these "natural" and assumed roles as good mothers and wives if their husbands abandon them and their children are taken away from them. Laws, which are made by men, take away the ability of women to perform in these roles. This creates a vicious, no-win situation of men believing that a woman's only suitable occupations are taking care of the house and rearing the children and women who are unable to perform these duties precisely because of these men, who create and support the laws and lawmakers that unfairly take away these duties from women. By making Mrs. Walsh such an average, nice, Christian woman, Southworth shows the reality of how women legally have virtually no right to their own children. There is really nothing extraordinary about Mrs. Walsh's character or personality, which allows Southworth to utilize Mrs. Walsh as an everywoman character, who could be the reader, her sister, mother, or friend.

Southworth knew intimately what she was writing about with Mrs. Walsh's situation with her awful husband and the chance of losing custody of her children. According to Elizabeth

Stockton's "E.D.E.N. Southworth's Reimagining of the Married Women's Property Reforms," Southworth's husband left her and their two children to chase a gold rush in a foreign country. Although she did not pursue it, she apparently sought legal advice about initiating a divorce against her husband (243). Southworth is able to use her own experiences to educate her readers that husband abandonment can happen to any woman. Thankfully, Southworth had her talents as a writer to support her family, but she is likely aware that many women are not as fortunate and prepared to find paying occupations. Southworth's personal situation undoubtedly made her impassioned to connect with her readers about the dangers that men financially and legally pose to married women.

Legal Abuse Made Easy By Difficult Laws in Self-Raised

Southworth further illustrates the great vulnerability to legal and economic abuse that nineteenth-century wives faced through her example of Claudia and her marriage to Lord Vincent in *Self-Raised* (another element of which was examined in Chapter Three). Although Claudia is much better educated than Mrs. Walsh, has a Judge for a father, and was born into the wealthy social class, she too suffers greatly from her husband's abuse; in this way Southworth makes clear that no woman is safe from an abusive husband. In fact, Southworth shows that wealthy women are even more at risk from predatory men, who desire these women for the potential financial and social gains resulting from a marriage with them. Lord Vincent has very little difficulty in economically abusing his wife, easily commandeering his wife's vast fortune. After returning home to Europe after his marriage, Lord Vincent must explain to Mrs. Dugald why he returns with a wife (he saw that Claudia was interested in his title and he was interested in her money), and he gleefully boasts about the wealth that he has recently acquired:

She was a poor gambler! for it was a game between us! She was playing for a *title*, I for a *fortune*; well, she won the title and I won the fortune! Or rather you may call it purchase and sale! She bought a title and paid a fortune for it! For the moment the marriage-ring encircled her finger she became the Viscountess

Vincent and I became the possessor of her three millions of pounds sterling! (171)

Interestingly, although Claudia stands to lose the most from their marriage arrangement because of her vulnerability as a woman, Lord Vincent includes himself as almost an equal player in the game that is their marriage. Although Lord Vincent presents the stakes of the game as both he and Claudia winning something in exchange for something else, it is clear from what happens later in their marriage that Claudia had no idea how much she stood to lose. She not only loses her money, but also sells her freedom, her good name, and very nearly her will to live.

According to Mary Beth Combs's article, "Cui Bono? The 1870 British Married Women's Property Act, Bargaining Power, and the Distribution of Resources within Marriage," it was not until the passing of the 1870 Marriage Women's Property Act that British women were able to retain their inheritances after marriage. Combs writes, "The Act, which was not retroactive, gave women married after 1870 the legal right to own and control their personal property (moveable assets such as money, stocks, furniture, and livestock) and therefore shifted the control of resources within the household" (52-53). Similarly, Virginia (which Southworth once mentions as the setting of the novel) did not pass its Married Women Property Act, which allowed women to control property or money independent of their husbands, until 1877 ("Chronology").

Although Claudia seems to be a smart, confident woman who knows what she is doing when she marries Lord Vincent, she has no idea how financially vulnerable the lack of legal protection of her finances will leave her.

Although Southworth's readers may have lacked fortunes to gamble for titles and had much more modest aspirations in marriage, they could still learn important lessons from Claudia's situation. Readers may have wanted to marry well, but they must also estimate the cost of their marriage; a well-off husband is a poor prize to win, if it means suffering abuse. Southworth shows that women cannot count on the law to protect their financial assets. Significantly, although it may be easy to judge Claudia for so cheaply selling such valuable commodities as her virtue and marriage, according to nineteenth-century marriage protocol, her actions should be praised: she marries as she should, she chooses a seemingly financially well-off spouse, and she betters her social rank. When Claudia's father mentions marriage settlements, Lord Vincent pretends to be horrified and amazed that "any lady who was afraid to trust me with her money should be so willing to confide in me the custody of her person" (170). Lord Vincent further explains that the marriage negotiations may have ended then if Claudia had not "herself intervened and scornfully waived the question of settlements. She had always ruled her father and every one else around her in every particular, and she ruled in this matter also!" (170-71). Although Claudia may not be wise enough to protect her personal assets prior to marriage, her father, extremely knowledgeable about the law, should have known better than to let himself be railroaded out of setting up some sort of legal negotiations for his daughter and her future spouse. Claudia is willing to do whatever it takes to become a viscountess, regardless of the price that she must pay. Interestingly, Southworth here shows Claudia, a woman, exercising agency over a man, her father. Although this could be a moment of female empowerment, instead it is a moment of disappointment; rather than use her intelligence and persuasiveness for good, such as joining the fight for women's rights, Claudia chooses to take advantage of her father's lack of discipline and ends up the loser for her actions.

In contrast to the abuse that Southworth describes in *Ishmael* with Bernice, Nora, and Mrs. Walsh, Claudia's situation differs in that Claudia, similar to the other Countess of Hurstmonceux, Herman Brundell's wife, Berenice, is an abused wife from the upper class. Both Berenice and Claudia's circumstances reveal to readers that, although the forms of abuse may differ, women of all social classes can be the victims of domestic abuse; rank and money do not protect women against men who wish to hurt them. Although they come from vastly different worlds, Claudia and Mrs. Walsh's situations share many similarities. Patriarchal laws disadvantage both women, as neither has complete control of her own finances (Mrs. Walsh's earnings from her job and Claudia's vast inheritance) after marriage because the law dictates that a husband has legal control of his wife's money. Claudia has an advantage over Mrs. Walsh because, even if she needs to leave her husband or he drains her fortune, she still has a wealthy father who will gladly welcome her home and continue supporting her. Mrs. Walsh has no backup plan and must rely on Ishmael convincing the court to legally separate her and her husband so that she can protect her finances. Although Claudia may be wealthy, her story provides a warning to Southworth's readers who may think that domestic abuse is only a problem faced by the lower classes. Although the upper class may keep silent about abuse, Southworth assures these women that they too are at risk for falling prey to violent or psychologically intimidating marriages. Domestic abuse occurs to women of all classes and all levels of education. As this novel ventures transatlantic-ly between England, Scotland, and the United States, Southworth also shows that women faced abuse all over the world and encounter equally unfair laws protecting them from spousal abuse.

Like Mr. Walsh does with Mrs. Walsh, Lord Vincent's knowledge of the law and his financial resources help him further his abuse of his wife. Once Lord Vincent has stolen his

wife's assets, he has no use for her and decides to get rid of her by obtaining a divorce. He gleefully tells his mistress, "I shall get rid of my Indian Princess, not by *breaking* the law, but by *appealing* to the law!" (168). Although his actions are far from ethical, significantly, Lord Vincent sees himself as acting justifiably because he knows how to navigate the legal system. Once again Southworth shows a serious disconnect between what is honest/right and what is legal. According to Ginger Frost's *Living in Sin: Cohabiting as Husband and Wife in Nineteenth-Century England*, "the grounds for divorce were few and biased in favour of men. Men could divorce for a single act of adultery, while women had to prove adultery and some other offence, such as cruelty, desertion, or bigamy" (16). Knowing that he needs to have some sort of proof to initiate divorce proceedings, Lord Vincent uses his power to manipulate those in his household. After witnessing his valet, Mr. Frisbie, killing his girlfriend (and fellow servant of Lord Vincent), Lord Vincent promises to help Frisbie cover up the murder, lie to the police, and hide the evidence. In exchange Lord Vincent takes advantage of this service by forcing his cooperation in his plot to set up Claudia by forcing his servant to claim adultery with Claudia, so that Vincent can pursue a divorce on grounds of adultery. After accompanying his mistress, Mrs. Dugald, and her naive friend, Mrs. MacDonald to the theater, Lord Vincent arranges for his unsuspecting servant, Cuthbert, to immediately send him a note if anything should occur between Claudia and Frisbie. Cuthbert sees Frisbie sneak into Claudia's chamber and he immediately sends a note to his master to return home. Meanwhile, Lord Vincent arranged for Frisbie to sneak into Claudia's chamber without her knowledge and to hide until Lord Vincent returns. Conveniently enough, Lord Vincent immediately returns home to discover his wife in her locked room with his servant, who admits to a repeated affair with Claudia, facts which his witnesses attest to the police as "proof" that Claudia has broken her marriage vows. Lord Vincent

seems to have clear grounds for a divorce and should easily obtain it from the courts.

Unfortunately for Claudia, although she has the truth on her side, she does not have evidence to prove her case. Although she could technically try to claim that her husband is the guilty party in their marriage, she would not have any tangible proof or witnesses to vouch for Lord Vincent's "cruelty, desertion, or bigamy" even though her husband is very much guilty of all three offenses.

As a woman, Claudia is at a serious disadvantage when challenging the legal system, which is further shown in how Ishmael and Judge Merlin decide to pursue justice for Claudia when they come to her rescue. Claudia sneaks a letter out to her father, Judge Merlin, who quickly heads to Europe along with his faithful friend. As an irate father whose only daughter is in great distress, Judge Merlin's first reaction when he discovers what his son-in-law has done to Claudia is to take justice into his own hands. However, Ishmael, ever the voice of reason, stops Judge Merlin because he trusts the law to enact justice: "And is it not better that the law should deal out retributive justice to them, that that you should execute unlawful vengeance" (399). Interestingly, although Judge Merlin has spent decades longer in the legal field than Ishmael and has far more experience with legal cases and precedents, he can only think of seeking out Lord Vincent and killing him with his own hands (398). However, despite Ishmael's faith in the legal system, it is he who decides that their best course of action against Lord Vincent is to not prosecute him on procuring a divorce using false evidence, but, rather, bringing charges against him for selling Claudia's servants into slavery:

We will not have your daughter's pure name dragged through the mire of a divorce court; we will have Lord Vincent and his accomplices arrested and tried; the valet for murder, and the viscount and the opera-singer for conspiracy and

kidnapping. We have proof enough to convict them all; the valet will be hanged; and the viscount and the opera-singer sentenced to penal servitude for many years. Will that not be sufficient punishment for the conspirators. . . . Your daughter shall be restored to you;—her dower recovered, her name preserved; and her honor perfectly, triumphantly vindicated. (399)

The group realizes that divorce proceedings may take quite some time in the court and that Claudia's name stands to be tarnished by her association with the divorce. Unlike the other women examined in this project, Claudia stands a good chance of being granted a divorce because of her evidence and her money to hire representation (not to mention the fact that she has the financial means to actually support herself afterwards); however, even with evidence and money, Southworth illustrates how difficult the divorce trial will remain in terms of the length of time and the stigma that a woman incurs from being divorced. Until this stigma changes, any women, whether wealthy or poor, abused or just unhappy, are likely to pursue this path in a society that places so much importance on a woman's reputation. Ishmael and the Judge decide instead to reveal the plot that Lord Vincent and his mistress had hatched against Claudia.

Although the dissolution of Claudia's marriage comes at a time when divorces were increasing in number, American society was still very much divided over whether divorces should even be so obtainable (Riley 71). This debate was a frequent feature of newspapers for years, which makes it likely that a divorced woman would encounter harsh criticism from a large percentage of society. Furthermore, Riley states that "In England, divorce was virtually unavailable to women . . . only four English women obtained divorces by 1850 even though Parliamentary divorce had existed for 186 years" (52). Unfortunately for Claudia, her reputation would be hurt more by a divorce than by having a convict husband. Without his wife's

knowledge, Lord Vincent sells his wife's servants to a man who plans to illegally transport them to Cuba, where he can get a hefty price for them (331-32). Scotland, where Lord Vincent makes his home, has already outlawed the buying and selling of slaves. Although the slaves belong to Claudia, an American, and where born in the United States, they became freed the moment that they stepped on European soil (333). Judge Merlin and Ishmael instigate charges against Lord Vincent for selling Claudia's servants into slavery (a felony offense), and Lord Vincent and his mistress are arrested. Significantly, although it is more than clear that Claudia is innocent in the accusations that Lord Vincent accuses her of, Claudia still stands to lose the most if their divorce case proceeds; showing the inequality of nineteenth-century social stigma, a woman's reputation is very fragile and even the hint of impropriety can ruin a woman's good name. Through this tangle of legal plots, Southworth not only shows her knowledge of laws and what is happening in the world (which adds to the realism mode of the novel), but she also highlights the ridiculousness and unfairness of laws and their patriarchal nature by showing how difficult it is for women to get justice; two lawyers decide that it would actually be easier to prove the outrageous-sounding, complicated plot that Lord Vincent and his mistress cooked up than for Claudia to get a simple divorce from an obviously cruel, abusive man.

Most Laws Are Patriarchal and Women Suffer as a Result in Fettered for Life

Although Lord Vincent and Mr. Moulder in Blake's *Fettered for Life* (which was also discussed in Chapters Two and Three) come from very different social classes, both men attempt to use their role as husband to keep their wives submissive and prisoners to their rule.

Exasperated by how Mr. Moulder treats his wife, Laura attempts to encourage Mrs. Moulder to stand up to her husband: "I believe he would really be better off with a wife who asserted herself a little. . . . I only wish you would try a change for awhile, and make a sort of declaration of

independence" (133). Although Laura certainly wants the best for the woman that she has come to consider a close friend, Laura is young and fairly naive about Mrs. Moulder's ability to affect her husband. Mr. Moulder certainly would not take kindly to becoming more independent with such things as getting his own meals; if Mr. Moulder is not fed in what he sees as a proper amount of time or manner, he will be upset and he will take out his anger on his wife. Laura should also realize that Mrs. Moulder lives in a precarious situation; she and her children need Mr. Moulder's financial support. As Laura has been struggling to find financially sustaining work for months and mostly failing, she should be much more sympathetic and understanding of the difficulty and unlikelihood of Mrs. Moulder being able to support herself and her children without the assistance of Mr. Moulder. Indeed, Mrs. Moulder would not even have enough money to survive on her own until she found a job. As Laura later laments on the need for women to stick together for support in such an abusive and unfair world, it is disappointing that she cannot better sympathize with Mrs. Moulder's vulnerable financial situation; fortunately for Laura, she is single and can control her finances, showing the discrepancy that exists between married and single women and the financial and legal control that they can exert. Earlier in the novel Mrs. Moulder reveals to Laura that, although she believes her husband is fairly well off, Mr. Moulder "only gives me money when I ask for it, almost as if it were a charity on his part" (160). She reveals that she receives no allowance and dreads asking her husband for money because her husband thinks she spends too much. One of the many ways that Mr. Moulder exerts his authority over his wife and assures that she will remain in his power and unable to assert herself is by ensuring that she is economically dependent on him. He allows her no money of her own and tightly controls the very meager amounts that he allows her for household needs.

Unfortunately, Blake indicates that not much has changed in the situation of women's financial dependence on men; Mrs. Moulder faces many of the same challenges as previous generations of women. Earlier in the novel, Mrs. D'Arcy tells Laura about her mother's situation: "My mother was married twenty-five years ago, when the law gave all her property to her husband . . . my father has absolute control of everything, and hardly gives us what suffices for the simplest wants" (35). Mrs. D'Arcy is likely referring to the number of laws affecting married women holding property that were established by each state in the United States. For instance, New York passed a Married Women's Property Act in 1848 (which was the model used by other states in the years following), which allowed women to keep any property that they owned prior to marriage and to be gifted property ("Married Women's Property Acts" n.p). Because the novel was published in 1874, Laura and other young women can hold such progressive ideas about women's financial and legal independence because they benefit from laws such as the 1848 Act. Blake shows how slow the law is to change, as it has taken over twenty-five years (from Mrs. D'Arcy's mother's generation to the present time) for such a law to be enacted. As Mrs. Moulder was married before 1870, the law does not affect her marriage and thus, her husband has every right to control all of the property and finances. By showing that women still suffer in 1874 (even after the passing of such a seemingly important law), Blake demonstrates the need for even further legal reform to protect married women. That is, young readers must not forget their older sisters in the fight for legal representation. Mr. Moulder's frugality with his wife sharply contrasts with his frequent spending on his own indulgences. In addition to her monetary dependence on her husband, Mrs. Moulder also tells Laura, "I could not do it [(rebel)], Laura; it's not in my nature; and indeed, I don't mind what I do for him, if he will only be a little tender to me" (133). No matter how abusive Mr. Moulder is to his wife, she still loves him and would

never even consider leaving him for that reason alone, something that Laura cannot grasp.

Although she greatly suffers from his abuse, Mrs. Moulder lives for those rare moments (whether or not they have ever actually occurred) in which her husband is actually nice to her.

Unfortunately, in addition to Mr. Moulder's economic abuse of his wife, he is also able to legally abuse her because of her lack of knowledge of laws, her lack of finances to hire representation, and, most importantly, laws that privilege men. As a result of all of this, there is little help that Laura or any other woman can provide for Mrs. Moulder because of the legal system. When asked by Laura if anything can be done for Mrs. Moulder, Mrs. D'Arcy replies, "the man has by law the right to treat his wife almost as he pleases" (140). Mrs. D'Arcy may be a respected woman because of her occupation and wealth, but clearly even she is no match for laws that protect a husband's right to abuse his wife. In response to whether or not there is no redress for the wife, Mrs. D'Arcy must dash her naive friend's belief in justice:

Only in cases of actual brutal violence; and then, you see, how lenient the punishments are! When people prate against giving the ballot to women, they do not realize that it is needed at this moment, to protect them in life and limb; that the laws, as they stand to-day, actually sanction a certain amount of tyranny on the part of the husband. (140)

While the nineteenth-century women's suffrage movement is often associated with the abolition cause, Blake shows its importance to protecting women against domestic violence. Mrs. D'Arcy makes a direct connection between women obtaining the vote and women being safe from their husbands. Although readers may believe that Mrs. D'Arcy is somewhat conservative, despite her occupation, because of her insistence on going by Mrs. rather than Dr., she realizes the importance of the female political voice because women literally stand to lose their lives without

it. Blake presents Laura as a foil here, a reason for D'Arcy to discuss the laws and history; it is the older generation educating the younger (and by extension younger readers).

Even with women like Laura and Mrs. D'Arcy who care about her wellbeing, Mrs. Moulder's situation is, unfortunately, hopeless; clearly Blake illustrates that in order for change to occur and women like the Mrs. Moulders, Floras, and Mrs. Bludgetts of the world to live safely and happily, the legal system must support their rights, even if it means opposing the husband's right to dominate his wife. Mrs. D'Arcy tells Laura: "in *Richards versus Richards*, the court declared, 'It is sickly sentimentality, which holds that a man may not lay his hands rudely, if necessary, on his wife.' I could multiply these instances indefinitely, but these will suffice to show what the whole tone of our laws is. Laws which women have not helped to make, to which they have not even consented, yet which they must obey" (142). The use of the phrase "sickly sentimentality" suggests not only the old-fashioned-ness of such a rule, but also the negative connotations of sentimentalism; sentimentalism, especially sentimental fiction, was seen as particularly feminine, too emotional, and, thus, lesser than the male-oriented world of facts. According to Jane Tompkins in *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*, "the *popularity* of novels by women has been held against them . . . [as well as] their preoccupation with 'trivial' feminine concerns . . . [and, as a result,] has been rigorously excluded from the ranks of 'serious' literary works" (xiv). Thus, sentimental literature was often viewed as lower than more serious male-authored literature. Mrs. D'Arcy is rightfully angry at laws, which women had no legal ability to create, that offer preferred treatment for men, and to which women are forced to submit.

Benjamin Grant's *Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania* reveals Mrs. Richards petitioned the court for a divorce and alimony from her husband. Grant

writes that in 1854 Mrs. Richards moved out of her husband's house with their infant son after four years of marriage. According to the report, this divorce action must have been quite surprising to Mr. Richards:

During all this period, the deportment of the husband was kind and affectionate towards the wife, with the exception of a single act, the cause of the decree in this case. This act is the alleged pulling of her nose, which happened in this way: The wife and sister of the husband were quarrelling, and the wife had a knife in her hand, which she used in a threatening manner towards the sister; the husband interfered, raised his hand to push the wife back, and in so doing put his hand on her face, and created the alleged cause of divorce. (389-90)

One troubling aspect of this report is why, if Mr. Richards saw his wife threatening his sister, would he push her away via her face, specifically her nose? In her article, "Faithless Wives and Lazy Husbands: Gender Norms in Nineteenth Century Divorce Law," Naomi R. Cahn points out that divorce would only benefit a woman who was financially independent of her husband (20). Although it is entirely possible that Mrs. Richards had wealth independent of her husband, it is not very likely given the time period that she would be able to keep it after marriage, and, thus, would make it questionable why Mrs. Richards would take the risk of not being granted alimony and having to struggle on her own to support her young son, especially after such a minor example of cruelty (if you could even consider it that) from her husband. Interestingly, of the witnesses who testified in the case to say that Mr. Richards had no history of abuse towards his wife, all of them based their testimony on the facts that they had not seen any abuse in the public realm and that they had never heard Mr. Richards say anything about abusing his wife; although it is also troublingly revealed that Mr. Richards "sometimes got drunk, and that he was a man of

high temper," this seems irrelevant to the case for the lawyers (392). Given the irregularities of the case, Mrs. D'Arcy's anger at the legal system seems well founded. Additionally, these irregularities further show how grounded in reality are the examples of legal abuse and legal disadvantage that Blake and the other writers in this chapter illustrate. Although Mrs. Richards, as a married woman, should be able to rely on her husband for legal and financial protection (and indeed has no real alternative), he, like numerous fictional examples of male characters in the novel proves to be a woman's worst enemy. By bringing in this very real legal case, Blake further blurs the line between fiction and reality in her realistic novel; she proves that she is knowledgeable about what is going on in the world regarding laws; therefore, Blake's readers should feel that the gruesome details like domestic abuse are equally as fact based. Although the Richards case is certainly interesting and thought-provoking on its own, it cannot do what a novel can; for instance, the legal record primarily shows Mr. Richard's side of the story and does not go into much depth about domestic violence and the other likely instances of abuse that Mrs. Richard must have incurred to reach the point of pursuing a divorce.

Research into the Richards vs. Richards case reveals more legal complexities than Blake may have been aware of. Additionally, it further emphasizes the significance of abuse, divorce, and the relationship between them in nineteenth-century America. Here Mrs. D'Arcy's legal education of Laura serves as a proxy for Blake's legal education of her readers; young women like Laura who are likely to marry soon are woefully undereducated about the realities of the legal and economic inequalities granted to married men and women and must be aware that marriage makes them incredibly vulnerable to abuse in these realms from their husbands, who are granted incredible rights over their wives.

Laws Do Not Protect Secretly Married Women or Bastard Children in Lost and Saved

In *Lost and Saved* (which was also examined in Chapter Three) Beatrice's abusive relationship, like that of Blake's Mrs. Moulder, is further complicated by her role as a mother. Naive to the laws and caught up in the romance of her whirlwind relationship with Treherne, Beatrice is unaware of the potential vulnerability she and any potential children she has face. She genuinely believes that she is legally married to Treherne based on the "marriage" ceremony in which she participated. Unfortunately, regardless of whether or not Beatrice was a victim of Treherne's deception, she is still completely accountable for her child being born out of wedlock. Beatrice recognizes that she has done nothing wrong (other than be duped by Treherne) and feels that she deserves to be claimed by him as "my father's daughter has a right to be claimed---as your child's mother has a right to be claimed" (233). Here Norton points out that although Beatrice morally and ethically deserves to be recognized as Treherne's wife, there is a great discrepancy between what is right and what is legal, which illustrates a major problem with laws that may claim to have one's best interests in mind and who they serve to protect. Even though Beatrice insisted upon marriage before consummating her relationship with Treherne and she knows without a doubt who the father of her son is (and he knows without a doubt that he is the father of the child), the law sees her child as illegitimate and she has no legal recourse for proving it legitimate.

Treherne's knowledge of the laws and Beatrice's ignorance of them allows another method that he can use to take advantage of and abuse his wife. Again Norton directly addresses her readership, who may be skeptical about the reality of Beatrice's naivety towards Treherne and the laws:

If my readers think it positively ridiculous to suppose that an educated girl of seventeen would either have believed herself married by the simple ceremony of a clergyman reading the service without witnesses when she was apparently in *articulo mortis*, or, — that ceremony failing, — that her son could be legitimatised by her after-marriage; let them ascertain what the ideas of law on these simple points may be, among very young ladies brought up in retirement, in this country where Gretna Green⁷ has only just ceased to be a Hymeneal temple, — in this country, the only one in Europe, I believe, where the innocent suffer for the guilty, and an after-marriage does *not* redeem the destiny of the children.

(268)

Norton reminds readers not only of Beatrice's age, but also the fact that she was on her supposed death bed when her "marriage" ceremony with Treherne took place. Yes, she should have been aware that witnesses are necessary for a marriage ceremony to be legal. However, she was very ill and, most importantly, she trusted Treherne, who is much wiser and more familiar with legal matters. Secondly, although the New Poor Law came into effect years earlier, it is unlikely that Beatrice would be versed in newspapers (not as respectable a reading genre for women as novels) and thus very knowledgeable about politics and laws. Beatrice's small and fairly secluded town may also not allow her knowledge of anyone who was affected by the law and, thus, a lesson from which she could learn. Norton points out the ridiculousness of a country and a law where after-marriage does not legitimize children; even if a man wanted to do the right thing for a woman and their offspring, the law forbids it. Like many other vulnerable women, Beatrice truly does suffer for Treherne's sins. To truly emphasize her point that it is no surprise that Beatrice is naive because of her age and sheltered upbringing and that every sign indicated

that she was married in a valid marriage ceremony, Norton turns to direct address, almost as if she is shaking the proverbial finger at her readers to reprimand them for blaming Beatrice for the abusive situation that she ends up in, which contrasts significantly to how much blame Sadlier places upon her character, Sally.

Beatrice and her child must face the consequences of the Poor Law of 1834. According to Ginger Frost, the Bastardy Clause of the Poor Law of 1834 placed the responsibility of maintaining illegitimates onto their mothers. Women could no longer name the putative fathers of their children and receive support from them (12). Although this clause was designed to protect men from being held legally and financially responsible for children that they were not the fathers of, Norton shows a critical flaw with the law; sometimes men actually are the fathers of the children that women attribute to them and, thus, should be forced to accept responsibility for children who will undoubtedly suffer from no paternal support. Echoing legalities that actually exist, Norton shows the fault with contemporary laws with Treherne, who, even if he reformed his ways and lawfully married Beatrice, would ironically still not be legally responsible for their child because their son will never be considered legitimate in the eyes of the law because he was born prior to marriage. Norton's novel (published in 1863) may have been written decades after this law was passed; however, little changed in the subsequent years and the law remained skewed towards protecting male interests: "Although some changes occurred in this law in 1844 (and more substantially in 1872), women remained at a disadvantage in collecting support; in addition, the amount of maintenance was small and ended when the child reached thirteen" (12). Even though Treherne is a member of the upper class whose wealth will only increase when he comes into his inheritance, he can easily shirk financially supporting his child; as with everything else regarding their son, it is Beatrice who must bear the burden. Even

with the "improvements" in the law since its inception, Beatrice and her child are destined to suffer because of the patriarchal law. Despite the fact that nineteenth-century England seems to be progressive in its laws, Norton's novel illustrates that these laws, written by men, favor male interests and that they are still unfairly disadvantageous to women's interests, such as protecting the best interests of their children and financially supporting themselves and their families. By showing Beatrice as an upstanding young woman who suffers from her association with Treherne, Norton emphasizes that these bad laws hurt good women.

Lost and Saved, Ishmael, Self-Raised, and Fettered for Life all show that men can exert abuse on their partners through economical and legal means. Although the nineteenth century was a time of progression in legal protection for women, these authors show the ease of men circumventing these laws, which left married women in extremely vulnerable situations and dependent on their husbands. Rather than protect these women in their charge as expected by societal gender norms, these men were oftentimes the biggest danger to and the worst protectors of these women. Additionally, as women had limited access to the public sphere, knowledge of laws such as those regarding child custody and divorce that affected them, or the finances to hire legal counsel, there was little chance for these women to benefit from these laws, however limited they may be; unfortunately, laws were usually designed to benefit male interests and were often interpreted by unethical lawyers and judges, furthering reducing the chance that women could find justice. These authors present reform novels that attack the vice of a corrupt and biased justice system. Women's lack of income and control over their finances also meant that oftentimes they felt they must stay in their marriages or risk destitution for themselves and their children; unfortunately, this financial dependence left women in vulnerable, submissive roles to abusive husbands. These authors wanted their readers to be aware that they could not

assume that their husbands would operate with their families' best interests in mind and to be aware how easily husbands could financially and legally abuse their wives.

CHAPTER 5

ADVOCACY & ACTIVISM

Patiently, devotedly, did this girl, whom the world would call lost, endure the trials and the hardships of her lot . . . hard-working, self-denying, but holding in her heart a burning revolt against the social position to which misfortune and man's social laws had condemned her (Southworth, *Ishmael* 116-117).

Although all of the women novelists in this project use their writing to draw attention to numerous forms of abuse that husbands perpetuate upon their wives, they primarily present the problem without really providing a solution or much hope for the future. However, Southworth in *Ishmael* and Blake in *Fettered for Life* both present proactive advocate figures (Ishmael and Frank, respectively) who energetically work to help vulnerable women. Significantly, both the advocates and the women they help are people whom society considers undesirable or unworthy of consideration in some form (either because of their gender, poverty, or questionable moral decisions). Although both figures have endured numerous "trials" and "hardships," they have made it their lives' work to revolt against the limited positions that society has given them either because of being born out of wedlock and poor (Ishmael) or being born a woman with limited career options (Frank). Significantly, both of these characters are non-traditional figures who encompass aspects of both genders, suggesting that it takes a very unique and special person, who utilizes the strengths of both genders, to achieve the reform necessary for aiding abused women.

Interestingly, both Southworth and Blake give their characters significant names. Ishmael is a name with strong negative biblical connotations. According to "Isaac and Ishmael," Abraham, believing that his wife, Sarah, is sterile, conceives a child with his servant, Hagar. Eventually Sarah does bare Abraham a legitimate son, Isaac, making Ishmael unnecessary as an heir; further complicating matters, Ishmael does not act or believe as Abraham would like and

there is fear that he will be a bad influence on Isaac. God tells Abraham to send Ishmael and Hagar away. After leaving with the food and water Abraham supplies, Hagar and Ishmael suffer, getting lost and running out of water in the desert until God produces a spring of water and then assures them that he has seen Ishmael's suffering and that Ishmael will become the father of a great nation; the prophesy is fulfilled and Ishmael becomes the father of many children and the head of the Ishmaelites or Arabs (n.p.). Much like his biblical counterpart, Southworth's Ishmael is also a child born out of wedlock who is unwanted by his father. Like Abraham, Herman meagerly attempts to provide for his son before he abandons him forever; Abraham must have known that Hagar and Ishmael could not possibly carry enough food or water to keep them alive on a journey of unknown length, and Herman should have known that providing one check to Hannah for Ishmael's maintenance would hardly be enough money, besides the fact that it was highly unlikely that Hannah's pride and dislike for Herman would allow her to even cash the check. After years of poverty because of his aunt's inability to earn much and the social stigma of being a bastard, Ishmael suffers greatly for years until providence (similar to God in the biblical Ishmael's case) sets in and through a series of lucky breaks (his free schooling, Reuben getting him law books, and an internship with Judge Merlin), he succeeds as a lawyer and earns the respect of society. As a successful lawyer from humble roots, who fights for the rights of those who are disadvantaged and overlooked by society, Ishmael becomes a sort of progenitor of a new America, where people like Ishmael and Mrs. Walsh finally have a chance.

Similarly, Blake's use of the name Frank is unlikely a coincidental choice. Blake's first husband was named Frank Umsted. In her autobiography, Blake writes that her marriage "had been on my part the result rather of circumstances than that of a strong and passionate love . . . but his devotion to me amounted almost to adoration and I felt for him very sincere and tender

affections" (qtd. in Farrell 41). Unfortunately, Blake's marriage ended in heartbreak and great financial difficulties. Unexpectedly, Blake's husband was found dead with a gun; although his death appeared suspiciously like a suicide, the coroner's report was inconclusive and Blake did not believe it was premeditated (69). After her husband's death four years into their marriage, Blake found out that she was penniless and that Frank had spent her inheritance (which muted his ambition for seeking work as a lawyer), which was between \$50,000 and \$100,000, as well as stocks that he had been given to invest by Blake's mother; the twenty-five year old Blake then solely supported a toddler and an infant (41-42, 68, 70). In a strange way it seems that *Fettered for Life's* Frank is Blake's attempt at fixing or rewriting her own history. Whereas the real Frank in many ways had a stifling effect on Blake by curbing her ambitions through the expectations of what was required for a proper wife and mother and by leaving her financially destitute with children to support, the fictional Frank is able to fulfill the role of a successful, charming, protective man (qualities in which the real Frank proved inadequate). Unlike the real Frank, who may have held Blake back, the fictional Frank encourages and even saves numerous women characters. The fictional Frank is also very much what Blake herself might have been, if she would have had the fortune to have been born male like her husband. Why did Blake just not create a better male version of her husband? Perhaps she felt that she could never perfect the Frank figure in a male form.

The Feminine Ishmael Challenges the Status Quo by Being a Lawyer in Ishmael

In addition to the numerous laws and the court case mentioned in *Ishmael*, as discussed in the previous chapter, Ishmael's career as a lawyer shows the legal undertones visible throughout Southworth's work. As an uneducated, lower-class man, Ishmael's seeking a legal position and realizing success as a lawyer is even more astounding than it might initially seem. In "Lawyers

and Public Criticism: Challenge and Response in Nineteenth-Century America," Maxwell Bloomfield discusses the important changes occurring within the American legal system in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Although public opinion on lawyers was rarely very favorable earlier in the century, during this time, the middle class pushed for quicker and cheaper justice (270). Ishmael, as a new lawyer who is also very conscious about the expenses required for legal representation (owing to his humble background), offers a much more affordable option for clients with limited financial means. Bloomfield also notes, "The drive toward reduced educational qualifications for lawyers parallels and complements the agitation by lower-middle-class constituencies for liberalized divorce laws" (271). Ishmael joining the legal profession and being accepted by his peers and clients reflects this change of attitude; other than his few years at Mr. Middleton's school, Ishmael is primarily a self-taught scholar who got the bulk of his education by reading old law books that his Uncle Reuben found.

Although the general public earlier in the century saw lawyers as distrustful or immoral, Ishmael maintains a balance between laws and ethics and represents a lawyer who can win cases while preserving his integrity. Southworth juxtaposes Ishmael's style of lawyering against that of Mr. Walsh's counsel of three lawyers during Ishmael's first trial:

Mr. Wiseman, was distinguished for his profound knowledge of the law, his skill in logic, and his closeness in reasoning . . . Mr. Berners, was celebrated for his fire and eloquence . . . Mr. Vivian, was famous for his wit and sarcasm. Engaged on one side, they were considered invincible. To these three giants, with the law on their side, was opposed young Ishmael, with nothing but justice on his side. (612)

Ishmael is positioned as the David versus the Goliath that is Mr. Walsh's three lawyers, each of whom is a celebrity of sorts within the legal profession and each of whom represents a different

quality that is effective, but decidedly not ethical. In contrast, this is Ishmael's first case and he is virtually unknown within this community. Although Mr. Wiseman sounds like an admirable and praiseworthy lawyer, he apparently needs the qualities of Mr. Berners and Mr. Vivian in order to succeed in court. Whereas Ishmael relies on truth and facts to guarantee that justice is secured for his client, Mr. Berners and Mr. Vivian have built careers based on flashy performances with little truth to solidify their claims. But, despite all of the odds being against Mrs. Walsh and himself, Ishmael secures justice for Mrs. Walsh.

Stockton discusses reluctance of nineteenth-century judges and legal systems to intrude upon marital privacy at the known risk of leaving wives vulnerable to the actions of their husbands. She writes that Southworth "repeatedly shows that wives need a safeguard beyond their husbands' protection, and she asserts that strong legal agents should provide such advocacy" (247). Although laws and the entire system of coverture previously assumed that husbands would be best suited for protecting their wives, Southworth and other writers of the time period realized that bestowing husbands with so much power over their wives often resulted in them taking this authority for granted against the vulnerable group that was married women.⁸ If the law refused to intervene to protect these women after husbands abused their power, who was left to care for them? Likely recognizing the difficulties in women achieving such roles or perhaps uncomfortable with women holding such public roles, Southworth does not postulate that these legal agents should be the wives themselves or even female legal representatives; she even refutes the need for legal equality and instead "depicts women as needing legal mediation who can convince the law to invade marital privacy when necessary. She understood, however, that good mediators were hard to find" (Stockton 247). Southworth makes it clear that Mrs. Walsh's marital situation needs fixed, but at no point does she suggest that Mrs. Walsh directly confront

her husband or take a more proactive approach to seeking justice for herself and her children. Instead Southworth delivers a savior in the form of Ishmael to rescue this helpless woman. Although Stockton does recognize Southworth's intent to show women readers that laws and husbands are often inadequate protection for vulnerable women, she does not address the uniqueness of the character of Ishmael as this legal agent; Southworth creates Ishmael as a very feminine figure, and it is precisely these peculiar feminine qualities that make him such a successful advocate for women.

Throughout the novel Ishmael is described as not merely a good man and a great lawyer; he is practically a saint whose primary consideration at work is always doing what is right regardless of what will make him money or increase his fame. As Southworth describes him, "He was no paid attorney; it was not his pocket that was interested, but his sympathies; his whole heart and soul were in the cause that he had embraced, and he brought to bear upon it all the genius of his powerful mind" (620). Interestingly, although it does mention his mind, Southworth's description of her protagonist does not highlight masculine traits, but instead dwells on more feminine traits like empathy and charity. In short, Ishmael embodies the traits of the ideal nineteenth-century woman. According to Barbara Welter in her influential article, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860":

The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged . . . could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife—woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power. (152)

In Southworth's novel these four traits also spell Ishmael. Raised by his very religious aunt, Ishmael certainly does not lack piety. His purity is evident in his commitment to his betrothed as well as in his determination to uphold justice for Mrs. Walsh, no matter how daunting the case. Although Ishmael must be assertive in his career as a lawyer, he does appear fairly submissive in his personal life, especially in his relationship with Claudia. Claudia's pushy nature always means that Ishmael does as she requests. Similarly, as a child in school, even though he writes the better composition, Ishmael allows his best friend to win the school award by rigging the contest in his favor. From his early days tending to his sick Aunt Hannah, Ishmael is no stranger to household chores. Ishmael seldom appears to socialize outside the house and seems much more comfortable in the domestic realm, surrounded by women.

In contrast to Judge Merlin, who speaks of the credit to Ishmael's career that representing Mr. Walsh would bring (a paying client for a relatively unknown lawyer), Ishmael decides whom he represents based on whether he believes they are in the right, not whether or not he will stand to financially benefit from the job (an unusual decision making process for a man who is not financially well-off and who has experienced utter poverty). Even more astoundingly, rather than seek a new client to represent who meets his criteria of being just and who can also pay Ishmael's legal fees, Ishmael actually seeks out Mrs. Walsh and insists on representing her despite the fact that she cannot pay him anything. According to Lori D. Ginzberg, reform work (charitable work to help others) in the years around the Civil War "carried the assumption both that virtue was more pronounced in women than in men and that this virtue could be the force behind a moral transformation of society at large" (5). Hence it is no surprise that, in the nineteenth century, charity and benevolent work was considered the venue of women, who were tasked with using their pronounced morality to positively affect the world. Choosing charitable work over business,

it is unlikely that many men of the time would choose to spend their time and energies assisting a relative stranger with no hopes of being compensated like Ishmael does when he chooses to help Mrs. Walsh. Going back to Welter's list of attributes, Ishmael's willingness to represent Mrs. Walsh pro bono simply because he believes in the righteousness of her case and he feels for her situation as a mother exemplifies the purity and domesticity requested of the true woman figure; Ishmael goes into the case knowing that the odds are against him and that this case will take his time away from profitable work, yet he never considers not helping her. Ishmael wholeheartedly believes in the sacredness of the domestic sphere of this mother needing to raise her children.

Significantly, in addition to his charitable inclinations (typically encouraged in young nineteenth-century women), Ishmael is described in ways familiar to nineteenth-century readers as the usual description of a woman character. Nina Baym discusses the standard plot of nineteenth-century novels written by women and targeting women audiences:

the story of a young girl who is deprived of the supports she had rightly or wrongly depended on to sustain her throughout life and is faced with the necessity of winning her own way in the world. This young girl is fittingly called a heroine because her role is precisely analogous to the unrecognized or undervalued youths of fairy tales who perform dazzling exploits and win a place for themselves in the land of happy endings. (*Woman's* 11)

Even though Baym's analysis focuses on a woman protagonist, this is also Ishmael's story. After losing his mother at birth, Ishmael lives with his aunt, who ignores her nephew's need for emotional support. Additionally, the abandonment of his father and the town's negative impression of his aunt (the townspeople do not want to associate with the sister of a supposed fallen woman) mean that Ishmael is left without any financial support and struggles daily to just

get by. True to Baym's definition, Ishmael performs “dazzling” feats as he saves the lives of various other characters, becomes a top scholar, and develops a career as a famed lawyer.

Although much of the novel focuses on the development of Ishmael's education and career (two masculine plot lines), there is also the secondary plotline of Ishmael's love life. Much like in courtship novels centering on women protagonists (an ur-plot that would be very familiar to Southworth's women readership), we see Ishmael's shy infatuation with the wealthy Claudia Merlin, a relationship that stands little chance due to their very different social positions, his absolute heartbreak when Claudia becomes engaged to someone else (he even sheds very unmanly tears), and finally his realization that Claudia's less flashy and more domestic cousin is a much more suitable and stable marital match for him.

Significantly, Southworth's novel serves as a blend of elements of both the more typical male and female bildungsroman. Ishmael's coming-of-age story not only includes masculine adventures (like his rescuing other students from a fire) where he serves as the hero, it also includes more the more typical female plotline. According to Eve Kornfeld and Susan Jackson's "The Female Bildungsroman in Nineteenth-Century America: Parameters of a Vision," the female bildungsroman is usually absent of a father (men only appear to serve specific roles and then disappear) and the protagonist must rely on their mother to "provide an example of piety and grace and to help them through the difficult task of reaching adulthood" (70-71). Ishmael is certainly absent from his father for all of his childhood; Herman's primary role is not only to inseminate Nora, but to indirectly lead to her demise, which prompts Ishmael's purpose in life to vindicate her death. Ishmael's Aunt Hannah, his surrogate mother, instills a strong sense of piety in Ishmael, who has incredibly strong morals and devotion to his family and friends. As for grace, Ishmael is the epitome of a controlled, polite man, who never resorts to anger or violence

when agitated. Kornfeld and Jackson also discuss how "In writing for adolescents, an author tries to encapsulate the ideologies which she feels will be of most use to her readers in their attempt to define themselves" (69). Through her use of the gender-bending Ishmael, Southworth encapsulates the best of both femininity and masculinity as models for her likely primarily women audience. Through reading this novel, readers will learn from Ishmael how to be independent, ambitious, successful, gracious, pious, and benevolent.

From the moment of his premature birth, the physical descriptions of Ishmael similarly border on the feminine, as he is often described as "pale and thin" (268). Oftentimes the terms used to describe him are those that the reader would expect to see describing the quintessential beautiful nineteenth-century heroine. He is described as "delicate" and "slender" with "sweet, smiling lips," "small" hands and feet, "flaxen hair," and a "thin, pale face [which] was as delicately fair as any lady's" (317, 332, 333). Undoubtedly, being raised for many years in a woman-headed household has also increased Ishmael's feminine sympathies and qualities; for instance, he often helps with typically female housework such as washing clothes and preparing tea for his aunt, who sometimes suffers from health issues (274, 293, 295). Through his development of these domestic skills, Ishmael effectively learns how to perform the role of a woman; this performance allows him to empathize with women because he understands the difficulty of their daily work. Being raised by his aunt for crucial years in his development has given Ishmael a very nurturing side, which is crucial to his success as the advocate figure; Ishmael later becomes distinguished from his fellow lawyers because of how much compassion he feels for those he helps.

Additionally, after hearing the sad story of his mother's difficulties, Ishmael vows to spend the rest of his life avenging his mother's death by doing all that he can to help other

women. Rather than seeking revenge on the father who has abandoned him or turning to violence, Ishmael seeks a very feminine form of vengeance by promising to help women like his mother: "Oh, mother! Oh, poor, young, wronged and brokenhearted mother! sleep in peace! for your son lives to vindicate you! Yes, if he has been spared, it was for this purpose! to honor, to vindicate, to AVENGE YOU! (378). Although seeking vengeance certainly seems like a masculine trait in contrast to the passiveness and ladylikeness expected of nineteenth-century women, Southworth shows Ishmael as taking a very feminine, sentimental approach to his vengeance. Rather than confidently charging off to begin his plan, Ishmael passionately weeps upon his mother's grave until his aunt gently orders him to get up, so that they can return home.

Ishmael's femininity is precisely what allows him to be such a successful advocate for women. When Judge Merlin first tells Ishmael about the case, he assures his protégé of the ease of the case given the circumstances and Ishmael being "good at law . . . [and] great at sentiment" (584). Judge Merlin ironically praises Ishmael for his sentimentality or feeling, the very trait that leads Ishmael to refuse to represent Mr. Walsh and take this so-called guaranteed win; Ishmael feels too much for Mrs. Walsh and the difficult situation forced upon her by her husband (a situation similar to that of Ishmael's own mother) and must follow his heart and aid her seemingly impossible case. As sentiment (and sentimental fiction by association) are typically associated with women, Ishmael's talent in this area further emphasizes his femininity, which makes him a better lawyer and a stronger advocate. Ishmael's sensitive, feminine side quickly allows him to gain Mrs. Walsh's trust when they first meet, which is quite a feat considering how weary and distrustful she is of men after being so hurt by her husband; when they meet, Ishmael talks "soothingly" " in a sweet, reassured, and reassuring tone," which is unexpected as men of the time, especially lawyers are expected to be blunt and oftentimes gruff in order to be seen as

assertive and masculine (594). Furthermore, Ishmael makes use of his nurturing side when Mrs. Walsh becomes distraught when she mistakenly thinks that Ishmael has come to issue her a court order or is legal representation for her husband. Southworth writes, "Ishmael did not interrupt her; he let her go on with her wild talk; he had been too long used to poor Hannah's excitable nerves not to have learned patience with women. . . . Ishmael's experience taught him to let her sob on until her fit of passion had exhausted itself" (595). Being raised solely by a woman has uniquely provided Ishmael with the empathy and patience necessary to calm down Mrs. Walsh. Ishmael's sensitive, feminine nature allows him to be a stronger advocate because he does not give up on aiding Mrs. Walsh or get angered by what many men would likely consider ridiculous female babbling. If Southworth could not imagine women's legal equality or women lawyers, she does the next best thing: she provides the ultimate women's advocate in an approachable (feminine) man.

Frank Challenges Gender Expectations by Being a Successful Man in Fettered for Life

Whereas Southworth offers an advocate for women's rights in the form of a particularly feminine man, Ishmael Worth, Blake's *Fettered for Life* presents almost the reverse with a women's advocate, Frank, who assumes the guise of a man in order to help other women and to work as a journalist. Like Ishmael, she too blurs the normative lines of gender; Frank is neither purely feminine or masculine, but a fusion of the best characteristics of both. Another similarity that these two advocates share is that they both start life as vulnerable and are seen in some aspect as less desirable members of society, Ishmael for being an illegitimate child and Frank for being a woman. Additionally, both of these characters lose a parent quite early on in life (Ishmael's father leaves immediately after his birth, and Frank is raised by her father), which likely has an effect not only on their development, but also their identification with the gender of

their remaining parent. According to Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, "women, as mothers, produce daughters with mother capabilities and the desire to mother By contrast, women as mothers . . . produce sons whose nurturant capacities and needs have been systematically curtailed and repressed" (7). Chodorow believes that women develop more compassion and nurturing because of their identification with their woman parent; men are taught to repress these more feminine characteristics and to identify more with their father. Significantly, with their characters of Frank and Ishmael, Blake and Southworth refute Chodorow's theory, which seems to assume that the child will always have a same sex parent available to parent them and thus will learn to imitate this parent. But Chodorow's theory proves true in an unintentional manner, as Frank and Ishmael clearly do show signs of identifying with and emulating the gender of the parent who is their caregiver. Furthermore, Ishmael comes from very impoverished roots (he is raised by his aunt, who has little means of supporting him). Similarly, it is very likely that Frank also comes from disadvantaged means since she makes no mention of having come to the city with an inheritance (which would likely give her more independence as a woman) even though Mrs. D'Arcy mentions that Frank is the only child of her father (65). Both these characters must and do find a way to move past these conditions and to succeed, which makes their achievements and triumphs all the more impressive given what they had to overcome.

Although the protagonist of Blake's novel, the idealistic, young Laura, recognizes the gendered inequalities that exist around her, especially in relation to the numerous forms of abuse that men inflict upon their female partners, she has virtually no agency to enact change or to truly offer any assistance, which is why Frank is such an important character. Unlike Laura, she does have the ability to aid other women. Throughout the novel, Blake provides a very convincing

portrayal of Frank as a male character. The only difference between Frank and the majority of other male characters is how idyllic a man Frank is compared to the numerous examples of abusive men that Blake provides. Frank embodies masculine strength, which is evident when Laura's new friend delivers a very convincing and manly punch to Mr. Bludgett, who forcibly grabs Laura and attempts to stop her from moving out of his residence (24). Although Frank may only be pretending to be a man, Blake provides numerous examples that illustrate Frank's physical strength, which could certainly rival the strength of any of the actual men. Blake provides very physical examples that demonstrate how Frank's strong portrayal of a man assists her advocacy work. She shows herself a force to be reckoned with who cannot be dismissed, even if she does perhaps have unusually strong feminist beliefs for a man.

The few lines of physical description of Frank that Blake provides could very well be a description of Southworth's Ishmael, which further shows how the reader might not realize that Frank is portraying a different gender; if readers were supposed to perceive Ishmael as a male, it is not surprising that a similar description of Frank would lead them to believe that she is also a male character. Frank is noted to be a "good-looking young man" with a "chestnut moustache, shading a mouth that, but for this, would have been effeminate" (10). Much later in the novel, Rhoda seems to realize the truth behind Frank's secret (but does not reveal this truth to the reader) when she provides a description of Frank's looks including Frank's "slender figure," "delicate face," and "small strong hands" (169). Blake does subtly hint (so subtly in fact that even the most astute reader is unlikely to realize what Frank's secret is before it is revealed to the narrator) that something might be amiss about Frank in that she is often described as having a "mournful" or "melancholy" look on her face as she reflects on her past.⁹ Blake describes Frank's "mournful" look when she and Laura have a conversation about trust in regards to Laura wrongly

placing confidence in being safe residing at the Bludgetts' house; Laura thought he was harmless because of his age, a very misplaced trust given his abusive behavior towards his wife and his assistance in Judge Swinton's cruel kidnapping scheme (25). Here Frank's mournful eyes reflect the fact that she knows that Laura has placed her trust in Frank, who has been lying to her and the rest of the world about her true identity. Laura later witnesses Frank's "deep eyes . . . gazing away into space as if he saw some mournful picture" (26). While discussing with Laura the many dangers present in the city for a young woman, Frank undoubtedly recalls her own initial struggle to succeed as a woman before making the difficult decision to pretend to be a man. Another instance of Frank's meaningful eyes occurs when she excuses herself to leave Laura with Guy, her potential suitor. Frank regards them both with "melancholy eyes"; in this same encounter, Laura also notes the "sad hungry look of those mysterious eyes" (143). Whether this look derives from secret feelings that Frank might harbor for Laura or from Frank's wistfulness at the unlikelihood of ever finding a romantic relationship of her own as long as she is disguised, it is clear that Frank suffers in silence at what she is missing out on. Although Frank suffers for a different reason than the various women that she helps, many of whom suffer abuse, her own anguish about hiding who she really is from those around her as she performs this role makes her an advocate who can empathize with other suffering women. Blake provides another slight indication (once again using Frank's eyes, which, for Blake, seem to be a window into Frank's soul or innermost thoughts) through her use of the terms "strange" or "odd" to suggest that maybe the reader does not know everything about Frank; for instance, Blake's first description of Frank mentions "a strange expression lurking in their [Frank's eyes] depths" (10). Additionally, Mrs. D'Arcy (the only character who knows the entire novel that Frank is actually a woman) tells Laura that Frank's history is "a strange one," but leads Laura (and the reader) to believe it is

because Frank is far from home and without a family (65). One might wonder why Blake employs all of this subversion to keep Frank's true identity secret until close to the conclusion of the novel. Blake's political agenda in illustrating the often overlooked abilities and skills of women necessitates that readers think that Frank is a man in order to make her gender reveal all the more astonishing so as to drive home the point that a woman really can do what a man can. If Blake revealed this sooner, she would run the risk of readers perhaps downplaying Frank's many accomplishments and heroic deeds.

One way that Frank proves herself an extraordinary man or woman is her work as a journalist, which allows her the means of not only interacting with the world, but also to affect change through what she writes about and the perspective she provides on the world's events. Early in their friendship, Frank utilizes her position to keep Laura's name out of the newspaper's report on the court, after she is erroneously arrested for propositioning men while out alone at night in the city (26). Without the kind action of her friend, Laura faces damage to her reputation, and it is even less likely that she would be able to secure decent occupation or lodging. Significantly, Blake makes it clear that Frank is not only capable of working full-time, but that she excels at her work, which is reprinted in other papers and praised by many; clearly Frank is not only a decent journalist, but a better one than many of her male counterparts, which is evidenced by Frank's promotion to the editorial staff (259, 301). Early in the novel, Mrs. D'Arcy talks to Laura about Frank's ambition: "He has uncommon abilities, and his aim is very high, I only hope he will have the strength to make the sacrifice necessary to its accomplishment" (65). Although this description nearly sounds like the American Dream wherein men with abilities can improve their situation, Mrs. D'Arcy's inclusion of the idea of strength seems peculiar, as readers would not likely expect a female character to question such a

masculine trait as strength, especially in a male character. Blake further showcases Frank's endless ambition, as Frank reveals her "ultimate achievement . . . I want to be editor-in-chief of some great journal, so that I can conduct it according to my own views, and make it the medium of my own thoughts" (301). Founding her own journal will allow Frank to share her views on the struggles that women face and allow women a voice in the world (301). Significantly, Blake does not disclose the reasons behind Frank's ambition until after her gender is revealed, when Frank shares why she decided to make the drastic decision of pretending to be a man: "my beauty . . . did me no good . . . I had no friends, I was entirely unprotected. I was insulted, refused work, unless I would comply with the disgraceful propositions of my employers; in short, I had the experience which so many young women have in the great city; poverty, temptation, cruelty" (366). By including the difficult struggle that Frank faced prior to her transformation, Blake emphasizes to her readers that, because of the unfairness of society and the inappropriate actions of men, Frank really had no other choice if she wished to be successful. Although Frank was certainly just as skilled and ambitious before this decision, she never would have thrived; the American Dream is for men only.

Of course, Frank is not the only writer in Blake's novel, as, before her death, Flora experiments with a writing career; however, she is certainly the only successful one, which raises questions on why Frank succeeds. Both Flora and Frank find that writing gives them a voice or a way of expressing their thoughts to others. A key difference lies in the genre that they write in; whereas Flora writes poetry, Frank deals in realism (306). Although an author may certainly make an impact with more fictional writing, Blake previously in the novel shows a disdain for less realistic literature, such as the works that Mrs. Bludgett enjoys, which are "showily illustrated . . . real exciting stories" such as the "Headless Lover, or Beauty's Last Temptation, a

Tale of Love and Despair," which Mrs. Bludgett reads as a means of escaping her oftentimes miserable day-to-day existence as a physically and emotionally abused wife (16). Whereas Mrs. Bludgett and Flora use literature as a means of escaping the awful conditions of the world, Frank uses literature as a means of putting herself into these conditions in order to educate others about the world. A significant difference between the literature that Mrs. Bludgett and Flora enjoy and the literature that Frank develops is that Frank (much like Blake herself) is heavily invested in the realm of realism. Both Frank and Blake recognize the power of realistic writing as a means of advocacy and keeping readers informed about the issues of the world.

Although Blake was never the great editor-in-chief that Frank dreams of becoming, she was an important reformer in the suffrage movement, and she frequently used her numerous non-fiction writings and speeches as means of advocacy to share her thoughts on the unfair condition of nineteenth-century women. For instance, sharing thoughts that later surface in her creation of the gender-bending Frank, Blake's "The Social Condition of Woman" (1863) states, "The true qualification for securing any position should be mental capacity, not the physical accident of sex. . . . it should be the quality of the work, not the sex of the worker, that should govern the compensation. . . . let them [women] do whatever they can do *well*, without being cramped or excluded by sex (381-82). Blake's use of "accident" succinctly shows her thoughts on the ridiculousness of limiting women like Frank, who are ambitious, intelligent, and skilled at occupations, simply because of genetics, something entirely out of their control. If women can do the work that is currently limited to men, Blake wholeheartedly believes that they deserve the opportunity and that they certainly warrant getting equal wages.

Blake poses Frank as her progressive voice for the cause of reform. Although it could be easy for readers who are unfamiliar with such radical ideas on women's independence to dismiss

Frank's cross-dressing and bold ideas as crazy, Blake purposely shows that Frank is an intelligent, ambitious, and considerate woman. Blake knows that she must speak against these dismissive critics of women's rights because she experienced these naysayers in her role as a public speaker for the women's rights cause. Blake's progressive viewpoint is evident in "Mrs. Blake Sarcastic: A Woman's Answer to the Opponents of Female Progress" (1883) wherein Blake, with her typical no-holds-barred attitude, responds to a speech that she had recently heard from Rev. Dr. Morgan Dix in which he spoke against women's progress and their independence, which he believed would lead to women leaving their homes, abandoning their children and husbands, and destroying the family structure. To dispute Dix, Blake states that for every one woman that left home for a "fashionable life," a hundred men had "ruined theirs by their vices" (8). Additionally Blake adds, "During a period of three months in New York three women left their homes and 463 men" (8). Much like Frank must surely do, to be taken seriously as a journalist, Blake not only engages her readers and listeners through sentimental means, she also utilizes statistics and reality to impress upon her readers how serious and widespread domestic abuse has become, a strategy she also uses in *Fettered for Life*. Although Dix may blame these women's leaving on their wanting new "fashionable" lives without the burden of tending to husbands and children, Blake makes it clear that these women were abused and lived in fear; as she does in her novel, Blake unmistakably demonstrates that many (if not most) women are faultless in their abuse. Additionally, Blake's novel shows that it is extremely difficult for women to leave, thus the idea of women just up and leaving on a whim is ridiculous; these female characters have every reason to want to leave, and they cannot because of financial difficulties in supporting themselves and husbands who would likely kill them, if they even tried; Blake's novel, like her essay, refutes Dix's claim to the point of indicating the very opposite; according to

Blake's novel, women would likely be more willing to stay at home if they were given professional opportunities and rights. Further emphasizing that most of these women who left their homes left out of fear, she speaks "of the men who have murdered their wives in this City . . . The night would not be long enough for the story. Sometimes the murders are put in the newspapers under the head 'Minor Items' or 'Another Wife Murder.' Did any one ever see the head-line 'Another Husband Murder?'" As she does with her novel, Blake brings to light the abuse that often remains hidden or gets minimized in short blurbs in the newspaper, which might easily be overlooked ("Mrs. Blake").

Another important reason that Frank is able to succeed as an advocate is because she embraces a male persona, which allows her incomparable freedom to live her life, pursue a career, and help other women. One of the clearest illustrations of this physical freedom that Frank has is her ability to rescue Laura from Judge Swinton when she rushes to help because she feels emboldened by her male disguise (168). Frank not only becomes the hero in Laura's rescue from her kidnapper, but also revels in the excitement of her adventure (evident by her "sparkling eyes"), which certainly would be less likely to have been a success if she had been recognized as a woman (186, 190-91). From the moment that she finds out that Laura has been kidnapped, Frank remains very cool and collected and effectively gathers as much evidence as she can on the details of the crime; Blake demonstrates Frank's facility with yet another masculine-associated skill by showing that Frank does not become hysterical and unable to cope with the situation (186). Blake shows evidence that male dress and the rights allotted to men enable much more freedom. Although Laura is certainly a very intelligent young woman, she still falls into the position of the vulnerable damsel in distress who needs a man (or in this case, someone who looks like a man) to rescue her. By showing that Frank can do all this and can do it just as well as

a man, if not better, Blake reveals the constructedness of gender, since Frank plays the part of a male very convincingly.

Significantly, through Frank Blake subverts the usual hero myth by presenting a strong female hero who must save the damsel in distress by fighting the evil male villain; this further shows not only the ability of women to help other women, but also the necessity as the majority of men (at least those seen in Blake's novel) cannot be trusted to serve the role of advocate or hero. On a smaller scale, Frank also chivalrously agrees to accompany Maggie and Rhoda to Maggie's childhood home, where she is heading to spend her last days (197). By pretending to be a male, Frank is able to provide a bodyguard-type presence for the ladies that helps ensure that they are not bothered or taken advantage of on your journey. In contrast to all the other male characters who interact with these women, who were once prostitutes and horribly misused by men like Judge Swinton, Frank does not judge them for their past actions and is happy to befriend them, which further shows the need for women to support other women. Another example of Frank's advocacy is evident when she aids Laura is by arranging for Laura to stay with Mrs. D'Arcy, an intimate friend of Frank's. This arrangement has a great impact on Laura because it not only provides her a safe, comfortable place to stay, but also exposes her to Mrs. D'Arcy's progressive and feminist ideas, which educates the young, naive Laura about the situation of women (25).

Unfortunately, as much as Frank enjoys the freedom and career opportunities afforded her because of her male persona, they have not come without tremendous personal sacrifices. The necessity of maintaining her facade has left Frank alone and desolate, and because of this she needs the community of women just as much as the more powerless women in the novel need her. However, despite the desolation that Frank's situation causes, she has a level of inner

strength missing in Flora. This allows Frank to tackle the world independently and to make her way without an inheritance or familial support, which is a step that Flora is not ready to take to support her career ambitions. In contrast to Southworth's Ishmael, who has a fairly easy journey on his path to lawyer/advocate for women through several lucky breaks like a free education, getting used legal texts, and being mentored by Judge Merton, Frank (likely because she is a female) must forge her own way to success and must make far more sacrifices to achieve it. Unfortunately, the sacrifices that Frank must make are continuous, with no immediate end in sight. Apparently it is only possible for nineteenth-century men to fulfill the American Dream, the ideal of being self-made, regardless of how much assistance they needed along the way (such as the numerous ways Ishmael receives assistance). Although Frank portrays a male in public, as a woman she must work much harder to make something of herself and receives no assistance along the way. Indeed, once the reader is aware that Frank is a female, any assistance that Frank would receive would likely be called into question as improper if bestowed by a male (especially as she has no close living male relatives) and any females that she encounters are unlikely to have the resources for assisting another woman; even in drag, a woman who works to improve her circumstances must toil harder than even the hardest working self-made man and likely settle for far less success.

Frank's use of cross-dressing to succeed in her employment echoes ideas that were circulating in the women's rights movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the July 22, 1869 issue of *The Revolution* and republished in *The Selected Works of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton (whom Blake knew through their mutual work for the women's suffrage cause) writes:

There are many good reasons for adopting male costume. 1st. It is the most convenient dress that can be invented. 2d. In it woman could secure equal wages with man for the same work. 3d. A concealment of sex would protect our young girls from these terrible outrages reported from brutal men, reported in all our daily papers. . . . When we have voice in legislation, we shall dress as we please, and if, by concealing our sex, we find that we too, can roam up and down the earth in safety . . . we shall keep our womanhood a profound secret. (253)

Stanton presents numerous logical explanations for why women should wear male clothing, reasons which Frank demonstrates to be true. The multiple physical escapades that Frank gets involved in such as rescuing a kidnapped Laura or surviving the shipwreck are likely made much easier by Frank's freedom of movement in a shirt and pants as compared to wearing a long dress. As compared to Laura's struggles to find meaningful employment (especially at a reasonable wage), Frank's costume clearly enables her to secure equal wages to her male counterparts, as her employer is unaware that she is not also a man. Furthermore, Frank's costume certainly protects her from "brutal men," as she is the only female in the novel who is not harassed or abused in some manner by male characters.

Frank's sacrifices of the sake of her job success are further evident when her work for the newspaper and her tour of the South take her quite close to her childhood home. Unfortunately, Frank feels she must avoid the people she used to know likely because of the fear that they could reveal her true identity as a woman and thus destroy her career (215). Frank comes to the unfortunate and unsatisfying conclusion that she must make work the sole focus of her life:

I shall not marry; my work must be father and mother, wife and children to me. I believe that a great daily newspaper may be conducted only in the interest of

truth, of justice, and of right. The experiment has never yet been tried as I hope to try it; but I trust that the day will come when I may shape, with my own hands, a paper which shall be a teacher of the people, a guide in the path of virtue, and reform, and this aim must for me take the place of all family ties. (302)

Here Blake reveals the ultimate way for Frank to advocate for the rights of women to provide them a voice against such infractions as domestic violence. Much like Blake uses the platform of her novel, Frank plans to use her newspaper to speak to the world as an educational tool for revealing the truth. Interestingly, Blake's strongest figure of advocacy plans to change the world via the world of journalism and newspapers rather than the medium that Blake uses for this work, a fictional novel. Perhaps Blake suggests that the best or strongest approach for tackling injustices to women like domestic abuse needs to occur on multiple fronts and must rely on women helping their fellow women.

In addition to Frank, the importance that Blake places on the necessity of women helping women is also evident in numerous examples of other female characters; furthermore, the multiplicity of these female advocates also shows how one woman helping other oftentimes leads to a chain reaction where the helped woman aids others. Rhoda mentions that she was once helped by Frank, a favor that she has never forgotten; Rhoda and other saloon girls were arrested by the police and housed in substandard conditions until Frank threatened to write about their mistreatment in the newspapers (58). Similar to how she helps Laura when she first meets her in the courtroom, Frank is able to use her newspaper position to give herself authority and to affect change that she would not likely otherwise achieve. Rhoda in turn repays this kindness that she was shown by taking care of her friend, Maggie, a young woman who is near death from consumption (93). Although Rhoda can barely scrape together a living for herself with her

meager earnings, she takes care of Maggie as though she is her daughter and does whatever she can in her power to make Maggie comfortable (to the point of feeding Maggie while going hungry and finding a way to finance an expensive trip to take Maggie back to her birthplace), despite having no obligation to do so; she simply recognizes that there is no one else in the city to tend to Maggie (93-94, 116).

Another character who is connected to Frank via this chain of advocacy is Mrs. D'Arcy. Mrs. D'Arcy and Frank became close after Mrs. D'Arcy tended an ill Frank and discovered her secret. Through her association with Mrs. D'Arcy, Frank has been able to further help women in capacities that are beyond her career. For instance, after Frank meets Laura and realizes that Laura needs a safe place to stay, he arranges for Laura to stay at Mrs. D'Arcy's home, where the older woman becomes a motherly mentor figure for the young woman. Mrs. D'Arcy aids Laura in numerous ways such as trying to help her find employment as a bookkeeper and helping her find pupils to tutor, which provides Laura with the necessary income that she needs to support herself and to remain in the city, which, in turn, enables Laura to be there as an advocate for others (25, 50, 69, 73). Mrs. D'Arcy also provides Laura with a sounding board for her developing feminist, reform-oriented ideas; as Laura's indignation at the unfairness of patriarchal society increases, she has Mrs. D'Arcy to educate her on the history of women's rights and to encourage her to work for change and to help other women (63, 141-42, 255-57). Although her advocacy work in helping women does not have the success as Blake's other female advocates (likely because of her inexperience and naivety because of her age), Laura continues the chain of advocacy through her attempts to help Mrs. Moulder and Flora stand up to their abusive husbands (examples of which have been analyzed in previous chapters of this project). Blake emphasizes the importance of each woman using her talents and gifts to do their part in this cycle

of women helping women. As Blake's readers belong to the same demographic of young females as these characters, this chain of advocacy might also extend to the readers in their own situations and encourage them to aid their fellow females.

The gender-bending advocate figures that Blake and Southworth include in their works put into practice the challenges to gender essentialism that Margaret Fuller writes about: "Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another. Fluid hardens to solid, solid rushes to fluid. There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman" (62). Although patriarchal nineteenth-century society might suggest otherwise with its concepts like the angel in the house and gendered separate spheres, Blake and Southworth demonstrate that male and female are merely two characteristics of everyone. Both Frank and Ishmael are characters that demonstrate this gender fluidity. Although biologically a man, Ishmael's childhood with his Aunt Hannah, his sensitive, nurturing nature, and his feminine looks, allow him to not only navigate the male world of the public sphere and having a career, but to also empathize with, connect with, and advocate for female characters, whom he has vowed to offer the help that he wishes his mother had had prior to her death. Frank also embraces her masculine side by deciding to present herself as a man although she is biologically a woman. Unlike Ishmael, who utilizes his feminine side to succeed as an advocate figure, Frank turns to her masculine side in order to most effectively aid vulnerable female characters. Both Frank and Ishmael utilize the appropriate gender qualities as needed in particular situations. For example, Ishmael and Frank make use of traditionally male ambition to succeed in their careers; however, they realize the importance of being compassionate and sensitive when dealing with clients or friends and family. Blake and Southworth show that this gender fluidity is important for being a well-rounded, good human

being; adhering to one's prescribed gender roles based on sex limits one's humanitarian advocacy; masculine strength and ambition is equally as important as feminine compassion and nurturing. As Fuller writes, "Ye cannot believe it, men; but the only reason why women ever assume what is more appropriate to you, is because you prevent them from finding out what is fit for themselves. Were they free, were they wise fully to develop the strength and beauty of woman; they would never wish to be men, or man-like" (31). Although Frank certainly enjoys the freedom of movement (both in the sense of physical activity that pants allow and that she gets from male clothing over female clothing, she never expresses any other reason that she prefers male clothing; she simply adopts male clothing out of necessity to remain safe as a single woman in the city and to get ahead in her career. If Frank could just be herself and find meaningful employment as her female self, she would unlikely to go to such extremes as maintaining this elaborate alter ego; however, as seen by Laura's limited job prospects and the pitiful pay that she is offered at these few prospects, Frank could never succeed, especially in such a male dominated field as journalism. Frank has tremendous ambition and talent in her job as a reporter, which she uses as a means of advocacy for helping women; however, she finds that she will never be successful while seen as a female and must adopt the guise of a man. Although it is fairly easy for Ishmael to embrace his feminine side with little repercussions, Frank's journey is far more difficult and involves extreme measures like hiding her true identity from her friends and coworkers and by distancing herself from her family; it is far more difficult for a woman to embrace her masculine side than for a man to embrace his feminine side. By providing a female figure who helps others, Blake shows the strength in female advocacy and the effect that it has on inspiring other women to also become female advocates. Although the novel's readers may not go as far as concealing their gender to find employment, they will hopefully be

encouraged to push the boundaries on what their parents believe they should or should not do; they can also learn from Frank to help their fellow women who may not have the familial, financial, or educational resources to improve their own situations. It is unfortunate that Frank has to resort to cross-dressing and hiding her identity from everyone because it dismisses the ideas of reform or advocacy for women coming from more normative, less drastic sources like the many laws we are supposed to be aiding women. Although cross-dressing provides a means of pseudo liberation for Frank, it comes at a tremendous cost, as she must sacrifice much of her own happiness for the cause.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

As I am finishing writing this dissertation, this semester a total of four sexual assault incidents involving students at my university have made the news, and it is only a month into the school year. Additionally, national news is repeatedly filled with stories of famous figures and accusations against them of domestic abuse. Whether it is the field of music with Chris Brown abusing girlfriend, Rihanna, or the world of sports with NFL player Ray Rice, who abused his then-fiancée, domestic violence is a topic that frequently appears in the media, but seldom appears in the classroom. Although my dissertation focuses on the past, with the most recent novel I examine being published one hundred and twenty-nine years ago, I am continuously amazed at how little has changed in the realm of domestic violence in all this time.

When I set out on the journey of writing this dissertation, I had many hypotheses about what these domestic abuse novels would look like (some of which were not realized) for what I would find and how this project would develop. Perhaps owing to my twenty-first century feminist ideas or my fondness for the very progressive *Fettered for Life* (one of the first novels chosen for this dissertation and an inspiration for pursuing a reform-oriented project), I initially expected the other novels to be more like Blake's and to take stronger stances against abuse. Originally I also expected the novels to provide more solutions for how to end abuse and help the victims. Furthermore, I thought that the descriptions of abuse would be more graphic and vivid, which is not the case with all of the novels; instead many of the novels that I found used coded language and only included the examples of abuse in secondary plots where the abuse is not witnessed firsthand by the narrator or protagonist. Perhaps this lack of vividness and graphicness is why there is gap in the scholarship of these novels, which is what my dissertation seeks to fill;

unfortunately, these texts may have been forgotten because they did not seem to deliver messages as strong as some critics, especially those looking for strong feminist and reformist interests, may desire. In the end, I found that Southworth and Blake were the only two authors to proffer any real solution for the abuse situation, which they do by providing an advocate figure to help abused women. Significantly, both of their characters fulfill this role through a combination and the strength of both female and masculine traits. However, all of the authors in this study make a point of emphasizing the toll that abuse has on its vulnerable victims.

The seven women authors that I examine all utilize the novel's strengths of invoking character empathy and providing didactic messages to show their female readers various types of domestic violence and warning signs of abuse. These authors make it clear that women of all socioeconomic classes are abused and that even so-called "good" men are capable of abusing women. Furthermore, these authors show that physical violence emasculates men and aids in the breakdown of socially supported gender roles, as men who hurt women are not fulfilling their role as protectors of married women. These authors also illustrate further collapse of gender roles when women who are emotionally and psychologically abused are unable to meet the rigid gender demands of running the household, keeping control of the children, and remaining calm, collected, and passive while their husbands belittle and demean them. Lastly, these women demonstrate the ease men have in circumventing the inadequate laws designed to protect women, which enables them to legally and economically abuse their wives.

There are several areas that I would have liked to explore with more time and resources. This dissertation focuses solely on women authors writing about domestic violence and the similarities that exist in plots, characters, language choices, and what they are attempting to show with these instances of abuse. It would be interesting to discover whether or not differences exist

with how male authors address domestic violence. Additionally, although this project only examines the fiction of white women, there are examples of fiction written by women of other races or ethnicities. Furthermore, by coincidence, the American authors in this project all lived in the northeastern United States; there are likely southern women authors writing about domestic violence. Do the accounts of women of other races, ethnicities, and location look similar to those of the authors examined here?

The scope of this project could also be expanded by increasing the range of years. For instance, were women writing about domestic violence before the latter half of the nineteenth-century? If so, what do these writings look like? Are they using different techniques? What does writing on abuse look like after the nineteenth century? Is there a progression of increasing awareness, more graphic descriptions, and authors becoming more vocal about the need for reform? Are later authors using similar techniques or is there a greater freedom to write about these issues as time progresses?

Further work into this area could also examine more contextualizing sources discussing domestic violence, such as pamphlets and non-fiction books. I was only able to examine a handful of examples of newspaper articles, all of which came from either *The New York Times* or *The [London] Times*; more examples of newspaper articles from additional sources would provide a much more thorough look at how this genre discusses abuse and their relationship to novels. Additionally, it would be interesting to see if smaller, more local newspapers address domestic violence in the same manner, as readers are more likely in smaller towns to know the victims and the abusers.

I had no idea how challenging it would be to find novels that included examples of domestic violence, in large part because of the problem of searching without set terminology in

an ocean of books that have been out-of-print for a century. Yet, I was able to locate eight novels that include numerous examples of domestic violence, which suggests that a more comprehensive and lengthy search stands to yield a wealth of novels that would expand our knowledge in this important area. The lack of criticism or visibility of these texts calls into question what other important voices or topics have been lost. My dissertation is offered as a beginning for this needed work and a call to action for further work on this subject. These novels and others like them reveal an important and unique aspect of what it was like to be a woman in nineteenth-century England and the United States.

In addition to recovering these forgotten texts and writing criticism about them, in order to ensure that these important works are not once again lost to memory, they should also be discussed in classrooms. Currently there is a real and dangerous problem of sexual assault and abuse on college campuses. These texts have not only the ability to teach students about a previous time, but to also aid students in talking about this current issue. These novels can serve as a means for students seeing a tangible connection between the past and today and for initiating an important discussion about sexual assault that is not happening in other courses.

As I briefly mention in an endnote in Chapter Five, I included one of these novels, *Fettered for Life*, in an American Literature before 1900 survey course that I taught in spring 2014. I taught two sections of this course with each class having an enrollment of about twenty students. Before starting class discussion of the novel, I was especially nervous about how the students would handle the multiple abuse scenes; were they mature enough to discuss domestic violence or would they shy away from the topic and only want to talk about other issues? Each discussion day I asked the students to supply the day's conversation topics for that particular section, and I was pleased to see that the students were very interested in talking about the

various ways that women are abused and restricted in the novel; they initiated these conversations and without much prompting, were able to make connections between the situations and struggles of nineteenth- and twenty-first-century women.

Unfortunately, because of time constraints (a common problem with survey courses) we were unable to spend as much time as I would have liked on talking about this comparison; we spent four total class periods on discussion of the novel, which amounts to a little over three hours. In order to not completely overwhelm my students (many of whom were not English majors and not used to lengthy fictional reading assignments) with reading, each class period was devoted to a fourth of the novel, which further limited the time that could spend on some of the most important sections of the novel (although we did use some of the last discussion day to talk about overarching topics). Each class period was a fairly open discussion, although I did ask students at the beginning of each class what they thought were the most important topics from each section to discuss as well as to think of the larger picture of themes and topics that the author is emphasizing. One activity that worked well during the three beginning sessions was to have students predict what they thought would happen next; most of their predictions turned out false. Interestingly, students repeatedly predicted who Laura would end up with, which shows just how deep-rooted romance plots are even with today's readers. Although some of the students thought that Frank was hiding something, none of them predicted that he was actually a woman (despite the fact that many of the students were using an edition of the novel that actually mentions a "female crossdresser" on the back cover teaser).

I have no doubts that my students would have done well with a lengthier discussion; it has been my experience that students are most engaged when talking about current issues and personal experience and observations and that this would lead to a profound discussion about

domestic violence and how much (or little) the situation has changed over the past century and a half. I did my best to provide historical context to help my students understand why abused women like Flora and Mrs. Bludgett feel pressured to marry and their extremely limited options for divorce and to financially support themselves should they try to leave their husbands. In a dream teaching situation, I would love to have a course that is able to solely focus on novels by nineteenth-century women authors that focus on domestic violence or at least the situation of women at this time. With more time, I could provide students with more in-depth knowledge of various laws that affected the novel's women characters and perhaps really provide students with this understanding of why these women would face a very difficult time if they stood up to their abusers or sought legal recourse. Although all novels that include domestic violence may not offer as much in terms of other themes or plot and character development, I feel that they would all be useful for aiding in this conversation about domestic violence and that an entire literature course could revolve about this issue.

Scholarship and teaching need to revive more nineteenth-century women's novels that discuss domestic violence. These texts enable students to not only discuss the situation of women at that time and the difficulties that they faced, but to also consider the similarities of these texts with modern life and the frequency of domestic violence, especially on college campuses. The current situation with domestic abuse is growing worse, and the literature classroom allows a place for students to discuss the current situation as a means of comparison with the situation of the nineteenth century, which is unfortunately not very different from that of today.

NOTES

¹ There are studies that address the abuse of black women in literature. For example, Andrea Stone discusses sexual abuse of slaves in both in a historical and a literature context in her "Interracial Sexual Abuse and Legal Subjectivity in Antebellum Law and Literature." Franny Nudelman's "Harriet Jacobs and the Sentimental Politics of Female Suffering" provides an interesting look at how Jacobs negotiates conventions of sentimental fiction while discussing abuse.

²Nicky Jackson's "Animal Abuse: The Link to Family Violence" explains that Henry Bergh was a wealthy philanthropist who was passionate not only about preventing animal abuse, but then went on to work towards preventing abuse of humans, especially children. His efforts led to the passing of the first New York law regarding animal welfare and the creation of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) (22).

³ For more information on how Patmore's "angel" is influenced by common ideas of the time, see Elaine Hartnell's "'Nothing but Sweet and Womanly': A Hagiography of Patmore's Angel."

⁴ The *Luminarium: Encyclopedia Project* reveals that Arabella was a favored cousin of King James. Although she greatly relied on this favor to get financial help, she accepted an engagement with a man who came from a familial line disliked by the king. She declared that she would not marry without the king's consent, yet she did so only a few months later. Her secret marriage was discovered and she and her husband were taken into custody. Both attempted escapes with only her husband succeeding. Arabella was caught and forced to spend the rest of her life as a prisoner in the Tower of London ("Arabella"). According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Anne fell in love with James, the future king of England, with whom she had a very complicated relationship. James made a marriage agreement with her, but later took

back his proposal. Anne found out she was pregnant, at which point James, after much indecision, decided to marry her after his brother, the king, granted him permission. However, Anne and James still struggled: "Questioned repeatedly during her labour, she insisted that James was the father and that she was married to him. James had previously denied that he was married, but now confessed it" (n.p.). It was months before the couple appeared together publicly.

⁵ During the nineteenth century, this association between animal and human abuse was recognized by many reformers. According to "Unleashing Compassion: Social Work and Animal Abuse," humane education groups were founded in the latter part of the century; one of their goals was to "teach children to prevent animal cruelty . . . [and] as they learned to respect animals, they would learn to respect the rights of other people as well" (Faver and Strand 176). The author also notes that the president of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals publicly spoke on cruelty to animals being a warning sign of potential abuse of humans (176).

⁶ The Library of Congress' American Memory page on Married Women's Property Acts provides a brief overview on these nineteenth-century laws as well as additional resources to consult for more information ("Married Women's Property Acts").

⁷ According to the BBC's "Gretna Dream: Why English Lovers Eloped to Scotland," marriage laws were much less stringent in Scotland than in England during the latter half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. Thus, English couples often headed to Scotland, especially Gretna Green (the first stop over the border in the route from London) to marry. Scottish "irregular marriages," meant that couples could marry without the government or

church involvement. This ended in 1856 thanks to the Lord Brougham Act, which required the couple to reside in the parish at least twenty-one days prior to a marriage ceremony.

⁸ According to Ellen Dubois' *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights*, coverture is a "legal doctrine . . . which determined that marriage removed from women the right to own and contract for property, transforming them instead into property" (283).

⁹ I taught this novel to two different sections of an American Literature survey and, as far as I know, none of the students realized Frank's secret prior to Blake's revelation that Frank is a woman. Over the course of several class periods (the reading was assigned and discussed in sections of about 100 pages at a time), the students were asked to make their predictions for what would happen in the rest of the novel and, although some questioned the validity of *his* good guy image and guessed that *he* and Laura would end up in a romantic relationship, no one ever mentioned anything about Frank's gender. They certainly were surprised at this secret (likely similar to how their nineteenth-century counterparts would have acted).

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