

NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERARY
WOMEN AND THE TEMPERANCE
TRADITION: TEMPERANCE RHETORIC IN
THE FICTION OF LYDIA SIGOURNEY,
FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER,
REBECCA HARDING DAVIS AND
ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

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by
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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SIGOURNEY, FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER, REBECCA
HARDING DAVIS AND ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

presented by Shelley R. Block,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy of English,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

I would like to thank my family and friends who contributed to this project in various and sundry ways over its development. This project is specifically dedicated to my parents who always believed in me; to my grandmother, Virgie Douglas, whose strength is inspiring; to Joel who shouldered additional responsibility without complaining and instead helped me press on toward the goal—without your faithful encouragement, I would never have succeeded—and to Noah, Nathan, Natalie who are my delight.

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ABSTRACT

Although historically scholars have viewed nineteenth-century temperance as a lesser movement in a century characterized by other weighty reforms, this dissertation builds on recent scholarship that redirects attention to the multi-faceted nature of women's temperance work as it coalesced women for important cultural work. Just as the women's temperance movement as a whole has suffered from critical neglect, so too have the literary productions of temperance women. In this work, I analyze how—despite the characteristic sentimental, generic stereotypes often associated with temperance literature—nineteenth-century female authors of temperance literature did in fact utilize this genre to respond to a wide array of social and political concerns. For Lydia Sigourney, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Rebecca Harding Davis and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, the temperance issue does not stand alone; my work illuminates how to various degrees and in diverse ways, temperance is intimately connected with topics such as women's concerns, community, capitalism and reform among a host of other pertinent social topics.

Introduction

Literary Women and the Temperance Tradition

Even at the inaugural convention of the national organization of the Woman's Christian Temperance Movement in 1874, participants realized that the singular intersection of the entirely female leadership of the organization with the political controversy surrounding the temperance agenda foreshadowed ramifications beyond those implied solely by the organization's "temperance" objectives. Ruth Bordin in *Woman and Temperance: the Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* reports that "[t]he presiding officer [of the convention] found it appropriate to remark that such a conference of women would have been impossible a generation or two earlier, when 'woman was often no more than a slave to man'" (36). Bordin proceeds to quote "[a]nother participant [who] saw it as one of the 'most hopeful of conventions since that one in Philadelphia when they wrote of 'life liberty and the pursuit of happiness'''"(36). These women's presentiments were not unfounded. The WCTU quickly became the most extensive women's organization in American history through the

nineteenth-century.¹ Not only was the WCTU the nineteenth-century's largest women's organization in terms of numbers and geography, but it quickly extended its scope beyond the confines of its temperance beginnings: although the ultimate goal of the WCTU remained temperance, as Barbara Epstein in *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* notes, the long-time president of the WCTU, Frances Willard, increasingly viewed "the question of alcohol [as] intertwined with every conceivable social problem" (124), a view which thus translated into the WCTU's involvement in a vast array of social and political arenas.

While in large measure my work does not deal specifically with the WCTU as an historical entity, I rely heavily upon the recent scholarship of that organization that identifies threads of feminist discourse within women's temperance work and further links those threads with a multiplicity of social and political agendas. Although historically scholars have viewed the nineteenth-century temperance movement as a lesser movement in a century characterized by other weighty national reforms, more recent scholarship argues for its importance, and

¹ See for example, Bordin's analysis of WCTU growth, page 56, Epstein page 115 or Mattingly page 1.

particularly for the importance of women's temperance work. Bordin argues that "the WCTU in the mid-twentieth century became a cheap joke and . . . the WCTU and Frances Willard have not received the attention they deserve" (xvii); thus, Bordin's "volume attempts to remedy in part this lack of scholarly attention" (xviii). Similarly, in an examination of the rhetoric employed by female temperance workers, Carol Mattingly's *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* asserts that "[t]wentieth-century feminists often more comfortably identify with leaders of the suffrage associations, even though temperance women were enormously effective in creating change for nineteenth-century women" (1). Accordingly, Mattingly finds that

[t]emperance was a major reform issue for most of the nineteenth century and represented the most important and far-reaching issue for women during that period . . . [y]et despite efforts in recent years to include women's voices in our understanding of our country's past, scholars have tended to ignore those of women associated with temperance. (6)

These and other scholars are seeking to reclaim a feminist orientation to the women's temperance movement and to redirect attention to the multi-faceted nature of women's temperance work. Correspondingly, these scholars find that the significance of the women's temperance

movement is situated broadly within its ability to coalesce women for important cultural work not only in the area of alcohol reform but perhaps more significantly in the creation and promotion of a powerful feminine voice to be used for articulating a particularly female political perspective on a wide range of public concerns.²

Just as the women's temperance movement as a whole has suffered from critical neglect, so too have the literary productions of temperance women. Mattingly, who devotes a portion of her temperance study to exploring the larger feminist themes found in a multitude of temperance texts, asserts that "as studies on nineteenth-century women writers flourished in the 1980s, little attention was given to writers of temperance fiction Most scholars of nineteenth-century women writers have ignored women's temperance fiction" (8).³ This dissertation is in part a response to the call of scholars such as Mattingly who describe nineteenth-century women's temperance literature

² For book-length studies of the WCTU's significance to the larger women's movement, see Carol Mattingly's *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* as well as Ruth Bordin's *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900*.

³ Subsequent to her publication of *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric*, Mattingly also published a collection of temperance fiction titled *Water Drops from Women Writers: A Temperance Reader*, making even more temperance fiction available to contemporary scholars.

as "a rich and engaging field of study for feminist readers" (8).

The historical neglect of temperance fiction as a whole has begun to change. Just as there has been a renewed sociopolitical interest in women's temperance activity, so too have recent literary critics begun to explore the multiple threads at work within temperance literature by both men and women. The recent revival in scholarly interest related to temperance fiction has resulted in several key works which provide a foundation for the study of the significance of temperance texts. One such work, *The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature* edited by David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal, is a compilation of essays discussing various critical aspects of temperance discourse with its principal focus on nineteenth-century texts. Reynolds and Rosenthal recognize the scholarly void in relation to American temperance literature and situate their volume accordingly. They argue that "literature inspired by the temperance movement successfully converted many and made an indelible mark upon American literary history" (6). Yet they note that "[s]urprisingly, literary scholars have largely ignored this vast popular movement" (6). In light of this lack of scholarly attention, the editors describe that

"[t]he purpose of *The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature* is to gather new scholarship by leaders in the field to probe the pervasive influence of antialcohol reform on American literature" (6).

While not dealing exclusively or primarily with temperance texts, Nicholas O. Warner's *Spirits of America: Intoxication in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* seeks to address the theme of alcohol and intoxication in nineteenth-century American literature. He remarks that "[s]urprisingly, few literary studies have examined the topic of intoxication" (4). Although Warner includes a chapter on female responses to intoxication in which he remarks upon the female temperance movement, he more generally, in the introduction to his work, describes temperance literature as "outside the purview of my purposes and interests here" (30). Thus, while Warner provides brief commentary on some of the authors on whom this study focuses, his emphasis is on providing an "examination of changing images of intoxication in women's writing . . . [to] enable us to understand more fully the overall literary-historical context of this theme in nineteenth-century American literature" (183). Therefore, his work does not provide a detailed analysis of any single

work but rather traces key themes in a variety of texts throughout the century.

Building on these recent discourses surrounding temperance and alcohol, I analyze how—despite the characteristic sentimental, generic stereotypes often associated with temperance literature—nineteenth-century female authors of temperance literature did in fact utilize this genre to respond to a wide array of social and political concerns.⁴ In many cases, fictional conventions of the temperance genre simply become a vehicle for exploring other pertinent and diverse cultural issues. Temperance reform was indeed an ideal discourse for “tempering” many more highly politicized messages for audiences who would be unused to hearing controversial opinions from the voices of women. Indeed, the suitability of temperance reform as a potential political springboard evolved because of its complexity as both a moral issue related so closely to concerns of home-life that the public deemed it appropriate for women as well as its status as a political issue, requiring specific legislative action. In her work *Disorderly Conduct*, Caroll Smith-Rosenberg

⁴ I would contend that this literary response mirrors what scholars such as Bordin and Mattingly have identified within women’s temperance rhetoric as a general shift from moral suasion to a more politicized, public response to intemperance.

describes the transformation of a feminine moral voice into a feminine political voice:

[O]utside the home, woman's peculiar moral endowment and responsibilities justified her playing an increasingly expansive role When men transgressed God's commandments, through licentiousness, religious apathy, the defense of slavery, or the sin of intemperance—woman had both the right and the duty of leaving the confines of the home and working to purify the male world. (127)

Audiences who were, thus, unwilling to listen to women's opinions on issues of race, class, or specifically female concerns such as suffrage, might be wooed by the moral implications of the temperance tale. By enlarging the boundaries of temperance fiction beyond those of specifically temperance themes, women were able to voice distinctly political opinions on a diversity of subjects.

An abundance of relatively unexamined temperance literature by female authors both well-known and obscure exists in a variety of venues. My study focuses on four nineteenth-century women—Lydia Sigourney, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Rebecca Harding Davis and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps—all with notable literary reputations apart from their temperance writings. Yet, where scholarship on these temperance texts exists, and in some instances it is very meager, rarely does the scholarship interrogate the ways that the temperance genre interfaces with the larger

cultural and political themes found in these works. My aim then is to analyze how an understanding of temperance—including the history of the nineteenth-century women's temperance movement as well as generic conventions associated with temperance literature—informs the larger thematic arguments of these works. Without an historical understanding of the intensity and wide-ranging efforts of the women's temperance movement, the depth of the thematic content of these works might be unexpected given their "temperance" label: these novels and stories respond to issues as "surprisingly" political as capitalism, industrialism, class and race as well as more "female-oriented" issues such as suffrage or community. The richness of this fiction is itself an argument for a continued reexamination of the discursive elements at work within the temperance genre.

My first chapter serves as an introduction to the most common aspects of women's temperance literature. This chapter which focuses on the temperance literature of Lydia Sigourney, as compiled in *Water-Drops* (1848), seeks to map out the formulaic conventions of the temperance genre to provide a basic background for my later assertions about the innovative ways certain female authors used or manipulated these formulas, to push standard themes beyond

standard expectations. Temperance literature is, as Karen Sánchez-Eppler asserts, "a literature generally characterized by formulaic writing" (60). And yet, this formulaic writing becomes a discourse not merely about alcohol control, but when utilized by female authors, the conventional plot structure Sánchez-Eppler identifies, "degeneration from the first misguided sip to destitution and death" (60), also embodies an undercurrent of feminist meaning. These stories raise questions about the recourse available to women whose husbands are intemperate. What is the role of a "dutiful" wife? What methods do mothers employ in their attempts to instill temperate virtues in their children? Even the most basic temperance storylines, as Sigourney often utilized, provide insight into nineteenth-century gender ideology and female discourse communities.

Chapter two focuses on a more radical use of temperance ideology by examining the connections between race and temperance as elucidated through the lens of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's works "The Two Offers" (1859) and *Sowing and Reaping* (1876-1877). In her exploration of the participation of African American women in the temperance organization, the WCTU, Mattingly finds that "[b]lack women did often value their connection with

the WCTU . . . primarily for the agency it afforded them in fulfilling their own purposes" (76). This desire to utilize temperance rhetoric as a means of furthering particularly black communal goals is, as I argue here, at the heart of Harper's temperance fiction, specifically "The Two Offers" and *Sowing and Reaping*. Although the WCTU may be considered somewhat progressive for its inclusion of blacks within its organizational hierarchy, the racial relationships within the organization were not without turmoil, and Harper was very much aware of and involved in the racial tensions of the union. This fact coupled with the publication of Harper's temperance fiction in black periodicals with separatist agendas highlights my assertion that Harper's temperance arguments have radical intentions for their black audience. Although the temperance rhetoric used by African Americans is sometimes interpreted as being assimilationist, promoting methods for blacks to join white, bourgeois culture, I assert that Harper's invocation of the temperance theme serves as a call for blacks to separate themselves from white middle-class culture. Her literature, thus, marks a radical departure from the ideology of the temperance movement as outlined by scholars, such as Joseph Gusfield, who characterize the temperance movement as a "symbolic crusade" by the upper

classes to reassert their value systems on the underprivileged; Harper instead uses temperance as a means of promoting a black value system counter to the consumer culture promoted among the white middle class. For Harper, the multiple threads of temperance discourse allow her not only to decry alcohol consumption but also to raise important questions about the materialistic practices she associates with white capitalistic structures. Approaching temperance as a black and a female, Harper's texts are multi-layered in that they address issues such as women's suffrage alongside issues pertaining to the black community as a whole.

Chapter three examines temperance rhetoric as a response to American social shifts directly related to the rise of industrialism and the pursuant emphasis on capitalistic culture. Rebecca Harding Davis in her novel *The Tembroke Legacy: A Domestic Story* (1869), serialized in *Hearth and Home*, rhetorically links the problems associated with alcoholism with concerns about the ways in which an industrialized society itself fosters intemperance. Within her novel Davis both invokes and deconstructs common temperance discursive patterns in order to raise questions about the formulas associated with temperance reform. Perhaps the most provocative inquiry Davis makes into

temperance discourse comes when she interrogates the intersection of temperance with theories of capitalism. Rhetorically, temperance and capitalism were commonly linked as being important counterparts for economic success: a temperate lifestyle fashioned one to be a "good" worker which in turn allowed one to participate more fully in capitalistic consumer culture. In this particular novel, however, Davis reverses this commonly held notion and posits the existence of an addictive quality to capitalism that encourages intemperate qualities rather than instilling temperate ones. Throughout her exploration of this "underside" of the relationship between capitalism and intemperance, Davis depicts how an addiction to material success as a good worker in an industrialized society parallels addiction to alcohol and how both cause disruption in the continuity of the perception of personal identity as well as a disruption in natural social relations. The novel also comments on a wide range of social topics including the efficacy of the reform methods utilized by temperance societies in addition to a woman's role in energizing male reform. Although *The Tembroke Legacy* appeared during the period Jean Pfaelzer labels as that of Davis's "best fiction"(5), the novel has received

little literary attention, and yet the novel exhibits a complexity of themes that merits further attention.

The primary texts for my fourth chapter are the novel *A Singular Life* (1894) and the novella *Jack the Fisherman* (1887) both by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (Ward). Phelps's texts analyze the religious dimensions of temperance reform and ultimately find temperance reform primarily centered on rhetorical constructs rather than on real and practical reform efforts. Similarly to Davis, Phelps finds economic culture at the heart of the problem of intemperance. Phelps, however, depicts a class-based system of oppression rooted in capitalistic cultural tendencies rather than the general materialistic malady that Davis references; thus, Phelps's portraits of intemperance center on the lower classes who are often exploited by those who rhetorically espouse alcohol reform but who in practice strategically ensnare those less fortunate into excessive alcohol consumption. In Phelps's tales threads of religious and economic reform discourses converge to restrict and ultimately silence those for whom reform is supposedly intended. Phelps depicts a reform movement emptied of its power to open up spaces for the social mobility that it touts; thus, temperance reform becomes a rhetorical façade rather than a vehicle for true reform. Ultimately,

however, Phelps is ambiguous about whether true reform is a viable possibility under any circumstances. While characterizing the hero of *A Singular Life*, Emmanuel Bayard, as a man set apart from traditional reform movements both religious and economic, Phelps allows Bayard to make significant inroads in his attempts to squelch the alcohol industry. Bayard's untimely death, however, problematizes any easy solutions to the complexities of real reform.

Spanning decades and crossing cultural, racial and economic lines, these female authors all recognized the efficacy of invoking the common nineteenth-century discourse of temperance to explore wide-ranging social concerns. However, because of this very invocation of the temperance genre, and the corresponding assumptions regarding the often trite and predictable plot/moral structure, these stories are often overlooked in scholarly conversation. And yet these authors were willing to transgress generic conventions and to connect their society's engagement with temperance with concurrent cultural issues, demonstrating their awareness of the ways in which one cultural dialogue—temperance—informs other pertinent social questions. Temperance fiction, thus, becomes an interesting venue in which to study women's

political and cultural concerns: as a genre it provides a forum for political discourse while simultaneously attempting to impose the boundaries suggested by a conventional, generic plot structure. So, while temperance itself, as the largest women's movement of the nineteenth-century, and temperance fiction are deserving of recent scholarly attention, these particular stories are valuable for more than their contribution to the increasingly well-defined portrait of American temperance fiction; they are equally important for their portrayal of female cultural critique within the confines of a proscribed, culturally-sanctioned genre in an era when women were discovering a political voice.

Chapter One

"Home, That Green Sheltered Islet": Alcohol and the Domestic Sphere in Lydia Huntley Sigourney's Temperance Fiction

In her *Legacy* profile of Lydia Howard Huntley Sigourney, Mary G. De Jong identifies Sigourney as "[t]he most famous literary woman in mid-century America" (35). Yet despite, or perhaps because of, her nineteenth-century notoriety, much of Sigourney's modern critical reception has been unfavorable. De Jong proceeds to observe that Sigourney

has been labeled by several modern critics for easy dismissal as a sentimental, circumlocutionary, prolific poet-notorious for her versification of conventional attitudes and preoccupation with death, resented for her extraordinary popularity. (35)

Indeed, Gordon S. Haight, writes that although he

hoped to find among her poems some few pieces that would establish her right to the reputation she enjoyed for half a century as America's leading poetess . . . [,] before reading many of the forty-odd volumes through which the search ultimately led . . . , [he] was forced to agree that posterity had judged fairly in denying her claim. (ix)

The majority of modern critical commentary dealing with Sigourney's work centers on her poetry and even more narrowly on her sentimental poetry, as De Jong's comments

reflect, despite the fact that Sigourney wrote in a variety of genres. Nina Baym in her article, "Reinventing Lydia Sigourney," reasons that

the Lydia Sigourney who was so often albeit so ambiguously and ambivalently praised in her own lifetime, and has been so heartily caluminated subsequently, is a representation based on only some fraction of what she wrote and published. The Sigourney of the consolation elegy, the funerary poem, the Sigourney obsessed with dead children and dead mothers, has been constituted by a succession of audiences, each basing its commentary and opinion on an ever smaller portion of the original record. Even now, when writing by antebellum American women is more highly valued than it has been for a long time, the mere mention of Sigourney's name suffices to invoke a caricature: a mildly comical figure who exemplifies the worst aspects of domestic sentimentalism. (387)

One of the mostly forgotten forms of Sigourney's record is her temperance fiction. Not surprisingly, this "caricature[d]" author's efforts in a genre commonly observed itself to be formulaic and sentimental have not enhanced Sigourney's reputation. Indeed Sigourney's temperance fiction has garnered labels similar to those applied to her domestic poetry; for example, Nicholas O. Warner deems her temperance tales "cloyingly lachrymose productions" (141).⁵

⁵ In *Liquor and Learning: Temperance and Education in Lydia Sigourney, David Belasco, and Willa Cather*, Gerard Francis Defoe also contributes to a body of recent scholarship providing a serious treatment of Sigourney's temperance

Despite the predominantly negative commentary on Sigourney's oeuvre, specifically her temperance fiction, recent scholarship provides alternate frameworks for analyzing Sigourney's use of convention across generic lines. In her article "Hannah More, Lydia Sigourney, and the Creation of a Woman's Tradition of Rhetoric," Jane Donawerth characterizes Sigourney's use of rhetoric, and particularly gendered rhetoric, "not [as] the radical end of the spectrum of women's rhetorical theory, but instead, co-opt, as a means to make some room for rhetorical theory by women, the movement to delineate a woman's sphere" (155). Further defining her argument, Donawerth asserts that Sigourney in her rhetorical theory "aims at a progressive goal by appropriating a conservative argument" (158).⁶ Speculating on the broad implications of her assertion, Donawerth "predict[s]" that

fiction. He analyzes "The Intemperate" and "To a Shred of Linen" in conjunction with themes of learning and education.

⁶ For example, Donawerth writes, "The sisterhood that Sigourney creates through her citation is not a liberated one. On the title page of *Letters to Young Ladies*, Sigourney cites More in pride of place: 'Every sort of useful knowledge should be imparted to the young, not merely for its own sake, but for the sake of its subserviency to higher things.' This seems a conservative claim: frivolous, irrelevant things should be left out, and the young should only be taught what is useful to spiritual or moral goals. But this is a quotation of an expert in girls' education, on the cover of a book addressed to

[o]nce we finish the recovery of the history of nineteenth-century parlor entertainment by women, . . . we will have a similar history of compliance and resistance, of accepting the domestic sphere, but using it as a powerful weapon on public issues. (158-59)

Donawerth's claims resonate with tenets of Baym's analysis of Sigourney's historical pieces. Baym contends that "antebellum women who wrote history did so in various ways and for various purposes. But all their history writing, in my view had a public intention and thus might have been seen as an incursion on the male sphere" (394 ftnt. 19). Both scholars contend that Sigourney's very participation in the discourse of rhetoric or history gives her work a political edge. This political edge gives rise to a rhetorical tension within Sigourney's works as a result of her incorporation of traditional, sometimes gendered, rhetoric within a more progressive discourse. So not only do Baym and Donawerth recognize progressive elements within Sigourney's work; both also comment on the presence of rhetorical conflict within the genres they analyze. While Donawerth attributes Sigourney's rhetorical discrepancies to her acceptance of the domestic sphere and simultaneous reappropriation of domesticity "as a powerful weapon on

schoolgirls, by another expert in girls' education. So this quotation is actually an argument for women's education, which in the mid-nineteenth century was unfortunately still in need of defense" (158).

public issues" (159), Baym locates the nuances of the tensions evident in Sigourney's historical pieces as a result of Sigourney's recognition of "the insoluble *political* and *moral* problem that the triumphs of Christianity and republicanism in America were achieved at the cost of their own basic tenets" (394).

Similar rhetorical tensions exist within Sigourney's temperance fiction; therefore, these analyses by Baym and Donawerth provide a schematic by which Sigourney's temperance work may also be evaluated. Sigourney's temperance fiction, as exhibited in her work *Water-Drops*, alternately reinforces conventional approaches to temperance reform, temperance fiction and the domestic sphere while simultaneously depicting the failures of separate sphere rhetoric, especially regarding temperance reform, to engender change. Thus, without being overtly political, this fiction is, even unknowingly, indicative of the women's temperance movement's progression toward politicized, gendered goals.⁷

⁷ Warner, too, suggests the possibility of subversion within female-authored texts dealing with alcohol and drugs, citing Joanne Dobson's theories of subversion. Warner does not, however, analyze Sigourney's works in conjunction with this ideology. See Warner page 208.

So while in its adherence to temperance conventions, including a reliance on tearful scenes to which Warner alludes, and its invocation of domesticity, Sigourney's temperance fiction may seem unremarkable—even reinforcing the status quo, these works, and others like them, record an important historic context in the evolution of temperance into a highly polemic battleground for women's involvement in the political arena. Published in 1848, decades before the overtly political women's temperance crusades or the founding of the increasingly political Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), Sigourney's *Water-Drops*, a compilation of poetry, essays and fiction all centering on the temperance issue, delineates Sigourney's mostly conservative version of the female role in espousing temperance. Even in their reliance on common temperance themes, images and plots, the selections in this work push readers beyond heavily stereotyped conventions to at least two other recurring features of this fiction: the importance of female social networks and the tenuous balance between political and domestic rhetoric the fiction asks its readers to negotiate. Both of these elements are foundational for later, more highly-political female temperance work. Thus, alongside their invocation of formulaic conventions related to alcohol control, many of

these temperance selections also reveal an alternate discourse of gender ideology. Additionally, an understanding of the conventions at work in these stories is subsequently important for distinguishing how later authors manipulate these same conventions for more polemic ends.

Temperance and Female Discourse Communities

As *Water-Drops* opens with the "Preface," readers find Sigourney consciously participating in what Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has described as "the female world of love and ritual" (53).⁸ Here in the "Preface" Sigourney adopts a role important within this female social network Smith-Rosenberg describes, that of a friendly adviser, a role Sigourney also embraces in others of her works. This role is one that scholars often overlook in their assessments of Sigourney according to Baym who asserts that one Sigourney who is

unknown to modern criticism is Sigourney the preceptress, author of books like *Letters to Young Ladies*, *Letters to Mothers*, and *Whispers to*

⁸ In her essay "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," Smith-Rosenberg describes how "a female world of varied and yet highly structured relationships appears to have been an essential aspect of American society. These relationships ranged from the supportive love of sisters, through the enthusiasms of adolescent girls, to sensual avowals of love by mature women. It was a world in which men made but a shadowy appearance" (53).

a *Bride*. In these conversational works she assumes the persona of trusted sisterly or motherly guide. This persona advocates a mix of republican and Victorian domestic ideologies that positions women in a home space at once within and apart from the larger social body. (391)

Utilizing the role of female adviser, Sigourney opens *Water-Drops* with a strong gesture toward highly gendered rhetoric. Sigourney writes,

Much has been said and done in the cause of Temperance and for the reformation of those who have swerved from its dictates. Yet there is still a strong tide to stem, and a great work to achieve. Are the female sex fully aware of their duties in this matter? (iv)

She then proceeds to link the need for female action to the sufferings of women caused by intemperance: "Too many of them [women] have, indeed, felt the miseries of a desecrated fireside, and the transformation of the natural protector of themselves and their children into a frenzied foe" (iv). After asserting women's moral imperative to participate in temperance reform, Sigourney clearly situates her call to action within traditional, domestic sphere rhetoric. She contends,

It has been repeatedly asked, if females are prepared to render all the aid in their power for the suppression of a crime which peculiarly threatens their most sacred interests. What is the nature of the power that they may command? Does it not consist principally in home-influences? In preventives,---in pencil-traces on the tender mind,---when it 'turneth as wax to

the seal?' Is not the structure of domestic life committed to their care? (iv-v)

Indeed, Sigourney specifically denies encouraging her audience to participate in the more political activities associated with temperance reform, arguing,

What then is the aid that woman can most fitly lend . . . ? Not the assumption of masculine energies, not the applause of popular assemblies; but the still small voice singing at the cradle-side,---the prayerful sigh, that cries where seraphs veil their faces. So may she steadfastly co-operate with the blessed agencies that work around her. (v)

By adopting a traditional domestic rhetoric, Sigourney here legitimizes her entrance into public discourse on a potentially political topic. Yet while her overt message reinforces the traditional use of domestic, moral suasion to combat intemperance, there are moments when her rhetorical strategies evince a discomfort with the success of these methods.⁹ For example, in the opening paragraph of the essay, as quoted above, Sigourney admits that "there is still a strong tide to stem and a great work to achieve" (iv). Despite the fact that the methods Sigourney advocates are the traditionally sanctioned ones that are securely in place, she acknowledges that this formula has

⁹ These subtle discrepancies are reminiscent of the tensions Donawerth describes in Sigourney's discussions of rhetorical theory.

failed to achieve its desired success. She also subtly hints that perhaps there is more for women to accomplish for the temperance cause when she questions "if females are prepared to render all the aid in their power for the suppression of a crime which peculiarly threatens their most sacred interests" (iv). Although she later alleges that she is not encouraging women to enter into masculine realms, one reading of her query certainly suggests that the domestic sphere may not fully exhaust all of women's reform potential, especially in light of the advances domestic, moral suasion has failed to make.

For Sigourney, the female discourse community represents a forum for addressing a range of issues; thus Sigourney's tenuous negotiation of domestic rhetoric and its failures to achieve a great measure of success is only one of several themes that is introduced in the "Preface" and subsequently appears throughout various selections in *Water-Drops*. In the "Preface" Sigourney also raises questions about the growing cultural emphasis on material indulgence and its relationship to intemperance.¹⁰

Intimating that a cultural emphasis on self-indulgence encourages intemperance specifically regarding alcohol,

¹⁰ This is a theme that other female authors will directly tie to ideologies associated with capitalism. See, for example, my chapter on Rebecca Harding Davis.

Sigourney writes, "Is abstinence from the intoxicating cup, the *whole* of temperance? Is it wise to pamper all the appetites, and then expect the entire subjection of one?" (v). Sigourney's engagement with broad cultural issues in conjunction with her participation in female discourse communities, defined by Smith-Rosenberg as "highly integrated networks" (61), can be viewed as foundational for the later organization of increasingly political women's temperance organizations such as the WCTU. Thus, even with her use of traditional domestic rhetoric in a text such as the "Preface," Sigourney participates in creating a space for later, polemic temperance rhetoric.

Two other pieces in *Water-Drops* are significant for their emphasis on female discourse communities and relational networks. "Letter to Females" is an essay in which Sigourney once again adopts the "preceptress" role and further elaborates the themes she sets forth in the "Preface." She primarily addresses private remedies for intemperance from the vantage point of an older, established woman with experience at keeping a well-ordered domestic sphere who is dispensing advice to a younger protégé. She writes,

We, my dear friends, to whom are intrusted the structure of domestic life, and the framework of families, are the natural and interested

guardians of temperance and purity Home,
that green, sheltered islet, amid the great waves
of an unquiet world, is our blessed province.
(255)

Moments of rhetorical tension are, however, evident in this piece as well, as Sigourney offers a call to action:

When, to efface a stigma from national character,
the philanthropist and statesman are combining
their energies, it becomes not those of humble
name or obscure station to remain inactive. Our
sex, depending by physical weakness as well as
the structure of refined society, on the
protection of others, has immense interests at
stake in the prevalence or suppression of that
lunacy, which may transform protectors into
murderers. The plea of want of influence is not
available, since far-sighted politicians admit
that no vice can obtain great preponderance in a
civilized community, without the permission of
females. (261)

Though she later clarifies that the action she envisions is on the home-front, "let us not withhold the aid that, in our province of home, it is our part to render," Sigourney again admits that "temperance . . . has still a giant's labor to perform" (261), an admission that domestic moral suasion is not completely effective. Additionally, her emphasis on the toll intemperance exacts particularly on women mirrors the later rhetorical emphasis of female temperance workers who advocate female political action.

A second piece that relies upon female communities is "Louisa Wilson." In "Louisa Wilson" Sigourney fictionalizes the severe repercussions of failure in the

relationships of the female world that Smith-Rosenberg describes. This story demonstrates how this female world functions as a socially stabilizing mechanism without which women are at a greater risk of experiencing the degeneracy of intemperance. Carol Mattingly recognizes the significance of the disruption specifically of the mother-daughter relationship in stories such as this one: "As the primary positive influence for children, a mother's failure or inability to inspire her young toward good motives presents another common theme for popular women novelists" (155). Mattingly asserts that since Louisa "has no mother or siblings to guide her or to offer companionship," (155) she succumbs to social drinking. Mattingly concludes that "Louisa's dissipation, Sigourney suggests, would have been prevented with the guidance of a good mother during her childhood" (155). While Mattingly's analysis provides an important starting point for understanding the role of female relationships in the story, applying Smith-Rosenberg's analysis of the wide-ranging significance of an entire female world of support and socialization to this story demonstrates a larger-scale failure than only the mother-daughter relationship. Instead, the story implies the breakdown of an entire social community and contains an implicit call to strengthen this feminine network.

In some ways, "Louisa Wilson" is an unusual temperance story since it depicts intemperance in a woman—the title character, Louisa Wilson—rather than in her husband or in another male relative. According to Warner, "[A] drunken woman became a particularly disreputable, almost unthinkable phenomenon" (183) and was very rarely incorporated into nineteenth-century women's literature dealing with alcohol. The story opens with a discussion of Louisa's marriage to husband Frederick. During the course of the conversation, the friends of the couple remark upon the fact that Louisa was raised by an elderly aunt, who after Louisa's marriage seems to disappear from her life. Thus, early on in the narrative, Sigourney introduces two particularly relevant female threads of discourse: first, Sigourney informs readers of Louisa's motherless state, the importance of which Mattingly suggests. Smith-Rosenberg also asserts that indeed, "[a]n intimate mother-daughter relationship lay at the heart of this female world" (64). Secondly, Sigourney intimates that Louisa lacks an even broader network of female relationships. Smith-Rosenberg finds these relationships to be very important as they are characterized by "mutual dependency and deep affection [and] are a central existential reality coloring the world of supportive networks and rituals" (173).

Louisa, who lives outside of this system, falls prey to social drinking, complete intemperance and eventually death. Although Louisa's husband attempts to encourage her reform, he is unable to help her. Yet help comes when he solicits it from his mother's friend, Mrs. Carlton. This mentoring female clearly recognizes her role in reestablishing Louisa's place in the female world. Mrs. Carlton explains to Frederick, "'Believe me, you are not the person to manage his matter. Will you leave it to me?'" (102). Clearly, according to Mrs. Carlton, what Louisa needs most is to be reconnected to the female network, an impossible job for a man to undertake. Nursing Louisa back to health and temperate living, Mrs. Carlton becomes Louisa's link to the female world of relationship, and Louisa flourishes until Mrs. Carlton's death. Sigourney explains that "[t]he loss of the hand that had steadily probed her follies, and fostered her virtues, was sincerely deplored by Louisa" (114). Shortly after Mrs. Carlton's death, Louisa gives birth to a daughter and finds herself once again disconnected from a female support system at what Smith-Rosenberg describes as a critical time in women's lives which "bound women together in physical and emotional intimacy" (60). Louisa spirals back into intemperance and fails in her capacity as a mother when in

an intoxicated state she drops her baby into a fire, mutilating the child for life. After this horror, Louisa quickly dies, but readers witness again the cyclical pattern of a maimed daughter—Louisa's child is physically scarred where Louisa herself bore emotional scars—with no mother and no ties to the very important female world of support and nurture. While this story clearly provides a traditional argument for a mother's role in promoting temperance at home, it also argues much more broadly that women must support each other, for in a multiplicity of ways, women are victims of intemperance. Indeed, one might also see women's temperance groups such as the WCTU as institutions that strengthen these very key bonds between women for a singularly political purpose. In its encouragement of female relationships, this story provides rhetorical support for these types of women's organizations.

The "Cloying" Conventions of Anti-Alcohol Fiction

The subtle undercurrent of female meaning and progressive ideology found in Sigourney's temperance fiction is often subsumed by her, at-times, heavy reliance on formulaic temperance conventions. Sigourney's compliance with basic temperance formulas provides an important contrast to the innovations introduced by later,

more polemic female temperance writers when viewed through the lens of critical consensus as to the fundamental characteristics of the temperance genre. As noted earlier, critics such as Karen Sánchez-Eppler commonly agree that temperance fiction can be "generally characterized by formulaic writing" (60). In the introduction to their critical work on temperance, *The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature*, David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal provide a thorough description of the basic elements found in nineteenth-century temperance literature. According to Reynolds and Rosenthal,

Each retelling of the same basic story ingrained American literature with temperance imagery. 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. In most stories, the first ill-fated taste of liquor leads inexorably to poverty and death. In contrast to the twentieth-century conception of alcoholism as a disease, nineteenth-century temperance stories understood inebriation as a sign of moral weakness and the drinker as the subject of a moral defect. As an antiliquor tract, temperance literature was meant, scripturelike, to show drunkards their sinful ways and to lead them to a life of sobriety which would herald financial and social prosperity. By swearing the temperance pledge, ex-drunkards made an oral testament to their newfound life of sobriety. (3-4)

While in general agreement with the foundational elements of temperance literature that Reynolds and Rosenthal outline, Mattingly, in her more specific analysis of female-authored temperance texts, delineates several additional characteristics of female temperance fiction that are relevant to my treatment of Sigourney. For example, Mattingly documents the prevalence of specifically gendered discourse in women's temperance writings, asserting that female

[a]uthors addressed the very real concerns women had about alcohol, but the temperance topic also allowed them to examine other issues of concern to women . . . societal and legal injustices, issues of physical abuse, and the generally unequal treatment of women. (123)

This literature's heavy emphasis on women's issues leads, according to Mattingly, to formulaic conventions that highlight the plight of women, often "present[ing] [them] as victims" (129). One strategy Mattingly finds to be employed by numerous authors is that of "foreground[ing] the precarious nature of a woman's choosing a life-mate" (127). In these temperance tales, marriage is indeed "precarious" because a woman has limited options should her husband become intemperate; both legally and morally a woman is circumscribed by unjust social dictates.

Most of Sigourney's tales in *Water-Drops* adhere to tenets of the basic temperance storyline in some regard. In its most basic formulation, this temperance outline prescribes that moral impairment, which may be coupled with inexperience, leads to a family's physical and economic decline. Two of Sigourney's stories--"The Widow and Her Son" and "Lost Hopes"--exemplify a reliance on this basic formula to instruct others on the evils of alcohol within a context of gender awareness. Yet even within this most basic framework, these texts embody subtleties that demonstrate a more nuanced approach to temperance than might be expected in sentimental, formulaic temperance prose.

"The Widow and Her Son"

"The Widow and Her Son" is a tale driven by a common temperance storyline which demonstrates Sigourney's concern with the effects of intemperance on women. The story opens with a graveyard scene where "[a] woman, holding two young children by the hand, was bowed down with grief" (44). The death of a significant male figures as a common trope in female temperance literature. This death may take many forms, perhaps as the loss of an alcoholic husband or son. In this instance, however, Sigourney describes the lost husband as having "led a reproachless life" (44).

Sigourney's use of the death of a loving, supportive male serves in this text a similar function to the more common technique of the marriage of a young woman to an intemperate man—a common opening plot structure in women's temperance fiction according to Mattingly. Both techniques function as a means of highlighting the difficulties faced by women who for a variety of reasons find themselves outside of the protection afforded by a traditional, stable domestic sphere. The added moral note in Sigourney's tale is that even within the context of marriage to a moral, temperate husband, a woman is susceptible to the vagrancies of intemperance.

The difficulties this woman encounters seem driven by the disruption of the domestic sphere occasioned by the death of her husband. Early on in the tale's progression, Sigourney makes a point of characterizing the woman's virtues, describing her "diligence and prudence[:] . . . [A]s her health, which had been worn down by watching and sorrow, returned, her energies also were quickened to labor that she might bring up her children without the aid of charity: and her efforts were prospered" (45). Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Sigourney does not, however, directly reward the woman's industry and success outside of the domestic sphere. Instead, initially her attempts at

economic stability are met with mixed results at home. On one hand, the daughter, Margaret, is described as "an active and loving girl, graceful in her person, and faithful to every duty" (46). Margaret contributes to the household with "[h]er industry [which] provided new comforts for the cottage, while her innocent gayety enlivened it" (46). While the mother-daughter relationship flourishes and the daughter acquires the same sense of industry attributed to her mother, the mother-son relationship is much more problematic. The son, Richard, spurns his mother's moral authority, and in response to her efforts at encouraging a temperate lifestyle, he "full of vengeful purpose, and knowing that his mother had long dreaded lest he should choose the life of a sailor, . . . hurried to a seaport, and shipped on a whaling voyage" (53).¹¹ He then spirals into destitution, "ill-prepared for the lot of hardship he had chosen, To drown misery in the daily allowance of liquor, was his principal resource, and afterwards, [. . .] his sea-sins sank him still lower in brutality" (53-54). Although the mother serves as a proper role model for her daughter, she is

¹¹ By depicting intemperance as the lot of a sailor's life, this story participates in a common temperance discourse that links alcohol abuse with those who pursue sailing as a livelihood. See my chapter on Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *A Singular Life* for an additional example of this connection.

unable to instill within her son a proper appreciation for industry or temperance, key tenets for personal and financial success in a capitalistic society.

The text implies that Richard's moral failure stems from two factors: Richard's lack of a male role model and the mother's indulgences, both of which emerge out of an improperly ordered domestic sphere. The death of the husband/father leaves Richard without a male example of industry and order, and although his mother industriously works to provide for the material wants of her family, Richard grows up without a proper understanding of a mother's moral authority within a properly ordered home. He repeatedly evinces his disrespect for female domestic authority throughout the story. The text documents that he "had been heard to express contempt for the authority of women" (46). On another occasion, he again verbally chafes against his supposition that women desire power over men, commenting to his sister when she expresses the desire that they should always work together for the welfare of their family, "'Always to be working under your orders, I suppose. No doubt, that would be quite pleasing. All you women like to rule, when you can'" (50). He also complains, "'Is there never to be an end to these women's tongues? So it has been these three years; preach, preach,

till I have prayed for deafness. I have had no rest'" (51). The mother's ability to employ moral suasion to influence her son to avoid the pitfalls of intemperance and idleness is thus undercut by his unwillingness to submit to her moral authority, occasioned at least in part by the lack of a male example as to the propriety of female moral authority. Accordingly, "There were rumors of his having frequented places where liquors were sold; yet none imagined the disobedience and disrespect which that lonely cottage sometimes witnessed" (46). His abuse of alcohol becomes a subordinate sin to the lack of moral submission and respect afforded his mother, and, thus, the abuse of alcohol flows from an improper lack of respect for the female moral authority in the boy's life.

Although in this tale Sigourney emphasizes that one of the important factors leading to intemperance and ultimately to personal trials is the improper estimation of women's domestic and moral authority, her portrayal of the widowed mother cannot be construed in all ways as sympathetic as she does not absolve the mother of all guilt in the intemperance of the son. Instead, Sigourney locates a measure of fault in the indulgent behavior the mother

exhibits toward her son.¹² While the story makes no mention of the mother's desire to indulge Margaret, Sigourney emphasizes the mother's emphasis on Richard's happiness: "It was seen by all, how much the widow's heart was bound up in him, and how she was always devising means for his improvement and happiness" (45). This indulgence backfires and "as Richard grew older, he liked the society of idle boys, and it was feared did not fully appreciate, or repay her affection. He was known to be addicted to his own way" (45). This addiction to "his own way" foreshadows his addiction to alcohol and suggests that the mother is ultimately at least partially responsible for her son's intemperance. The mother is here depicted as incapable of maintaining a balanced domestic sphere while at the same time providing the material necessities of the home. The mother's role as a worker in the marketplace is unable to endow her with the esteem she would otherwise be afforded should her role be that of a traditional wife/mother properly supported within the domestic sphere. On one hand, while Sigourney's depictions of the widow's plight may certainly be interpreted as asserting a traditional mindset that a woman's moral authority is tainted by

¹² A strong connection between material indulgence and intemperance is repeated in various selections in *Water-Drops* and is characteristic of all temperance fiction.

involvement in the marketplace, on the other hand, the widow's unfortunate difficulties may be read as a sympathetic reflection of society's inability to provide support for a woman who, through no fault of her own, is forced to transgress prescribed, traditional roles. Although her community does not leave her "forgotten" (45), the members are unaware of the strain and abuse the widow suffers from the disrespect of her son, which is perhaps symptomatic of a larger, generalized disrespect for women who break traditional boundaries and may as well be indicative of a lack of concern for supporting these women.

Whether or not the text is finally sympathetic to the widow's circumstances, the story's stereotypical ending clearly reinforces tradition through its use of standard temperance themes. At the tale's conclusion, Richard is ultimately saved from the ravages of intemperance through the kind interventions of a stranger who happens to be a Quaker. Richard's interactions with this devout man inspire genuine transformation, causing Richard to return to care for his aging mother and the orphaned children of his sister. By employing the theme of conversion through religious/moral suasion, Sigourney allows the religious, male role model to engender the change needed to bring Richard to temperance—a role she disallows his devoted

mother and sister. Further reinforcing the rhetoric of capitalistic temperance, with Richard's temperate behavior, he begins making economic progress:

His friend . . . took him under his especial charge, and finding him much better educated than is usual with sailors, gave him employment of a higher nature, which was both steady and lucrative. His expenses were regulated with extreme economy, that he might lay up more liberally for those dear ones at home . . . as his heart threw off the debasing dominion of intemperance. (62)

Richard's homecoming marks the reordering of the traditional domestic sphere, which the text depicts symbolically through the rebuilding of the actual home-place to which Richard returns his family:

He was not long in discovering how the heart of his mother yearned after that former home, from which poverty had driven her. On inquiry, he found that it might be obtained, having been recently tenanted by vagrant people. The time that he devoted to its thorough repair was happily spent. Its broken casements were replaced, and its dingy walls whitened. The fences were restored, with the pretty gate, over whose arch he promised himself, that another season should bring the blossoming vine that his lost sister had loved. (72)

The "bright and happy" (72) scene with which the story ends lures readers into forgetting that this was the very place the story began, and that, indeed as the earlier narrative thread indicates, the women in the story have at best a very fragile barrier between themselves and the ravages of

intemperance that may arise from a disordered domestic sphere.

"Lost Hopes"

On several levels the selection "Lost Hopes" provides an almost direct counterpoint to "The Widow and Her Son." The tale chronicles the moral debasement and deaths—due, of course, to intemperance—of two unrelated young men. Sigourney links these two narratives by virtue of the fact that each young man is an only child and is, therefore, especially vulnerable to parental indulgence, which as witnessed in "The Widow's Son" can have hazardous repercussions. The first section of the story outlines the demise of Frank Edwards, a young man who stands to inherit wealth from an indulgent uncle. Because of his wealth, the uncle is allowed to dictate his wishes for the course of his nephew's life, including showering the boy with material possessions and choosing a school for young Frank to attend. The mother does raise moral objections to the uncle's choice of school, pleading, "'I pray you not to listen to him [the uncle]. Our boy is doing well here. We cannot tell how it will be with him, when he is far away,-- --perhaps exposed to bad example'" (205). The father, however, overrules her objections. Frank is sent away to school where "[a]t length it was proved that he had not the

moral courage to say no, when tempted to evil" (208).

Eventually, the boy becomes a drunkard; the uncle disinherits him, and the young man comes home to die.

This storyline is followed by the tale of a nameless widow and her son who lived "[i]n the suburbs of the city where Frank Edwards was born and died . . . [i]n a cluster of humble dwellings" (213). Here again Sigourney emphasizes the role of parental indulgence in forging what later becomes the bonds of intemperance. Although the mother "was poor and inured to labor, . . . [she] freely expended on him, the little gains of her industry, as well as the overflowing fulness of her affections" (213). The dividends of this indulgence reflect the earlier pattern as the son "grew boisterous and disobedient" (214). In almost a direct reworking of the ending of "The Widow and Her Son" this son, too, "[i]n his anger . . . had gone to sea" (215). In this story, however, the mother rather than the son finds comfort in religion, and when the son does return home, his demeanor is in direct opposition to that of the earlier reformed sailor: "I will not speak of the revels that shook the lowly roof of his widowed parent, or the profanity that disturbed her repose" (217). The son, thus, dies "a bloated and hideous corpse" and "[t]he poor mother faded away, and followed him" (217).

Taken as a whole, "Lost Hopes" depicts intemperance at both ends of the financial spectrum, asserting that intemperance can occur at any socioeconomic level. Also in both sections of this story, Sigourney again emphasizes a mother's moral influence within the confines of domesticity, while equivocating on the actual authority afforded her. While Frank Young's mother inserts the only voice of caution against the emphasis on materialism and the corrupting influence of the world which leads to Frank's intemperance, she is emotionally indulgent to Frank and her moral authority is undercut by her weakness. The widowed mother is likewise weak and disrespected, and her moral arguments hold no sway over her son. If the moral authority of women in the home is to be a mainstay for propagating temperance, Sigourney depicts some serious flaws. So while her stories do not openly argue for a political element to women's temperance reform, they demonstrate the failures of domestic moral suasion to further the work.

Thus, we witness Sigourney's temperance fiction portraying how intemperance and its causal factors, including materialistic and moral indulgence, destroy women's moral authority within the domestic realm even as it destroys the family unit itself. While still far from

overtly advocating political action, the way in which Sigourney's fiction undercuts female moral suasion as a means of temperance reform pushes her work along the nineteenth-century continuum of women's temperance activity which ranged from a focused emphasis on moral suasion to convert a drunkard from his errant ways to a reliance on legal methods to legislate an end to intemperate behavior. In this same vein, Karen Sánchez-Eppler reasons that "the evolving methods and goals of temperance reform indicate changing attitudes toward the social power of domesticity" (62). Sánchez-Eppler proceeds to argue that

[t]his debate on tactics has an obvious gender bias, as arguments over the efficacy of moral suasion implicitly assess the social efficacy of the American family in the face of a problem that—as temperance workers were quick to remind—rendered woman and children particularly vulnerable. (62)

Without compromising her conservative tendencies, Sigourney, in her temperance fiction, argues that women should utilize every opportunity to employ moral suasion in an effort to keep intemperance at bay, for in her evaluation intemperance destroys the family unit which also undermines women's moral authority. Sigourney's fiction does, however, complicate a simple, conservative moral suasion paradigm by exploring circumstances which undermine the success of moral suasion techniques, suggesting that

these strategies do not go far enough in combating the problems of intemperance. By entering public discourse on temperance with a particularly feminized voice and proposing that domestic, moral suasion is not sufficient in every instance to engender change in intemperance, Sigourney's *Water-Drops* provides a stepping stone for the more political temperance females who follow by reinforcing the bonds of female discourse communities that become vital to later female groups tackling temperance from a more politicized position.

Chapter Two

Race and Temperance in Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's "The Two Offers" and *Sowing and Reaping*

"[T]here are two classes of people with whom I never wish to associate, or number as my especial friends, and they are rum sellers and slave holders'" (*Sowing and Reaping* 110).

The opening quotation of this essay which appears in Frances E. W. Harper's serialized novel, *Sowing and Reaping*, underscores the author's passionate views about temperance and abolition while gesturing toward Harper's unflagging participation in both reform efforts.¹³ By the time Harper was twenty-nine, she had devoted her life to speaking and writing on behalf of racial injustice and causes associated with black uplift.¹⁴ Likewise, temperance reform, too, became an outlet for Harper's pursuit of social betterment. Within the scope of her oeuvre, Harper

¹³ Portions of this essay appear in an earlier form in the essay "A Revolutionary Aim: The Rhetoric of Temperance in the *Anglo-African Magazine*." *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Bibliography*. 12 (2002): 9-24.

¹⁴ See, for example, Melba Joyce Boyd's *Discarded Legacy: Politics and Poetics in the Life of Frances W. W. Harper 1825-1911*.

published two pieces of fiction, along with several works of poetry, that directly engage her long-standing concerns about intemperance and provide a literary response to her continuing work within organized temperance reform movements. Aside from their temperance themes, "The Two Offers" (1859) and *Sowing and Reaping: A Temperance Story* (1876-1877) have garnered critical comparisons: as Frances Smith Foster notes, "[I]n many ways situations in the novel seem to be elaborations upon those in the short story" (xxxii).

One of the most critically debated aspects of both works centers on the conspicuous absence of racial characterization within both texts: in neither work does Harper endow the characters with a specific racial identity. This lack of racial demarcation seems surprising on two fronts—first, because of Harper's own awareness of the political and social limitations imposed upon her due to her status as both black and female and, correspondingly, because of her unrelenting commitment to causes of black uplift, exemplified in most of the works she authored. The critical result of the racial ambiguity within these works has been an interpretive tendency toward universalizing the themes and applications of the works, as characterized by Carla L. Peterson's observation concerning

these works that "temperance transcends racial categorization;" therefore, "the characters are to be imagined not as either white or black but as both/and" ("Frances Harper . . ." 45). While an examination of the thematic implications of the texts as devoid of specific racial concerns proves useful in assessing larger temperance themes, I will argue that re-contextualizing Harper's temperance efforts within the historical framework of the black temperance movement and re-imagining racial considerations specific to the publications of these texts demonstrate Harper's continued racial consciousness, a consciousness she uses within the context of temperance reform for subversive and even revolutionary implications to advance the specific concerns of the black race.

**Thematic Repetition: "The Two Offers" and
*Sowing and Reaping***

Though separated by nearly two decades in publication, "The Two Offers" and *Sowing and Reaping* share, as noted by Frances Foster Smith, many thematic concerns as well as specific elements of plot. Serialized in the September and October 1859 issues of the *Anglo-African Magazine*, "The Two Offers" has only relatively recently begun to garner significant critical attention. William J. Schiek notes that "studies of African American literature generally

ignore it ["The Two Offers"] or mention it only in passing, even when they do discuss Harper's novel *Iola Leroy* (1892)" (14). The story's publication does, however, signify an historic moment as critics widely consider "The Two Offers" to be the first published short story by an African American female. The plot of "The Two Offers" centers on the different paths taken by two cousins, Laura Lagrange and Janette Alston. As the story opens, Laura is deciding which of two marriage offers she will accept. Janette warns her against accepting either of the offers

[b]ecause I think a woman who is undecided between two offers, has not love enough for either to make a choice; and in that very hesitation, indecision, she has a reason to pause and seriously reflect, lest her marriage, instead of being an affinity of souls or a union of hearts, should only be a mere matter of bargain and sale, or an affair of convenience and selfish interest.

(*Anglo-African Magazine*, Sept. 1859, 288)

The temperance theme of the story appears when Laura accepts one of the proffered offers, and readers find Laura upon her death bed awaiting her husband who had during their marriage "found other attractions that lay beyond the pale of home influences" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Sept. 1859, 291). Among these attractions are "gambling" as well as "song, laughter, wine, and careless mirth" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Sept. 1859, 291). Laura eventually dies

without the comfort of her husband's presence, leaving Janette "resolved more earnestly than ever to make the world better by her example" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Oct. 1859, 313). Janette, who never marries, devotes her life to furthering the goals of abolition.

Similarly to "The Two Offers," *Sowing and Reaping: A Temperance Tale* also appeared serially in an African American periodical, the *Christian Recorder*, the official publication of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church. Just as Harper contrasts the outcomes of the lifestyles chosen by Laura Lagrange and Janette Alston in "The Two Offers," *Sowing and Reaping* also employs paired protagonists—including a set of cousins, reminiscent of Laura and Janette in "The Two Offers"—in order to emphasize different outcomes of different life choices. At the center of *Sowing and Reaping* are the two cousins, Jeanette Roland and Belle Gordon. As the novel opens, Jeanette expresses her dismay at Belle's refusal to marry the prominent and wealthy Charles Romaine on the basis of his occasional intemperate act. Although Belle's disassociation with Romaine proves emotionally difficult for her—she admits that she "'gave him what [she] never can give to another, the first, deep love of [her] girlish heart'" (157)—Harper demonstrates that her difficult path

of self-denial is indeed warranted. Through the course of the novel, Jeanette marries Romaine and ultimately meets a fate similar to that of Laura Lagrange in "The Two Offers." Although Belle Gordon and Jeanette Alston also fulfill similar roles within the contexts of their respective stories, Harper varies these characters slightly. Unlike Janette Alston, who remains unmarried throughout the course of the short story, Belle Gordon eventually marries Paul Clifford, a reform-minded man who is equally devoted to the temperance cause.

The novel also expands its storyline beyond the relationships of the cousins to which the short story limits itself. Within this expanded scope of the novel, Harper paints a broader picture of the community's interaction with temperance issues by introducing two additional families whose corresponding situations reinforce Harper's temperance agenda at various social stratum. Joe and Mary Gough¹⁵ embody the lower class struggle with alcohol. Mary is a devoted wife who stands

¹⁵ Peterson notes, "The names of [Mary and Joe Gough] suggest Harper's awareness of the national dimensions of the temperance movement as they recall Joe and Mary Morgan, the central characters of T.S. Arthur's famous *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*, as well as John Gough, a well-known temperance lecturer whose 1869 *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* detailed his own intemperate youth, conversion and marriage to his wife, Mary" ("Frances Harper . . ." 48).

by her alcoholic husband and is eventually rewarded by his reformation, which occurs under the direct influence of Belle Gordon alongside subsequent interactions with Clifford. On the other hand, Harper uses her depictions of the family of John Anderson as a representation of the effects of alcohol upon those involved within the liquor industry. Anderson, the owner of an upscale saloon, seeks to encourage intemperance among the upper classes in order to prosper his business; he even goes so far as to prepare carefully alcoholic drinks for the children of wealthy parents, claiming that he is "'making an investment'" (133). While Anderson does acquire material wealth, his family life disintegrates, and at the novel's end, the Anderson family is characterized by illness, death and disgrace, evils that commonly befall those associated with the liquor industry within the genre of temperance fiction.

The Historic Backdrop of Black Temperance

Harper's use of paradigms associated with temperance fiction coincides with her participation within organized reform movements. And while critics tend to emphasize Harper's role within broad, universal temperance reform movements such as the WCTU, equally important to understanding Harper's fiction is the existence of a distinct movement of black temperance reform which

developed alongside broader movements. Also significant is the fact that the WCTU's temperance work was not without racial tension. The black temperance movement and the racial tensions of the WCTU both illuminate a strong racial awareness in Harper's temperance fiction.

Historically, in its own right the black temperance movement in America has a long and rich history. According to Benjamin Quarles, "The temperance impulse had deep roots among Negroes, going back to 1788 when the Free African Society of Philadelphia denied membership to anyone with the drinking habit" (93). This African American movement continued to be influential into the nineteenth-century when prominent African American figures, such as Frederick Douglass, championed temperance among blacks. Despite its distinguished advocates, temperance, in its relation to race, provided ambiguous images, and even among African Americans temperance could be a disputed goal. Robert Levine indicates that "the promotion of temperance could be taken as a surrendering to the Protestant-capitalist norms of the white community, a destructive abandoning of African traditions and values" ("Disturbing Boundaries" 350). Levine argues that part of the appeal of temperance was its "demonstrat[ion] that blacks could be as productive in the marketplace as whites, thereby refuting the proslavery

argument that blacks were better off on plantations" (Delany 23). Donald Yacovone finds that "[h]istorians who have examined the movement [of black temperance] tend to view it as a black effort to share in the democratic hopes and the economic boom of Jacksonian America" (281).¹⁶ Temperance thus becomes linked with a capitalistic desire for blacks to gain entrance into the marketplace. Frederick Cooper reinforces this association by arguing that during the 1830s and 1840s, "[t]emperance symbolized the gulf between the respectable middle class and the degraded lower class. Black leaders wanted to cast their lot with the middle class" (615). Cooper raises an important question, "Why should blacks with so many injustices to combat, devote so much effort to temperance?" (615). In answering his own query, Cooper cautions that temperance was most strongly advocated by "a particular segment of the black community," a segment that he describes as having "middle-class occupations and middle-class outlooks" (615).

¹⁶ While Yacovone finds this as the dominant treatment of black temperance, he himself complicates this argument. He argues that "[f]undamental changes in strategy and ideology had occurred between 1827 and 1854 in the black temperance and reform community" (296). These changes, in Yacovone's opinion, led to a more independent black voice in black temperance movements.

Black temperance rhetoric, however, could be demarcated from white middle-class influence, adopting instead an independent rhetorical tone. Yacovone explains that within some black circles temperance was also connected "to the emergence of an independent black reform and abolitionist movement" (282). In this vein, Denise Herd asserts that "temperance [was] strongly identified with a militant, relentless stream of anti-slavery protest" (364). Building on the potential militant associations of black temperance, black periodicals with specifically separatist agendas were able to incorporate temperance themes and still preserve their anti-assimilationist rhetoric. For example, the *Anglo-African Magazine* which published "The Two Offers" links temperance with black revolt and black rejection of white values. Thus, "The Two Offers" strongly asserts the need for blacks to disassociate from white, bourgeois values. Similarly, my contention about "The Two Offers's" arguments concerning the intemperate values of the middle-class, white culture echoes Peterson's assertions about *Sowing and Reaping*. Peterson affirms,

In . . . *Sowing and Reaping*, [Harper] offered readers a program that promoted self-disciplining of both individuals and a society rendered intemperate not only by drink but also by the elite's accumulation of wealth and consumption of a cosmopolitan high culture that was finding its

way into the new monthlies. ("Frances Harper . . .
." 46)¹⁷

While the rich history of the black temperance movement provides one important context for understanding the role of race in Harper's work, the racial tensions within the WCTU highlight another facet of Harper's understanding of the relationship between race and temperance. While it is true as Boyd points out that

Harper worked in an integrative capacity with the women's movement through the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and was appointed city, then state, and eventually national supervisor for its organizing efforts in the black communities (202),

the very need for "integrative" work hints at the racial tensions that erupted during Harper's association with the WCTU.

In her discussion of the racial dissension within the WCTU, Carol Mattingly relates that the WCTU

had special departments for any group members deemed in need of unique attention. To that end, two departments, the Department of Southern Work and the Department of Work Among Colored People, existed throughout most of the 1880s.

In 1889, however, white union members from

¹⁷ Peterson, however, does not find Harper's dismissal of intemperate cultural norms to be a black rejection of white values but instead concludes that Harper is arguing against this excess for both blacks and whites. Given the specific black audience of *The Recorder* which Peterson describes, I find the universality of her assertion to be minimized by the importance of specific black concerns within these periodicals.

the South balked at being represented by a separate department. By that time, apparent dissatisfaction was surfacing among some black members as well, and [Frances] Willard's [President of the WCTU] efforts to placate southern white members increased anger among black members. (84)

Mattingly further describes that at the 1889 WCTU national convention, Harper addressed the assembly, recommending among other things "[t]hat in dealing with colored women that Christian courtesy be shown which is due from one woman to another" (86). Mattingly asserts that this recommendation "suggests unequal treatment of black members, despite the union's claim of equality" (86).

These arguments were a precursor to a vociferous conflict between African American activist Ida B. Wells and WCTU President Frances Willard in which Wells accused Willard of failing to speak out against lynching, resulting in the denial of Wells's request to address the WCTU convention. Willard, for her part, used, as Mattingly notes,

the disparaging image equating African Americans with the multiplying locusts that plagued Egypt, . . . [and] juxtapos[ed] the safety of women and children with the Southerners' 'problem' [which] supported exactly the kinds of racist myths and suppositions Wells was devoting her life to eradicating. (77)

Thus, while temperance reform movements, such as the WCTU, did provide an important venue for black women to occupy

positions of leadership, as Harper acknowledged, even these positions were fraught with racially based tensions and almost certainly influenced Harper's own views on the interactions of race and temperance reform.

Temperance, Race and the African American Periodical

Against the backdrop of racial division among organized temperance societies, specifically the WCTU, the absence of racial distinction in Harper's periodical, temperance fiction seems even more provocative. Indeed, Harper's collusion of common temperance themes with an unlikely racial ambiguity has elicited varied responses from critics responding to these texts; however, a dominant thread emerges: most critics find Harper's deracialized characterizations to be downplaying specifically black concerns and instead to be emphasizing the universality of the need for temperance reform. Writing about "The Two Offers," Scheick argues that "Harper's story concerns two white women, both of whom have experienced major disappointments in love affairs with men" (15). Hazel Carby envisions a wide audience for Harper asserting that "Harper's poetry and one short story, 'The Two Offers,' were, like her lectures, addressed to both white and black audiences of both sexes" (72), leaving the question of race

open for debate. In her analysis of *Sowing and Reaping*, Peterson contends that

Sowing and Reaping appears to be a purely domestic story in which neither time, place, nor race is specified. But this apparent narrowness belies a broader agenda: temperance is a national problem because the nation as a whole has become intemperate. ("Frances Harper . . ." 45)

While the critical impulse to universalize Harper's argument in "The Two Offers" and *Sowing and Reaping* to be about the merits of a temperate lifestyle for whites and blacks alike coincides with various of Harper's statements concerning temperance,¹⁸ contextualizing these temperance texts within the Afro-Protestant periodical milieu in which they were published remains a critical component to understanding the issues at work within these specifically periodical texts. The intersection of race and audience stands at the forefront of issues on which contextualization sheds light, and I believe that a closer examination of the periodical publication of these texts in

¹⁸ In her essay "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Colored Woman" (1888), Harper argues, "'In the great anti-slavery conflict women had borne a part, but after the storm cloud of battle had rolled away, it was found that an enemy, old and strong and deceptive, was warring against the best interests of society; not simply an enemy to one race, but an enemy to all races—an enemy that had entrenched itself in the strongholds of appetite and avarice, and was upheld by fashion, custom and legislation'" (qtd. in Boyd 204). Harper, "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Colored Woman," *A. M. E. Church Review* 4 (1888): pp. 313-16.

the context of the black temperance movement illuminates a specific temperance message Harper intends for the black community. Frances Smith Foster also underscores the need for a greater understanding of the Afro-Protestant press's contributions to black community as well as its significance to gaining an accurate understanding of the messages uncovered in texts published in this venue. In her treatment of Harper's periodical publications, Foster asserts the need for a renewed emphasis on the role of the African American press in critical responses to African American authored texts:

My study of the fiction, poetry, and essays about African Americans that were published by African Americans for African Americans suggests that African American writers were about the business of creating and reconstructing literary subjects, themes, and forms that best suited their own aesthetics and intentions and that they assumed and did enjoy an extensive black readership I am persuaded that the Afro-Protestant press, especially, makes it apparent that the literary forms and content of African American writers were at once inversions, improvisations, and inventions designed to speak to, about and for African Americans [T]hey wrote to make the crooked straight and to explain the parables that would free both their bodies and their souls. (51-52)

Foster calls for the reassessment of African American periodical literature in terms of its intentionality toward African American issues, averring that these works were "designed . . . for African Americans" (51). Foster's

emphasis on the intentional focus on black community found in African American periodical publications of this era reinforces my contention that Harper's primary concern in her temperance works centers on the effects of temperance within the black community rather than on the effects of the temperance movement in its entirety.

Other critics, however, while responding to the periodical publication of Harper's temperance texts in their assessments of "The Two Offers" or *Sowing and Reaping* still argue for a broad interpretation of Harper's temperance themes. In keeping with the universalizing tendency noted above, Melba Joyce Boyd dismisses the heightened racial consciousness of the Afro-Protestant press, to which Foster alludes, when Boyd argues concerning "The Two Offers" that the lack of "racial dimension . . . [of] the characters . . . provides a cross-cultural thematic latitude for the story despite its appearance in the *Anglo-African Magazine*" (118). In a different manner Debra J. Rosenthal factors the Afro-Protestant press's racial sensibilities along with the periodical publication of "The Two Offers" into her argument that "readers of the Afro-Protestant press probably did not find the deracialized discourse curious, but instead assumed

Harper's characters to be black" (155). Rosenthal, however, proceeds to assert,

Assuming a default black identity also releases the writer from the burden of race: Harper was free not to focus on contentious issues of race but could instead center her attention on the institution of marriage and on her moral reform project of temperance. (155)

This interpretation also, however, empties the text of any specifically racial dimension to Harper's temperance goals, downplaying the role of race within temperance reform as a whole.

Racial Context and "The Two Offers"

Yet the diminution of race in these texts seems inappropriate within the context of the periodicals in which these texts appeared. Published in the turmoil preceding the Civil War, "The Two Offers," voided of racial concern and focused on a universal temperance agenda, would seem out of place both within the context of Harper's desire to "'pledge . . . [herself] to the anti-slavery cause'" (Still 761) as well as in light of the story's publication in the *Anglo-African*. The *Anglo-African Magazine* expresses in its 1859 introductory "Apology" its desire to give "an independent voice" to black Americans (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Jan. 1859, 1). "The Two Offers's" concurrent appearance alongside Martin R. Delany's

militantly racial novel *Blake*, which also emphasizes a radical temperance agenda, underscores the heightened racial consciousness of the magazine, while demonstrating an emphasis on an independent black community.

The *Anglo-African's* desire to vocalize black independence provides an important context for my claim that Harper's fiction functions outside of assimilationist and universalized temperance discourse and instead relies upon a revolutionary and independent black rhetoric. The need for a forum for expressing unique black voices is a theme that permeates the magazine's "Apology." The magazine argues that blacks "must speak for themselves" and in this manner, the *Anglo-African* "aim[s] to uphold and encourage the now depressed hopes of the thinking black men, in the United States" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Jan. 1859, 1, 3). Similarly Thomas Hamilton, the editor of the *Anglo-African*, asserts that the magazine's "work here, is, to purify the State, and purify Christianity from the foul blot which here rest upon them." In order to accomplish this goal Hamilton promises that "[a]ll articles in the Magazine, not otherwise designated, will be the products of the pens of colored men and women" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Jan. 1859, 4). Clearly, the *Anglo-African* positions itself against white representations of black Americans, arguing

instead for authentic representations of the meaning of blackness. Hamilton's apology thus prompts readers to think of the works in the magazine in the context of black American independence from white ideologies.

The magazine's re-envisioning of blackness is not then solely a matter of self-improvement, as temperance rhetoric was sometimes employed, but rather an effort to acknowledge an already powerful black presence only beginning to be felt by white Americans. The "Apology" argues

at the very moment of the triumph of this effort [to lessen the humanity of blacks], there runs through the marrow of those who make it, an unaccountable consciousness, an aching dread, that this *noir faineant*, this great black sluggard is somehow endowed with forces which are felt rather than seen, and which may 'in some grim revel,' '*Shake the pillars of the commonweal!*' And there is indeed reason for this 'aching dread.' The negro is something more than mere endurance; he is a force. (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Jan. 1859, 2)

The "Apology" emphasizes a discourse of power or "force" claiming that "we cannot fairly estimate the forces of the negro" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Jan. 1859, 2). This essay proceeds to depict specific images of the diversity of black power, describing "the man who suffered himself to be scourged to death in Tennessee rather than betray his associate insurrectionists" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Jan. 1859, 2) as an image of physical power. Black intellectual

force is described in a discussion of various honors awarded to black youths, and the essay concludes,

[h]ere, then, we have the vital force, the physical force, and some slight inklings of the yet undeveloped mental power of the negro. The negro is a constant quantity; other races may be, and are variables; he is positive and reliable, and seems fixed so. (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Jan. 1859, 2)

Within this dialogue of power, temperance acts as a means for capitalizing on black strength, as Harper's "The Two Offers" subsequently demonstrates.

Given the particularly racialized concerns of the *Anglo-African*, it seems only natural to read the contents of the magazine through the lens of racial concerns. Although the *Anglo-African* may be interpreted as a separatist magazine, the black temperance movement, as Levine suggests, can be considered a "surrender" to the white community. How then can we reconcile the temperance theme of "The Two Offers" with its publication in the *Anglo-African*? Rosenthal contends that

Harper uses . . . racially unmarked characters to . . . urge black betterment by depicting African Americans leading middle-class lives indistinguishable from those of whites. The deracialized discourse of "The Two Offers" . . . participates in this project by depicting to a black readership racially indeterminate characters engaged in social and moral elevation. (160)

Instead of arguing for the collusion of black and middle-class values, I find that "The Two Offers," in the context of the *Anglo-African*, declaims capitalistic middle-class values, utilizing temperance as a backdrop for a rhetoric of social revolution to replace white bourgeois values.

In her analysis of Harper's story, Peterson asserts that "what initially appears to be a conventional courtship plot in 'The Two Offers' quickly becomes a cautionary temperance tale, as drink infiltrates the domestic sphere, destroys both the drunkard and his family, and thus rends the social fabric" (*Doers* 171-72). I would complicate Peterson's analysis by arguing that Harper, within the context of this tale, posits middle class social values, such as materialism, at the root of intemperance. Thus white middle class economic and social values lead to intemperance that subsequently leads to the collapse of the domestic sphere.

Throughout the story Harper opposes Laura and Janette, providing readers with two very different portraits of femininity. Laura, a product of capitalist values, falls victim to the effects of intemperance. Janette, on the other hand, seeks, and ultimately attains, fulfillment outside the confines of middle class notions of femininity. Within this context, Harper takes care to highlight Laura's

bourgeoisie background, describing Laura as "the only daughter of rich and indulgent parents, who had spared no pains to make her an accomplished lady" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Sept. 1859, 289). The conventional values imparted to Laura create in her a vulnerability for "the vain and superficial" nature of her husband and consequently make her a victim of intemperance (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Sept. 1859, 290).

Harper's characterization of Laura's husband also critiques the middle class, by portraying the husband's middle class upbringing as the precipitating factor for his later intemperance. Peterson maintains that "'The Two Offers' . . . largely blam[es] the drunkard's frivolous mother for his viciousness" (*Doers* 172). What Peterson perceives as the mother's frivolity is directly tied to economics within the tale. In the opening to the second installment of the story, Harper begins by differentiating the ideal private sphere from the reality of Laura's husband's experience:

In early life, home had been to him a place of ceilings and walls, not a true home, built upon goodness, love and truth. It was a place where velvet carpets hushed his tread, where images of loveliness and beauty invoked into being by painter's art and sculptor's skill, pleased the eye and gratified the taste, where magnificence surrounded his way and costly clothing adorned his person; but it was not

the place for the true culture and right development of his soul. His father had been too much engrossed in making money, and his mother in spending it, in striving to maintain a fashionable position in society, and shining in the eyes of the world, to give the proper discretion to the character of their wayward and impulsive son. His mother put beautiful robes upon his body, but left ugly scars upon his soul; she pampered his appetite, but starved his spirit. (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Oct. 1859, 311)

Harper directly relates the husband's materialistic home-life with his intemperate behavior. The elaborate detailing of physical luxury contrasts directly with a lack of moral and intellectual guidance.

Harper thus depicts middle class, bourgeoisie culture as being equally detrimental to male and female members of black society. Laura's privilege makes her incapable of seeing through the deceptive veneer of her husband's appearance, ultimately leaving her with "a face [that] told of heart-sickness, of hope deferred, and the mournful story of unrequited love" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Oct. 1859, 312). Her husband with "his want of home-training" is unable to provide stability for Laura (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Oct. 1859, 311). The middle class domestic sphere with its emphasis on materialism finally disintegrates under the burden of intemperance.

More than once had [Laura] seen him come home from his midnight haunts, the bright intelligence

of his eye displaced by the drunkard's stare, and his manly gait changed to the inebriate's stagger; and she was beginning to know the bitter agony that is compressed in the mournful words, a drunkard's wife. (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Oct. 1859, 311)

While the birth of a child provides Laura with a brief reprieve during which "the father paused in his headlong career," Harper's unwillingness to reward middle-class values results in the death of the child (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Oct. 1859, 312). The death of the child precipitates Laura's final decline and death as well as the disappearance of the husband, effectively eliminating the notion of the middle-class domestic sphere as a place of material success, happiness, and harmony. A domestic sphere characterized by excess, intemperance, sadness, and death replaces this common domestic image.

Harper's depiction of Laura and her husband corresponds thematically to an article entitled "Our Greatest Want," which Harper wrote and also published in the *Anglo-African*. This essay directly contrasts cultural materialism with what Harper perceives as the greatest need of the African American community, "a higher cultivation of all our spiritual faculties" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, May 1859, 160). Harper opens the essay asserting, "Leading ideas impress themselves upon communities and countries. A

thought is evolved and thrown out among the masses, woven with their mental and moral life" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, May 1859, 160). The essay progresses with a description of "a sentiment of human brotherhood" introduced into the thought of Great Britain, which resulted in the nation's emancipation from slavery, "and the nation gains moral power by the act" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, May 1859, 160). Harper then contrasts this politically freeing moral sentiment with her perception of the political atmosphere of the United States:

In America, where public opinion exerts such a sway, a leading is success. The politician who chooses for his candidate not the best man but the most available one.—The money getter, who virtually says let me make money, though I coin it from blood and extract it from tears—The minister, who stoops from his high position to the slave power, and in a word all who barter principle for expediency, the true and right for the available and convenient, are worshipers at the shrine of success. (*Anglo-African Magazine*, May 1859, 160)

While this section of the essay reads as a criticism of white American culture that relies on slavery to attain material success, Harper quickly turns her censure upon her black readership for their participation in the materialism that results from the enslavement of others:

And we, or at least some of us, upon whose faculties the rust of centuries has lain, are beginning to awake and worship at the same

altar, and bow to the idols. The idea if I understand it aright, that is interweaving itself with our thoughts, is that the greatest need of our people at present is money- And it may be true that the richer we are the nearer we are to social and political equality; but somehow, . . . it does not seem to me that money, as little as we possess of it, is our greatest want. (*Anglo-African Magazine*, May 1859, 160)

For Harper political and social enfranchisement via capitalistic pursuit undermines what should be the overarching goal of the black community: "the glorious idea of human brotherhood" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, May 1859, 160).

Instead of arguing for participation in white economic or political institutions, Harper issues a call for black Americans to separate themselves from institutions of slavery, including systems of economics and politics. Aligning African slavery with the Israelite slavery in Egypt, Harper asks, "We have millions of our race in the prison house of slavery, but have we yet a single Moses in freedom. And if we had who among us would be led by him?" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, May 1859, 160). She continues,

When we have a race of men whom this blood stained government cannot tempt or flatter, who would sternly refuse every office in the nation's gift, from a president down to a tide-waiter, until she shook her hands from complicity in the guilt of cradle plundering and man stealing, then for us the foundations of an historic character

have been laid. (*Anglo-African Magazine*, May 1859, 160)

This character that Harper deems essential for the black community requires the community's "willing[ness] to lay time, talent and money on the altar of universal freedom" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, May 1859, 160).

While Laura Lagrange and her husband represent the potential demise of wealth and intemperance, Janette embodies the virtues of a lifestyle temperate in terms of economics as well as in terms of alcohol consumption. Janette's background provides an alternate example, the type of life Harper seems to endorse. Janette's history is portrayed as lacking in material wealth:

Janette Alston, was the child of parents, rich only in goodness and affection. Her father had been unfortunate in business, and dying before he could retrieve his fortunes, left his business in an embarrassed state. His widow was unacquainted with his business affairs, and when the estate was settled, hungry creditors had brought their claims and the lawyers had received their fees, she found herself homeless and almost penniless Year after year she struggled with poverty and wrestled with want till her toil-worn hands became too feeble . . . and her tear-dimmed eyes grew heavy with the slumber of death. (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Sept. 1859, 289)

After the death of her mother, Janette "endeavored to support herself by her own exertions, and she had

succeeded" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Sept. 1859, 289). Not a victim of middle-class materialism, Janette

had a higher and better object in all her writing than the mere acquisition of gold, or acquirement of fame. She felt that she had a high and holy mission on the battle-field of existence, that life was not given her to be frittered away in nonsense, or wasted away in trifling pursuits. (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Oct. 1859, 313)

According to Peterson, the narrator rejects Laura "not only as a character but as a model for black women. Over her the narrator chooses Janette, the true woman" (*Doers* 173).

Janette, the only character who does not suffer from the pursuit of materialism, is also able to avoid the pitfalls of intemperance. Janette instead turns her vicarious interaction with intemperance into a call to public action. Through Janette Harper transforms intemperance into public service in a revolutionary manner. Rejecting the conventional domestic sphere with its taint of intemperate excess on several levels, Janette chooses a radical alternative, "willingly espous[ing] an unpopular cause" (*Anglo-African Magazine*, Oct. 1859, 313). According to Peterson, "Janette . . . chooses to devote the rest of her life to service in the community and public spheres, in particular to . . . abolition" (*Doers* 173). Janette models revolutionary behavior on several fronts: she rejects traditional conventions of materialism and domesticity in

order to embark upon a political career of abolition. Janette is clearly the model readers should seek to emulate: accordingly, rejecting intemperance requires the rejection of middle class white materialism and the embracing of black communal values, including abolition. Within this story Harper portrays intemperance as a direct result of buying into dominant white cultural values of materialism. Harper's tale implicitly argues that embracing temperance does not mean capitulation to white cultural norms; rather she argues that temperance can serve as a revolutionary means of advancing the African American cause.

Communal-Discipline and Sowing and Reaping

Sowing and Reaping, too, develops this theme of the destruction of materialistic pursuits, linking intemperance in alcohol to intemperance in consumerism and consumption, as Peterson outlines:

The narrative deconstructs two important dichotomies set up in the opening chapters to illuminate how intemperance has contaminated all spheres of life. Intemperance exists in the elite's drawing room as well as the lower-class saloon; through this observation Harper continued her critique of a self-indulgent high culture no longer confined to southern aristocracy but infecting a national population driven by the acquisition and display of wealth. ("Frances Harper . . ." 48)

Peterson, too, acknowledges the particularized African American concerns of the *Christian Recorder* in which Harper published *Sowing and Reaping*, asserting that "the paper's history . . . points to its lengthy struggle in helping African Americans imagine community, inviting them both to craft a group identity based on a shared past and to work toward the achievement of . . . citizenship" ("Frances Harper . . ." 42). In her contextualization of the 1876-77 novel, Peterson records that "little temperance writing appears in the later issues in which *Sowing and Reaping* was published; rather, these are filled with articles that chronicle the end of Reconstruction and . . . the violence that accompanied it" ("Frances Harper . . ." 46). Analyzing this lack of specifically "temperance" material, Peterson argues that "these articles are thematically linked to Harper's temperance concerns because they suggest a nation become intemperate, a nation whose intemperance has brought about the social evils that beset it." She then proceeds to find that according to these articles "[t]emperance is, then, the tool that will reform the nation" ("Frances Harper . . ." 46). This analysis serves as a foundation for Peterson's argument (also quoted above) in which she states that "if the novel's characters are not racialized it is because temperance transcends racial

categorization. Hence the characters are to be imagined not as either white or black but as both/and" ("Frances Harper . . ." 45). Although Peterson recognizes the important role serialized publication plays in the reception of a text, she subsequently dismisses the particular significance of a black audience for Harper's serialized temperance fiction.

In a broad, universal sense, Peterson's racially inclusive argument does seem applicable. Certainly, Harper was aware of and concerned by intemperance among both the white and black communities, yet even Peterson's acknowledgment that as a publication venue the *Christian Recorder* strove to create community among African Americans underscores the likelihood that, indeed, Harper's temperance message was primarily intended for the black community, the audience targeted by the periodical.

Michelle Campbell Toohey¹⁹ insists on a black audience for Harper's serialized novels, arguing that

[a]lthough Harper often addresses a broad cultural spectrum in her speeches and writing, these rediscovered novels are specifically

¹⁹ Although Toohey mentions *Sowing and Reaping*, the analysis in her text pointedly disregards this particular novel. In her footnotes Toohey writes, "Because the theme of Harper's second republished novel, *Sowing and Reaping*, is temperance rather than the specifically post-war African American issues of the other two novels, I have chosen to delete it from this study at this time" (215).

written to the nineteenth-century black community in a periodical dedicated to enhancing their daily life by encouraging concrete problem-solving skills. (202)²⁰

Moreover, Foster's study of Harper's work in correlation to the AME press also accentuates the inherently African American agenda of AME publications, such as the *Christian Recorder*. Foster explains "that the AME denomination and several others were formed as direct revolts against racial segregation and discrimination" (54). Foster further elucidates Harper's revolutionary aesthetic, asserting that

Frances Harper . . . was part of the same Christianity that produced Nat Turner and John Brown. Harper was a church militant whose congregation included several radicals named Moses Frances Harper's subordination of literature to serve a militant religion that she called Christianity did not obviate her concern for technique or talent. Rather it led her to seek out new ways in which the truths might be told and Christian soldiers might be enlisted. (54)

Contending that not only did the periodical encompass a predominantly black audience but also that the magazine was intentionally political, Toohey reasons that "only in the periodical press can Harper literately address the complex

²⁰ Toohey here refers to *Minnie's Sacrifice*, *Sowing and Reaping*, and *Trial and Triumph*, three of Harper's serialized novels recently recovered by Frances Foster Smith and collected in an edition titled, *Minnie's Sacrifice, Sowing and Reaping and Trial and Triumph: Three Rediscovered Novels by Frances E. W. Harper* edited by Foster.

social and political concerns of the postwar black community with the intimacy of audience required for building a community from the inside" (203). Toohey also argues for a contemporary politicized understanding of African American periodicals, advising that the recovery of Harper's serialized novels "has focused attention on the significant political role of the periodical in the Post Reconstruction Era" (202). She proceeds to assert that

the black periodical became one of the few vehicles left to continue the discussion of slavery's repercussions. The serialization of the novel gave Harper's readers access to a political dialogue they desperately needed during the backlash of a nation that had turned its attention and passion to other concerns. (205)

Foster's emphasis on Harper's militancy and Toohey's arguments about the political nature of the black periodical highlight a key dimension of Harper's *Sowing and Reaping*: the importance of distinctly African American communal goals.

Whereas Peterson's analysis of *Sowing and Reaping* finds "self-disciplining of both individuals and society" ("Frances Harper . . ." 46) at the center of the novel, a communally-focused reading demonstrates the role of the community in achieving temperance goals. Indeed, "communal-disciplining" itself is in keeping with the threats perceived by the temperance and Prohibition

movements. For example, Norman H. Clark finds that "the Prohibition Movement was to protect the home and family at a time when their security was far more urgent to society than were the rights of the individual" (51).

While Peterson's analysis places an emphasis on "self," finding that "even if intemperance may be viewed as an act of victimization on the part of the liquor industry, it is foremost an issue of individual moral responsibility" (48), the disciplining role of the community comes to the forefront of the novel on several important occasions. The theme of accountability appears early in the tale when Belle relates to Jeanette her reasons for refusing Romaine's offer of marriage. Jeanette chides Belle for being "'a monomaniac on the temperance question,'" and proceeds to complain, "'I do not think Mr. Romaine will feel highly complimented to know that you refused him because you dreaded he might become a drunkard. You surely did not tell him so'" (101). Belle's response highlights the important role Harper envisions for the black community in responding to intemperance and the seduction of materialism; Belle answers, "'Yes I did, and I do not think that I would have been a true friend to him, had I not done so'" (101).

The ideal of communal discipline extends to communal restoration as well, for whereas, Peterson interprets Joe Gough's renunciation of alcohol and subsequent return toward a temperate lifestyle as "Joe [learning] to discipline himself" ("Frances Harper . . ." 48), Joe's inadequacy in achieving self-reform only changes once Belle Gordon and Paul Clifford intervene in his behalf. Previously, despite the entreaties of his wife, Mary, Joe has remained mired in his addiction to alcohol, yet when outside members of his community address his intemperate lifestyle, provide him with an opportunity to renounce his alcoholism and secure a job for him, only then is Joe able to turn his life around. Self-discipline is directly dependent upon community intervention.

On the other side of the equation, Harper also demonstrates how the adoption of bourgeois values could be directly responsible not only for increasing individual intemperance but also for the larger breakdown in community. When Belle makes her comparison between "rum sellers and slave holders," she defines both classes as "criminals against the welfare of humanity. One murders the body and the other the soul" (111). Belle's sentiments are emphasized by Paul Clifford's articulation of similar values. Early in the novel John Anderson approaches Paul

Clifford with an offer to become a business partner in his prospective saloon, cajoling,

'Now Paul, here is a splendid chance for you; business is dull, and now accept this opening. Of course I mean to keep a first class saloon. I don't intend to tolerate loafing, or disorderly conduct, or to sell to drunken men. In fact, I shall put up my scale of prices so that you need fear no annoyance from rough, low, boisterous men who don't know how to behave themselves.' (105)

Clifford's response highlights Harper's concerns about the breakdown of community inherent with an increase in intemperance. Clifford rejects Anderson, saying, "'I say, no! I wouldn't engage in such a business, not if it paid me a hundred thousand dollars a year. I think these first class saloons are just as great a curse to the community as the low grogeries'" (105).

Anderson, miffed at Clifford's response, replies "stiffly, 'I thought that as business is dull that I would show you a chance, that would yield you a handsome profit'" (105). The narrator clarifies Anderson's offer based upon Anderson's own philosophical values that financial concerns should trump moral values:

You may think it strange that knowing Paul Clifford as John Anderson did, that he should propose to him an interest in a drinking saloon; but John Anderson was a man who was almost destitute of faith in human goodness. His motto was that 'every man has his price,' and as business was fairly dull, and Paul was somewhat cramped for want of capital, he thought a good

business investment would be the price for Paul Clifford's conscientious scruples. (105)

Harper rejects this materialistic viewpoint and underscores her vision of communal goals triumphing over individual, financial concerns with Clifford's response:

'I am determined however poor I may be, never to engage in any business on which I cannot ask God's blessing you cannot keep that saloon without sending a flood of demoralizing influence over the community. Your profit will be the loss of others. Young men will form in that saloon habits which will curse and overshadow all their lives. Husbands and fathers will waste their time and money, and confirm themselves in habits which will bring misery, crime, and degradation; and the fearful outcome of your business will be broken hearted wives, neglected children, outcast men, blighted characters and worse than wasted lives. No not for the wealth of the Indies, would I engage in such ruinous business' (106)

On several levels Clifford's response echoes Harper's philosophy of brotherhood and community in "Our Greatest Want" and "The Two Offers." While some members of the community, typified by Anderson, believe that money is the "greatest need" of the black community, Harper counters that argument, in this instance through Clifford, by asserting the importance of "the glorious idea of human brotherhood" ("Our Greatest Want" *Anglo-African Magazine*, May 1859, 160).

Clifford's remarks provide another thematic link to "The Two Offers" by stressing the important role Clifford's

mother played in his temperate lifestyle. Indeed the text hints at the failure of Anderson's mother to instill similar values in her children, a circumstance that closely corresponds to the upbringings depicted in "The Two Offers" in which moral training resulted in a temperate lifestyle whereas a childhood characterized by a focus on material wealth ended in destruction and demise.

The important role of women in communal discipline reverberates throughout the novel. In addition to remarks about Clifford's mother's influence in his temperate lifestyle, Harper also refers to another "sainted mother" whose example causes her son, James Smith, to repay a debt incurred by his father and thus to save Clifford from financial demise at a critical moment in his history. These portraits of influential women culminate in a picture of Harper's vision for women to be powerful, fully-participating actors in communal discipline. When the female members of Jeanette's community begin to assess her happiness and find it wanting, they wonder how she can be discontent in the midst of material prosperity. One mother, Mrs. Gladstone, is appalled by her daughter's lack of understanding concerning the harsh realities for women and relates the tale of a woman she knew whose husband "'starved his wife to death and yet escaped the law'"

(160). She utilizes this tragedy to make a larger point that women need suffrage in order to participate fully in communal life with one ultimate goal of ending intemperance. Mrs. Gladstone asserts,

'I want women to possess power as well as influence, I want every Christian woman as she passes by a grogshop or liquor saloon, to feel that she has on her heart a burden of responsibility for its existence, I hold my dear that a nation as well as an individual should have a conscience, and on this liquor question there is room for woman's conscience not merely as a persuasive influence but as an enlightened and aggressive power.' (161)

As the quotation above indicates, *Sowing and Reaping* also gestures toward the culpability of the national community in the temperance problem, pointing out on several occasions that the laws of the land are responsible for the "the misery, crime and destruction that flow out of the liquor traffic" (132). An emphasis on encouraging the black community to utilize communal discipline to strengthen the community as a whole corresponds to sentiments expressed by Harper in other venues. In an 1875 address, Harper propounds, "The most important question before us colored people is not simply what the Democratic party may do against us or the Republican party do for us; but what are we going to do for ourselves?" (qtd. in Boyd 135). In both "The Two Offers" and *Sowing and Reaping*,

Harper specifies this question to the temperance issue and responds by advocating a rejection of middle-class materialism and a renewed emphasis on communal accountability.

While many critics have emphasized the universal aspects of Harper's serialized, temperance fiction, an awareness of contemporary intersections of race and temperance yields a different interpretation of Harper's emphasis. If we arrive at these stories with an understanding of the independent black temperance movement; racial tensions within the larger, universal temperance association--the WCTU; and the rhetoric of separatism found in the publication venues of Harper's fiction; assuming a racial consciousness on the part of Harper's targeted audience seems equitable. While Harper certainly evinced interest in issues that cross lines of race, she always maintained an awareness of and a priority toward African American uplift, keeping in mind her position as both an African American and as a woman. Therefore, although the themes of "The Two Offers" and *Sowing and Reaping* can be applied to white cultures as well as black, they are more revolutionary in their specific application to African Americans, especially in their encouragement for African Americans to avoid--as a community--the pitfalls of

intemperance that white, bourgeois culture promoted, even to its own demise.

Chapter Three

An Industrial Legacy: Alcoholism and Alienation in Rebecca Harding Davis's *The Tembroke Legacy*

Toward the middle of Rebecca Harding Davis's *The Tembroke Legacy: A Domestic Story*, serialized in 1869 in *Hearth and Home*, Davis includes an important scene that might seem unexpected given the temperance overtones of the novel. Breaking with formulaic and thematic traditions of women's temperance fiction, Davis raises questions about her purpose for utilizing this genre by pointing out the inefficacy of the written word, and particularly the sentimental responses temperance literature attempts to evoke, in order to engender practical drinking reform—the apparent aim of such literature. In this scene Jackey Jaquett—sister to the tale's drunkard, Nalbro Jaquett—tries to rescue her brother from the evils of intemperance by offering him standard temperance literature:

'I'll bring you some books to read that have plainer words than any I know.' She went out, and in a moment came back with a bundle of temperance tracts, laid them on the table, and disappeared. He had wounded her to the quick. She saw that he thought her cruel and meddling, when she loved him better than her own soul, and only pleaded with him for his good. He was obdurate as a madman that was bent on throwing himself over a precipice. He would sacrifice their lives and his own for a momentary

gratification, a tickling of the palate. Satan had hardened his heart, . . . her only way of solving the problem, and the sole chance of relief was in warnings, entreaties, and these tracts.

Nalbro turned over the tracts wearily. They did not seem to him to have caught the right words any better than Jackey. Their writers looked at the wine-cup with the eyes of the drunkard's heart-broken wife or starving children—not with the drunkard's, who was more heart-broken and famished than they. (March 6, 1869, 170)

The contrast between Jackey's and Nalbro's perceptions of this temperance literature highlights Davis's differentiation between her work and traditional temperance fare. Jackey's belief that temperance literature remains one of her best and last hopes for salvation from Nalbro's "madness" typifies Jackey's sentimental approach. Her assessment of the situation—including her characterization of Nalbro as "a madman that was bent on throwing himself over a precipice" and her estimation that "Satan had hardened [Nalbro's] heart"—draws upon the quasi-sentimental, almost gothic tropes found within the norms of temperance literature. This reliance on formulaic ideology emphasizes Jackey's affinity for melodramatic and sentimental thinking. Temperance works often made use of such sentimental figures to inspire action, sometimes political, or to demand sympathy—perhaps as a negative reinforcement of undesirable behaviors. (In such cases the

sympathetic character would often be a female figure who might, for example, be a misguided woman who makes a poor marital choice and because of social and legal restraints has no opportunity to redeem her poor decision.) In contrast, however, Davis's sentimental figure, Jackey, appears not as sympathetic or inspiring but as generally out-of-touch and melodramatic.

Contrasting Jackey's melodrama with Nalbro's subdued realism, Davis pointedly underscores the unlikely possibility that temperance literature will bring about pragmatic change in the male drunkard. Nalbro understands that these stories are indeed about women, as Carol Mattingly in *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* argues, which from Nalbro's perspective causes the tracts to miss the heart of what is happening to him as a male, and thus, they ultimately fail to reform his life.

In part the significance of this scene lies in its invocation and simultaneous deconstruction of the temperance genre. While not denying the importance of temperance work, Davis here suggests that the power of the temperance movement is circumscribed by its use of certain rhetorical strategies—in this case an over-reliance on sentimental and didactic literature. The dissonance of

Davis's critique of the very forms of temperance *The Tembroke Legacy* at times relies upon opens a space for her to raise provocative questions about the literary formulas and cultural discourses associated with temperance reform and ultimately its ties to industrialization via capitalistic rhetoric. Although Davis's use of the temperance tale signifies her interest in popular modes of social reform, her manipulations of the standard temperance plot complicate the text and import her larger intentions. Davis's disruption of the temperance form leads to the thematic disruption of the culturally sanctioned nexus between temperance and capitalism. Instead of the complementary depiction of this relationship touted in much reform literature, Davis explores the possibility that capitalism encourages intemperance, a possibility that problematizes much of the rhetoric of temperance reform. Linking these themes of alcohol and industry, Davis further depicts the ways in which the cultural upheaval associated with the concurrent rise of industry and temperance reform created a multitude of social challenges and internal conflicts in areas such as social, including gender-based, relationships and personal identity, which characters must then negotiate.

Contextualizing the Novel

While traditional types of women's temperance literature may have participated primarily in women's "cultural work" as Mattingly suggests (124), Davis hints that temperance is more than a woman's concern and involves more complex societal issues than merely the consumption of alcohol. For Davis the cultural implications of alcohol abuse are broad and the thematic implications of her tale reach beyond encouraging readers to adopt a temperate stance with regard to attitudes about maleness and alcohol or about women and political reform. Because some, including Davis herself, might dismiss the standard temperance novel as a sentimental, narrow form lacking transformative political agency, Davis differentiates her "alcohol" novel from the standard on the basis of its broader political and social ramifications.

In addition to her characterization of traditional temperance literature as non-transformative, as in the scene above, her desire that her novel not be evaluated alongside the standard, sentimental temperance tale can be averred through *The Tembroke Legacy's* publication history. While standard temperance literature often appeared in venues specifically dedicated to temperance reform, *The Tembroke Legacy* appeared in *Hearth and Home* during the

period Jean Pfaelzer finds Davis writing her "best fiction" (5). Although Davis had regularly submitted her more well-developed and original works to the *Atlantic Monthly*, in the late 1860s discord between Davis and the editors of the *Atlantic* caused Davis to seek other outlets for her best material.²¹ The same year Davis published *The Tembroke Legacy*, she also published a series of essays on women's rights in *Hearth and Home*, indicating her view of this periodical as a place for serious political discussion. Eventually Davis would go on to publish one of her most important political novels, *John Andross*, in this same venue.

The Tembroke Legacy appeared in *Hearth and Home* from January 1869 through March of the same year and is one of a significant number of novels written by Davis that engages noteworthy literary and cultural themes but remains, nonetheless, fairly unexamined. Although recent scholarly assessments of Davis's canon have recognized her literary contributions as an innovative American author, many of her works remain fairly inaccessible. This inaccessibility has led, according to some critics, to a lack of understanding of Davis's position in American literature. According to

²¹ For more information on Davis's relationship with *The Atlantic Monthly*, see Harris's *Rebecca Harding Davis and American Realism*.

Lisa A. Long, "We must look not only to . . . Davis's adult fiction, but also to . . . [her] essays, autobiographies, and juvenile texts to discover the fullness of . . . [her] thought" ("Postbellum Reform . . ." 262). In fact many of these "overlooked" texts do engage themes that are noteworthy not only within Davis's canon but within the larger literary and social culture as well; such is the case with *The Tembroke Legacy*.

The themes of *The Tembroke Legacy* are significant in part for their resonance with the themes of Davis's seminal and avant-garde text, *Life in the Iron Mills*. With the appearance of this—her first—novel, Davis's disdain for the social and material effects of marketplace capitalism became apparent, and her concern for the plight of those she regarded as being oppressed by expanding industrialized values did not subside after its publication. Instead, Davis continued to develop this theme from various perspectives, providing a realistic picture of the challenges and pitfalls of encroaching industrialism and capitalistic materialism.

The breadth of Davis's writing is demonstrated by the fact that while in *Life in the Iron Mills* Davis utilizes a realistic or even naturalistic literary approach, in *The Tembroke Legacy* Davis takes a very different tack by

appropriating and revising the popular reform genre of the temperance novel to launch a wide cultural attack on the effects of industrialism. The broad scope of this work in contrast to the more singularly focused anti-alcohol stance of much temperance literature hints at the complexity of this novel which has been for the most part overlooked because of its "domestic" label and "temperance" storyline. Invoking language and imagery related to industrialism, Davis uses her temperance novel to sound a warning familiar to readers of her fiction: beware of the repercussions of industrial capitalism. Thus, in addition to its overt warning about the consequences of excessive drinking, *The Tembroke Legacy* suggests that alcoholism is symptomatic of larger cultural conflicts instigated by the rise of industrial capitalism. Davis does not, however, completely condemn industry; instead she raises important questions about the American response to industrial capitalism without relying on standard reform ideology for easy solutions.

Re-forming the Temperance Form

The Tembroke Legacy traces the legacy of alcoholism through the Tembroke family while focusing on the particular trials of Nalbro Jaquett, a descendent of the Tembrokes through his deceased mother. Nalbro is the sole

provider for his aging father, William Jaquett, and unmarried sister, Jackey. Although he has been under the presumption that the family property will remain in his immediate family's possession, at least until his father's death, a caveat in the will dictates that if any of the town's people witness Nalbro's intoxication, prior to the age when he would inherit the property, another relative will immediately gain the inheritance. Though Nalbro's father knows of the intricacies of the will, the will forbids him to explain them to his son. So, although William has requested that Nalbro refrain from drinking, he has withheld the particular consequences to the family if Nalbro indulges in intemperate behavior. The story proceeds to chronicle Nalbro's fall into intemperance and his eventual redemption through the sacrifices of the woman he loves, Jane, or Jenny, Cortrell.

While some elements of *The Tembroke Legacy* correspond to the conventions representative of nineteenth-century women's temperance literature, Davis also modifies the temperance form on several levels in order to accommodate her larger message, suggesting the ways that static conventions become ineffective, requiring challenge and innovation. Mattingly explores the characteristics common to the genre of women's temperance literature and concludes

"[t]hat women's issues are the primary focus in women's temperance fiction" (138). Mattingly comes to this conclusion only after examining a range of texts in which she finds a broad spectrum of issues and concerns, united primarily along gender lines. Her analysis underscores a central idea: women typically utilized the temperance form as a means of promoting a feminine agenda, often tackling issues of injustice and inequality among the sexes in strong subtexts that run concurrent with the publicized anti-alcohol message found in the fiction.

While Davis's text, as I argue later, does evince concern with women's issues, these themes do not comprise the central focus of the novel. Instead Davis suggests that arguments surrounding the plight of women must be made in the larger cultural context of the evolution of industrialism and its effects on the broader community. Davis's movement of feminine concerns to a less central place in the novel represents a significant revision to the typical temperance form. These revisions are evident in the characteristics Mattingly finds to be common to the female-centered nature of the literature. For example, Mattingly finds that

unlike most fiction written by women in the nineteenth century, temperance fiction does not *end* with the marriage of the heroine, but,

instead, generally *begins* with the wedding. The bride is usually a well-loved daughter and friend with bright prospects, but her happy dreams for the future fade quickly after marriage, as her promising and loving husband becomes increasingly involved with drinking and the ills that accompany intemperance (127)

In many instances Jane Cortrell fits the profile outlined by Mattingly: she is good-natured and well-loved, with the potential for a happy future. Davis's depiction differs, however, in that Jane is not the naïve bride that Mattingly describes as typifying temperance literature. Instead, she fully comprehends that her potential for future happiness depends upon her ability to "re-form" her future husband. Davis, rather than beginning the novel with the marriage of Jane and Nalbro, opens the narrative by outlining the threats to Nalbro's temperate, steady behavior. The tale then proceeds to outline Nalbro's fall, which occurs under the observation of the community, most notably Jane's parents. Unlike the female character Mattingly finds typical of temperance literature, Jane is fully cognizant of Nalbro's condition as a drunkard, and she knowingly persuades her father to allow her to marry the drunkard, Nalbro. When her father argues that Nalbro won't live "'six months'" and will "'never . . . give up drinking'" (March 20, 1869, 202), Jane argues, "'If poor Nalbro lives but six months, he will not trouble me long.

And while he lives and I am his wife, father, he will not drink Father, did you ever know me to change my mind?'" (March 20, 1869, 202).

While the tenacity of Jane's plans for Nalbro's reform can be found in other women's temperance literature, her conscious decision to marry a drunkard in order to facilitate his reform illustrates one of the ways that Davis alters the temperance form, emphasizing a shift in the focus of her novel away from the plight of the politically disempowered woman. Davis's characterization of Jane as a fully-knowledgeable woman allows Davis to showcase a woman empowered by her knowledge and her intellect to act as a catalyst for true individual reform. Jane's determined, practical and personal response to Nalbro's situation is distinguished from the responses of others in immediate contact with Nalbro, and thus, instead of being "the story of women's lives," that Mattingly finds to be the norm among this type of literature (126), *The Tembroke Legacy* is a novel that explores individual responses, both male and female, to a wide range of conflicts without foregrounding particularly gendered concerns. Davis is able to re-focus her novel, in part, by explicitly breaking with fictional devices traditionally associated with the women's temperance genre.

In addition to breaking with fictional character types specific to temperance literature, Davis also moves away from temperance fiction's tendency to rely on traditional reform methods. Indeed, in *The Tembroke Legacy* Davis does not advocate for any specific methods of temperance reform; instead this text asserts the potential failures of normal temperance avenues to evoke change. Besides raising questions about literary methods of reform, *The Tembroke Legacy* also depicts the insufficiencies of a caring community to provide enough social support to overcome Nalbro's addiction, raising questions about the role of temperance societies in contemporary social life. In his exploration of the temperance movement leading up to Prohibition, Norman H. Clark explains a phenomenon occurring throughout nineteenth-century American society which encouraged the rise in both alcoholism and temperance—the development of the “bourgeois interior.” Clark describes this psychological development as a “developing consciousness of individual, rather than communal, dignity, [a] turning inward for new sources of individual direction” (12). Clark argues that the temperance movement itself finds its

origins . . . in the slow articulation of deep anxieties: that the new world of industrialism, opportunity, and social turmoil . . . was a moral

frontier, that it demanded new patterns of interpersonal relationships, and that these new relationships were threatened by the unrestricted use of distilled spirits. The movement gained power in American society as that society rejected the older, more open, even public style of life and began the internalization of its loyalties, energies, sentiments, and disciplines.
(13)

Clark thus locates some of the causation for alcohol abuse within the framework of an increased emphasis on individual rather than communal goals resulting from social changes due to industrialization. Combating the perceived isolation of the alcoholic, in the nineteenth-century temperance societies spread across the nation. Members willing to join a temperance society signed a pledge which held them accountable for maintaining a temperate lifestyle, establishing themselves as members of a community with shared values. This creation of a temperate community represented moral accountability, providing a reason for a dry lifestyle.

Although Davis's text does not specifically remark upon temperance societies, she does comment on the failure of a system of accountability to create change in the life of a confirmed alcoholic, despite his apparent desires for change. At various points in the narrative, Nalbro makes the decision that he will resume a temperate lifestyle. The text describes that "he was full of vehement courage

and resolve. He swore to himself again and again that he would keep himself clean now to the end, be the time long or short" (March 6, 1869, 170). He pledges to his sister that "'We're doing right back to old times now'" (March 6, 1869, 170), as he makes his way to the mills to find a job. The superintendent of the mill, Mr. Voss, has heard about Nalbro's troubles but offers him a job as a "last resource for the poor devil" (March 6, 1869, 170). Voss emphasizes Nalbro's need for abstinence from alcohol: "'I hear that you've been—well, a little wild, eh? We must have none of that—I'll keep my eye on you'" (March 6, 1869, 170). In keeping with his earlier declarations of beginning anew, Nalbro asserts, "'You will have no cause to distrust me'" (March 6, 1869, 170).

Through Nalbro's relationship with Voss, Davis questions both the power of pragmatic sympathy and communal accountability to offer salvation to the drunkard. On the same day that Voss offers Nalbro a job, Voss also promotes Nalbro and offers him participation within a community of accountability:

Something which the young man's eyes had told him that morning had haunted him all day
'We want an overseer. Come to the office to-morrow, and see what we can do. Remember,' when Nalbro would have spoken, 'there must be perfect sobriety.'
'I understand.'

The old man nodded and walked away. Then he suddenly turned, and came back again, lowering his voice to a whisper: 'I know what hell you are trying to get out of, boy. I know there's no torture on the rack equal to what you are bearing to-day. I've felt it myself. I'll do what I can for you' 'You have a father and sister dependent on you, Bowles says.'

'Yes.'

'So much the better. A load like that ought to bring out all the man there is in you. Well, if you want a friend, come to me, Jaquett.'
(March 6, 1869, 170)

Although Nalbro makes every effort to remain sober the next day by rehearsing the facts of his father and sister's dependency upon him, after several hours he gives up telling Voss that he is going "'For liquor, sir'" (March 6, 1869, 170). The text gives no indication that Nalbro ever gives consideration to Voss's offer of accountability as a means of alleviating his temptations. While Nalbro's communal ties to his family do provide some measure of restraint to counteract his addiction, his pledge of sobriety to Voss is emptied of power and never seems to restrain him from pursuing alcohol. Thus, neither speaking reform nor participation in a sympathetic community ensure change.

Davis's innovations of the temperance genre within this novel speak to her ability to transform a sometimes contrived and sentimental form into a site of contention and questioning. On one level, her challenges to the

temperance form may reflect Davis's personal issues about public involvement in specific reform movements; Jane Atteridge Rose finds that because Davis was an "individualist," she "never involved herself in any organized cause" (50). And yet, the lack of a specific moral message in *The Tembroke Legacy* may signal more than Davis's personal desire to remain unconstrained by a singular reform agenda. Instead, this lack of moralizing may suggest Davis's broad vision for reform fiction. In fact, Long advises that in general Davis's reform fictions "are not overtly or primarily pragmatic or motivational documents meant to touch . . . readers and inspire action" ("Postbellum Reform" . . . 268). Instead she asserts that Davis "reimagine[s]" reform

not only as nurturing empathy and soliciting aid from one's readers, but also as a hermeneutic task [Her] texts are audience-oriented primarily in that they encourage self-examination of the fragmented, alienated self; social action is a fortuitous by-product of such psychological labors. ("Postbellum Reform" . . ." 268)

Utilizing Long's paradigm in relation to *The Tembroke Legacy* proves useful, for the novel makes associations and asks questions of cultural conditions larger than one specific reform movement although Davis uses the framework of temperance discourse as a context for the broader issues that the tale tackles. Indeed Davis's questioning of the

practicality of temperance rhetoric in the scene between Jackey and Nalbro implies that Davis's fiction is not specifically aimed at promoting a rhetoric-based alcohol reform unlike some popular temperance novels. The widespread, popular nature of temperance literature²² suggests that Davis's revisions to the form as well as her questions regarding the efficacy of the genre would likely be evident to her reading public, differentiating her novel and its intent from the typical temperance fare. This differentiation then allows Davis to introduce issues and ideas typically beyond the realm of temperance fiction.

A Dual Legacy: Alcohol Addiction and Industrial Capitalism

The appearance of *The Tembroke Legacy* in a venue not solely devoted to practical alcohol reform is important for Davis to be able to make a larger cultural argument about the changing face of American society due to the evolution of industrialized technologies and their social implications. For while on one level, *The Tembroke Legacy* calls into question the methods and means of the temperance movement, and specifically the temperance novel, to evoke

²² For example, W. J. Rorabaugh in *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* asserts that "[t]emperance reformers also flooded America with propaganda. By 1851 the American Tract Society reported the distribution of nearly five million temperance pamphlets; thirteen tracts had been issued in quantities in excess of one hundred thousand copies" (196).

widespread cultural change, the thematic development most important in the novel centers on the novel's challenge to the ideology of industrial capitalism. Using the backdrop of intemperance, Davis links the legacies of industrialism and intemperance in order to highlight the conflicts and inconsistencies of the methods of the marketplace.

Davis draws subtle associations between the problems associated with intemperance and the internal conflicts of industrial capitalism from the very beginning of the narrative to demonstrate the potentially dangerous legacies of both. Although the most overt danger in the novel arises from alcohol use, Davis implies with the opening of her novel that alcohol is not the only potential malady that faces the rapidly changing nation. The first line in the novel suggests its emphasis on alcohol as the "legacy" referred to in the title: "There is no family but has its demon, that follows it from generation to generation-" (January 23, 1869, 73). Although this opening never specifically employs the term "alcohol," Davis's use of the word "demon" recalls the phrase "demon rum" commonly associated with temperance literature and with the evils of the intemperate male. With this connotation and other veiled references to the actual nature of the legacy of the Tembroses, early on readers might correctly assume that

alcoholism is the legacy the novel. Alcoholism, however, is not openly revealed as the legacy to which the title refers until the second installment of the novel which appeared on January 30. While this omission allows Davis to create suspense from installment to installment, it also serves another important function. Davis's delay in specifically identifying the "demon" to which the opening lines refer allows her to suggest a second "demonic" entity: industrialization.

Using key descriptions of scene, Davis subtly asks readers to consider the cost of industrialization both to individuals and to the American landscape. Following Davis's invocation of "the demon" of the story, she jumps, without further explanation, to a depiction of a scene in which an agrarian mentality is contrasted with that of an industrial capitalist. The scene opens with a conversation between William Jaquett and Mrs. Cortrell, Jane's mother. Jaquett is a rural, agrarian gentleman who appreciates the beauty of the pastoral setting, stopping to enjoy the "fine crop of mercers," and "the leafy hillocks" (January 25, 1869, 73). Jaquett, who revels in the beauty of nature, guides Mrs. Cortrell to a spot along the river where he stops to admire the view. On this particular occasion, he turns to her, asking "'What do you think of this, now?'

waving his hand over the great landscape, and turning to her triumphantly'" (January 25, 1869, 73). Mrs. Cortrell, later described as "mercenary" (January 30, 1869, 89), responds "'It's so-so,' good-humoredly, as if dealing with a child. 'But if my advice was asked, that smoke yonder s would all be consumed in the foundries. They'd gain three percent by it'" (January 25, 1869, 73). Mrs. Cortrell's response evokes a sense of dismay in Jaquett, who exclaims:

'Three per cent!' looking wistfully at the misty purple waves which settled into a plane of inky darkness over the far-off mill town. Black, vapory columns rose here and there through the distance, like the shadows of gathering giants visible even in the noon-day; and bald, bleak mountain-ridges barred in the horizon beyond.

'Three percent! Yet we would lose something, I think,' mildly. (January 23, 1869, 73)

Through the characters of Jaquett and Mrs. Cortrell, agrarian and industrial capitalistic values collide. Whereas Mrs. Cortrell is interested only in potential capital gains, Jaquett senses that the loss accompanying such industrial ventures would be great. Although the novel's opening references the "demons" that sometimes serve as the inheritance of families, this passage implies that the effects of industrialization will be an inheritance that damages the landscape and the people generation after generation.

While the threat of alcoholism dominates the opening of the novel thematically and conversationally, the threats of industry continue to dominate the scenery of the novel. The novel proceeds with a description of the Jaquett's homeplace as an agrarian ideal just beyond the advances of industry. Davis depicts the Jaquett home as "heartily open to the sun, . . . wearing clinging masses of trumpet-creeper as gallantly as some worn old veteran the last gay trapping of his youth" (January 23, 1869, 73). The Jaquett house with its gardens, hens and hyacinths is thus portrayed as a hold-out against the industrial impulse, and Davis's language suggests the inevitability that these "trappings" of the agrarian life left over from the youth of the nation are quickly fading. For within view of the Jaquett farm is "the sudden sooty twilight which belongs to regions where bituminous coal is burned" (January 23, 1869, 73). The key to recognizing the cost of the impending changes is twofold: first, one must be willing to look beyond what is immediately evident, and secondly, one must not be blinded by the expected monetary gain accompanying industry's spread as is Mrs. Cortrell.

Further emphasizing the connection between the dangers of an alcoholic legacy and an industrial legacy, Davis links the two concerns as the conversation between Jaquett

and Mrs. Cortrell continues. Without specifically mentioning alcohol, Mrs. Cortrell quizzes Jaquett about Nalbro's financial prospects in light of his potential to inherit what she terms "[t]he French blood of the Tembroses" (January 23, 1869, 73). She interrogates Jaquett in order to ascertain the outcome of a possible marriage between Nalbro and her daughter Jane. Jaquett denies that "'any curse [could] come from [his wife] to her son,'" failing to see how the family financial pressures placed upon Nalbro, along with the machinations of a capitalist entrepreneur, could, and eventually would, lead him to disaster, preying upon his frailty regarding intemperance. In the same passage, Davis illustrates her warning: society might look upon the coming industrial era blindly, failing to apprehend its full potential for causing hardship:

He had stopped, leaning on the worm-fence: there was a film over his eyes so that he could not see the wide, melancholy valley, out of which all the sunshine had died, or the red and yellow pillars of furnace-fire against the black northern horizon. (January 23, 1859, 73)

Just as Jaquett cannot clearly envision the demise of his son, neither can he begin to contemplate the full impact of industry and alcohol on his own existence nor on the landscape of society.

In *The Tembroke Legacy* these early descriptions unite the concepts of intemperance and capitalism which prefigure the main thematic thrust of the novel, and while Davis provides a unique portrait of the intricate relationship between industry and intemperance, she was not alone in connecting these important social issues. Part of the appeal of the temperance movement was its ability to produce capable capitalists, and traditional temperance literature draws upon this ideology in order to promote its anti-alcohol message. Joseph R. Gusfield's work *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* explains the conventional underpinnings of this association:

The heart of the doctrine of Temperance lay in the manner in which it coupled economic and social success with moral virtue. The theme of uplifting the underdog through drinking reform is a major one in the Temperance literature of this period. The argument is addressed to the worker and not to the employer The argument addressed to the worker went somewhat as follows: Economic success is a result of reputability and efficiency at work. Drinking destroys both reputation and ability. Abstinence assures the person of his reputation and also prevents the decrease in the abilities brought on by chronic or episodic alcoholism. The man interested in his economic welfare has an interest in being abstinent. (81-82)

Barbara Leslie Epstein finds the ideology in temperance rhetoric even more calculating in its desire to promote

capitalist philosophies. She describes temperance as "a symbol of the qualities that . . . capitalists sought to instill in their workers in the quest for profits" (108). She proceeds to relate that "when manufacturing increased significantly, [temperance] provided a vehicle for the indoctrination of the same values in working-class men" (108).

What stands out about Davis's work, however, as with other conventions of temperance fiction discussed earlier, is her failure to conform strictly to tradition. Instead Davis's novel provides an ambiguous approach to the pro-capitalistic ideology often found in the promotion of temperance. Instead of promoting capitalist ideology, Davis initially draws attention to a more sinister side of capitalism by casting the villain of the novel, William Vaughan, as a "capitalist." Through the character of Vaughan, Davis portrays capitalism as preying on the unaware, causing them to seek wealth for its own sake and encouraging the neglect of important (pre-industrial) values such as character and community. William Vaughan is the relative who will inherit the Jaquett property in the event that Nalbro falls victim to intemperance. Vaughan, fully knowledgeable about the dictates of the will, seeks out and befriends Nalbro in order to use his own influence

subtly to encourage Nalbro's demise using the medium of alcohol.

Vaughan's sinister intentions are particularly revealing about Davis's questions about capitalism specifically because he is the character most closely identified with capitalistic pursuits. Superficially, Vaughan appears to be a gentleman desiring only to benefit Nalbro's pursuits. The discrepancies between Vaughan's public intent and his private intentions mirror the tensions of industrialism; while capitalistic ideologies seemingly benefit the hard-worker, the underlying principle is economic gain for the controlling interests. In name and appearance, Vaughan is Nalbro's friend and business partner. For even before he guesses about any idiosyncrasies in the will disposing of the family property, Nalbro has committed his time and energies to the development and patent of an engine that he believes would save lives if utilized on steamboats. Vaughan comes alongside of Nalbro providing the money for the pursuit. Believing that Vaughan is providing the resources, money and contacts, necessary to secure a patent for his invention, Nalbro is more than satisfied with the relationship.

In reality, however, Vaughan allows Nalbro to fall deeper and deeper into debt while Vaughan does nothing legitimate to further Nalbro's project. At one point in the novel, although still unconscious of his own entanglements in the will, Nalbro comes to the realization that in a short amount of time there is a possibility that the family property will no longer be in the possession of his immediate family. At that point Nalbro becomes obsessed with perfecting his engine, for he views it as the only means of providing for his family. In addition to preying upon Nalbro's obsession with his machine, Vaughan also feigns a romantic attachment to Jenny Cortrell, the woman Nalbro intends to marry. Manipulating Nalbro's emotions with half-truths, Vaughan works at increasing Nalbro's depression and at the critical moment offers Nalbro his first drink of alcohol, encouraging him to drink, exclaiming, "'Smell it It is perfectly innocent. My God! man . . . you are shipwrecked utterly. If there's no other help for you in life, take this! Try it'" (February 27, 1869, 154).

Labeled as a "'capitalist'" (106) by Mrs. Cortrell, who—not surprisingly given her penchant for material pursuits—supports Vaughan's, but not Nalbro's, role in the industrial enterprise, William Vaughan becomes a

disagreeable image of the newly evolving capitalist entrepreneur. Davis characterizes Vaughan by his greed, manipulation and complete lack of compassion for human frailty. Readers only discover Vaughan's true intentions via a letter he writes to a friend, George, who is privy to Vaughan's schemes regarding Nalbro. His own words frame his heartlessness as he writes, "'With this man, ruin is only a question of time. I confess I am not disposed to grieve if it come a month sooner, when my own future depends upon it'" (February 13, 1869, 122). He proceeds to chide George for his "'weak twinges of conscience,'" asking, "'Now, George, what is the use . . . of setting this man apart as a peculiar subject of compassion?'" (February 13, 1869, 122).

Although Vaughan feigns an interest in Nalbro's mechanical invention, his imposed distance from Nalbro's circumstances reflects cultural shifts in economic structures due to increasing industrialism. Although Nalbro's shop bears the title "*Vaughan & Jaquett*," Vaughan's presence is not attuned to the workings of the shop. Davis describes Vaughan and his demeanor in stark contrast to that of Nalbro. While Nalbro is becoming increasingly frantic and single-minded in his pursuit to finish his machine and secure financial freedom for his

family, Vaughan remains calm and secure in his ability to deceive and corrupt Nalbro:

The young man inside the shop [Vaughan] had been writing—leisurely, as he did everything else He stopped from time to time to trim the almond-shaped nails that tapered his slim hands, to wind his watch, or to eat a peach, cutting it off slowly bit by bit turning it to the light to admire its fur of crimson and brown. There was not a tint of beauty hidden even in a peach-skin that could escape William Vaughan's clear blue eye.

With his blonde skin, fair moustaches, almost Greek profile: his daintily-fitting clothes of fine brown cloth, and delicate linen, he was a something oddly out of place in the dingy little shop. The very pearl that rested, like a great drop of sea-foam, on his blue scarf seemed to protest against his unclean, greasy surroundings, and claim him for some higher and cleaner life. (February 13, 1869, 122)

Davis clearly depicts Vaughan as being "out of place" in Nalbro's workshop, for he is as removed from the actual physical and mechanical production of the engine as he is from the concerns that drive Nalbro's work. His manipulation of Nalbro for pure economic gain as well as his distance from Nalbro's production may be read as an indictment of a capitalist market that voraciously consumes any available resource. Vaughan actually seeks to destroy Nalbro's financial prospects in order to re-establish a class hierarchy, using lies and deceit to position himself above the Jaquetts, all the while downplaying the human cost of his actions.

In fact, Vaughan specifically denounces the human impact of his "speculation," likening his pursuits to those of an investor in the stock market. Dismissing his friend George's "twinges of conscience," Vaughan responds:

'You hint that my occupation resembles that of a spy too much for your high-toned notions of honor. Upon my word I cannot bring myself to your point of view. I simply protect my own interests My dear fellow, you sit and watch your interests in the money-market; I sit and watch mine here. You tell me that the rise and fall of stocks are subject to as accurate rules as the tides and currents in the sea. I tell you that the rise or fall of a soul is subject to laws no less absolute.' (February 13, 1869, 122)

One danger of capitalism, Davis suggests, is that people lose their humanity, becoming little more than commodities to be utilized to the best advantage for "investors."

Through Vaughan's feigned kindness to Nalbro, Davis cautions about one facet of the deception of capitalism, and yet Davis proposes that there are aspects of the specific relationship between capitalism and temperance that require close inspection. Karen Sánchez-Eppler notes that the tensions between capitalism and the temperance movement are often woven into the discourse of temperance literature, often an understated subtext. She maintains,

If there is one point on which all temperance writing agrees, it is that drink results in destitution. In this fiction, men are forever spending their last pennies on rum instead of on

much-needed bread; there is no more evil spot than that commercial establishment, the dram-shop. This might suggest that the public sphere of economic exchange should be understood as a threat to domestic happiness, and, like all sentimental fiction, these stories voice anxiety about the moral taint of the marketplace. Yet, as with the tavern-keeper's new shop of tempting toys, the drunkard's salvation invariably appears fully ensconced in capitalist structures of industry and exchange. Just as surely as a drunkard's sad end lies in poverty, the clearest mark of redemption is signaled in these tales by the attainment of an adequately prosperous home.
(74)

Yet Davis, instead of depicting temperance as a means of achieving capitalistic success, plays upon another aspect of the capitalism/temperance dynamic by investigating the ways in which a capitalistic mentality, particularly as it relates to industry, promotes the very intemperate behavior that capitalistic rhetoric claims threatens production and profits.

The portrait Davis paints of Nalbro Jaquett raises questions about the cause/effect relationship between alcoholism and industrialism, suggesting that intemperate pursuit of industry for purely capitalistic success feeds a general intemperance that may manifest itself in overindulgence in alcohol. When Nalbro first appears in the novel, he is "tugging to get a box full of iron and wood work out of his pocket," and his first words hint at his preoccupation with the success of his engine: "'It's

that infernal valve—I beg your pardon, sir—but it’s that valve—that wouldn’t open and so kept us back’” (January 23, 1869, 74). Only a few lines later, Nalbro reveals the beginning of an obsession that contributes to his demise: “it’s such a success that I’ll have my patent out by fall, and in a year they’ll have my engine on every boat on the river. It will be something worth living for to see that day’” (January 23, 1869, 74). For Nalbro the scope of his life, its worth and his success as a human becomes absorbed in his ability to manufacture the perfect engine, in essence to be a good industrialist.

Sensing the impending possibility of the loss of his home and property but not knowing the true nature of the threat, Nalbro cultivates the intemperance that looms as his greatest danger, by immersing himself in capitalistic pursuits specifically related to industry. Because he views his engine as the only salvation for himself and his family, Nalbro works unceasingly at developing and perfecting his invention. He, incorrectly, believes that “[i]f [his] engine fails, [they’ll] be paupers,” but the engine “is the cure for all of [their] troubles’” (January 23, 1869, 75). Vaughan encourages Nalbro’s single-minded obsession, manipulating Nalbro’s intemperate work schedule in order prepare him for the temptation of alcohol.

Vaughan finds success with this strategy, and Nalbro's obsession with work quickly becomes an obsession with alcohol.

In the case of Nalbro, Davis depicts how an intemperate work ethic, which she ties specifically to industrial capitalism and an desire for material wealth, dovetails into intemperate consumption of alcohol. This depiction contrasts with the ideology propounded by capitalism that temperance and capitalism share similar goals. For Davis, capitalism, taken to its extreme, can engender an addictive appetite that may then manifest itself in areas as diverse as occupation or alcohol. Nancy Glazener finds that Americans in the nineteenth-century recognized that addiction could appear in many and diverse areas. Glazener quotes "a man identified only as an inmate in an 'inebriate asylum' in New York State" as saying,

'There is a disease of the nervous organism, almost peculiar to this people [Americans], which sprang from seeds of self-indulgence sown in the moral, social, and physical lives of our great-grandparents, and which has acquired fearful aggravations of extension and virulence in each succeeding generation It does not necessarily take the direction of rum,--it may find relief in the intemperate, passionate pursuit of a vocation or an agitation If God, in his mercy, had not suffered me to escape by the stormy Jordan of rum, I might have been a spasmodic editor, a fanatical demagogue, a champion revivalist, a plug-ugly, a lecturer for

the Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society, or a-Fenian martyr.' (qtd. in Glazener 99)

Where traditional rhetoric finds that temperance produces good capitalists, Davis's interpretation reverses the dynamic, demonstrating how capitalistic ethics promote intemperate appetites.

Davis further explores another avenue from which capitalism, perhaps inadvertently, promotes a societal climate conducive to intemperance, by exploring what Clark termed, "the bourgeois interior" (13). As outlined earlier, Clark describes the "bourgeois interior" as a sense of individual rather than communal support and guidance, resulting specifically from the "the new world of industrialism" (13). Nalbro suffers from his own alienation borne in part from his immersion into the world of a capitalistic work ethic. Nalbro's role as an industrial worker pushes him away from relationships that provide a measure of safety against the unnamed foe of alcoholism. As Nalbro becomes more involved in pursuing his invention, in his estimation the invention becomes his only salvation, he withdraws further from the community that could provide him support. Initially in the novel, Nalbro is described as "[a] leader among men, and beloved of women" (January 23, 1869, 75). And yet early on,

readers glimpse how Nalbro's focus on self and preoccupation with industry lead him to ignore his father's warnings about intemperance. When Nalbro's father tells him of the alcoholic legacy of the Tembrokes, Nalbro pushes the warnings aside,

and so swung back to the usual thoughts—Jenny, and the machine, and his own work. He had need to work hard for the next half dozen years. He meant to carry the whole of their loads on his shoulders. As for the old Tembroke legends, or the words of the brown book, what had he to do with them? (February 6, 1869, 105)

Nalbro's rejection of communal knowledge foreshadows his rejection of help from Mr. Voss, the superintendent at the mill, and ultimately the nadir of his moral journey when Jenny finds him alone passed out on a burning boat. A heightened sense of individualism causes Nalbro to take on a heavy burden alone, and Davis hints that individualism should still be tempered with a respect for community. The novel suggests that a push for material wealth, via industrialization, magnifies already existent human frailties by alienating individuals and disrupting communal patterns and knowledge but covers these pitfalls with a veneer expounding the glories of individualistic success.

Although Davis cautions readers about the evolutions occurring as a result of expanding industrialism, the novel does acknowledge that there are benefits associated with an

increasingly industrialized age. In the end of the novel, after a long period of uncertainty, Nalbro's engine is completed and tested with success. One of Nalbro's benefactors exclaims, "'Thy invention . . . has had a thorough trial, and it is a complete success. Thee will do great good and save by it many lives'" (April 3, 1869, 234). Ultimately Davis does not discount the fact that industry has the ability to enhance lives, but once again she tempers her portrayal of the benefits of industry with an intimate portrait of its costs.

Charting Identity in the Context of Industrialization

The ambiguities that Davis expresses regarding her views of industrialism reinforce Long's assertion that Davis's novels "ask questions more often than offer answers" ("Postbellum Reform . . ." 268). In *The Tembroke Legacy* we find Davis responding to another question, relating to the construction of personal identity, that Long identifies as particularly prevalent among Davis's texts. In her articulation of Davis's literary techniques in the context of the reform genre, Long differentiates aspects of Davis's novels from standard characteristics of the reform novel, explaining that Davis's texts "are audience-oriented primarily in that they encourage self-examination of the fragmented, alienated self; social

action is a fortuitous by-product of such psychological labors" ("Postbellum Reform . . ." 268). Long also maintains that Davis's texts "cannot capture 'origins' in any sense of the word, but only momentary traces and glimpses of a sustained, authentic self" ("Postbellum Reform . . ." 277).

In *The Tembroke Legacy* we find Davis raising this very question about origins and the determining factors of personal identity through the character of Nalbro Jaquett. Davis's portrayal of Nalbro's character flaws, specifically relating to his fall into intemperance, is complex, intertwining many causal factors and different theories of intemperate behavior. From the earliest moments of the novel, Davis frames Nalbro's pending intemperance from a biological point of view, creating an understanding of Nalbro's propensity for alcoholism as an "inheritance" rather than as a moral failing. Thus Davis adopts a disease model of alcoholism, characterized by descriptions of Nalbro's physical susceptibility to intemperance. For example, Vaughan writes that

'the whole physical and mental conformation of young Jaquett marks him out as an easy prey. He is a large-boned, broad, muscular man, with not a pound of fat on his body; highly nervous, his digestive powers imperfect, his pulse uneven and thready; a man of passionate feelings and small

reason; frank, jovial, generous.' (February 13, 1869, 122)

The narrative further emphasizes the physical nature of Nalbro's "disease" by referring to the bodily changes Nalbro experiences during his downward spiral. Nalbro's father "knew now that though the soul of Nalbro Jaquett might be the same, the old, sound, clean, ready body was gone—gone forever, he thought" (March 6, 1869, 170). In a note following Nalbro's father's ruminations, Davis, in an authorial voice, observes:

How he knew this, I have not thought it needful to state. I would like to hide as far as might be the slow corrosion of muscle and nerve, the foulness of flesh, the incessant brutal, intolerable hunger of this disease. In this miserable, true, story, to keep the more repulsive facts out of sight is the best that we can do. (March 6, 1869, 170)

Davis's reference to Nalbro's condition as a "disease" emphasizes the biological factors contributing to Nalbro's affliction, providing what seems to be a stable framework for interpreting Nalbro's intemperance.

Yet in keeping with her distrust of overarching paradigms, Davis subtly cues readers that biology is but one influence in a large field of factors molding Nalbro's behavior. Davis introduces doubt into the disease model when Mr. Cortrell, Jenny's father, labels Jaquett's

affliction as a "disease." Jenny questions her father about the label, and he adds, "Well, . . . one hardly knows what else to call it" (February 13, 1869, 121). Jenny herself has a vested interest in believing that there is more than biology at play, for the text indicates that Tembroke biology that Nalbro has inherited always ends in complete disaster. One of Nalbro's forefathers has passed along the warning to Nalbro that "he is a Tembroke, and that when he has once tasted the accursed thing [alcohol], there is no going back--no going back"" (February 6, 1869, 105). Yet Jenny believes in the possibility of reforming Nalbro, and her plans hinge on the power of personal relationship to halt the process of biology. Just as Davis implies that Nalbro's increasing alienation provides at least a partial impetus for his intemperate behavior, both in terms of work and alcohol, Jenny's ultimate successful reformation of Nalbro indicates Davis's belief that personal relationships can provide an important counterbalance to medical causation.

Along with the importance of social relationship, Davis also suggests that there are other elements shaping Nalbro's destiny, including the effects of industrialism. As discussed earlier, the correlation between the growth of industrialism and a growing isolation of the individual

leads to a breakdown in social relationships, allowing the individual to become increasingly vulnerable to individual frailties, including intemperance. In addition, the changing patterns of everyday life associated with the shift to industrial ways of living generated what Clark terms as "deep . . . anxieties" stemming from what he calls a "disturbing acceleration of the urban-industrial processes and conversions: the vast commercialization of almost every aspect of life" (52). Readers clearly witness Nalbro's suffering under the pressures associated with his ability or lack of ability to transition to an industrial lifestyle. Accordingly, Vaughan, the capitalist, increases the pressures on Nalbro, pushing him to the breaking point. Davis, documenting the changes in Nalbro, indicates that mental as well as physical factors conspire to cause Nalbro's intemperance:

He had altered greatly during the summer. Whatever physical or mental forces had been skilfully brought to bear upon him had done their work well; there was a great deal of healthy stamina gone from the man, cheerfulness and good-temper. He was haggard and care-worn, the humor altogether lost from his thin, compressed lips. (February 20, 1869, 137)

The text acknowledges that there is more than "physical forces" at work on the transformation of Nalbro's character: other forces have altered Nalbro Jaquett.

Harris observes a similar pattern throughout Davis's work, finding that Davis "depicted the brute-self as determined by the natural forces of heredity and environment and as compulsively instinctual . . . and subject to social and economic forces" (8).²³ Yet Harris proceeds to argue that Davis "increasingly felt the need to depict the brute self as a consequence not of innate human nature but of social failings" (101). Particularly in this novel, Davis seems to emphasize the power of industrialization as an environmental force shaping and reshaping the character of American citizens, improving the quality of life for some yet cultivating the brutish tendencies of others.

In Conclusion: On Women and Sentimentality

The Tembroke Legacy's plot which weaves together the brute tendencies of intemperance and a strong anti-industrial-capitalism subtext with an ending in which Nalbro's ultimate salvation through the planning and hard work of a strong, but very domestic female, Jane, may seem to be a troubling concession to the standard sentimental, temperance form, undercutting the very questions Davis raises about form and about the appropriate response to social constructions of any nature. Yet Davis subtly

²³ Harris also describes Davis's "insistence upon . . . linking heredity and environment" (43).

intertwines cautionary warnings among the sentimental tropes found within the novel, as well as within the romanticism of Nalbro's salvation, creating a complex treatment of sentiment and gender roles.

Harris claims that "the endings of [Davis's] best works of short fiction . . . blend the closure of romanticism with the themes of realism" (227). Harris's assertion provides an apt description of the ending of *The Tembroke Legacy*. Ultimately the ending of the novel emphasizes the success of Jenny's treatment for Nalbro and the happiness of their lives as the narrator describes their "very noisy, jolly household" (April 10, 1869, 251), which is filled with three boys. The final, happy, domestic scene Davis paints, in which both Jenny's and Nalbro's families live a tranquil, almost pre-industrial existence, couples with a religious sentiment that influences the ending of the novel to provide a romantic overtone to its closure. Several scenes late in the novel reinforce this religious romanticism. For example, the clergyman who marries Nalbro and Jenny and is unable to forget them, overhears the name Jaquett from one of his parishioners and locates Nalbro and Jenny. Discovering them to be under "great suffering," he relays their predicament to their families who have been unaware of both

their location and situation for a year. The clergyman claims that "[t]he matter . . . impressed me strangely" and by finding Nalbro and Jenny he believed he was doing "the Lord's work" (March 27, 1869, 219). His revelations to the families allow both Jenny's father and Nalbro's father to be present at the moment of Nalbro's greatest triumph, the success of his engine, and to surprise the couple with a reunion, ushering them back into the familial/communal circle. In other instances the text indicates that Jenny relies on prayer for their successful outcome. In the very final lines of the novel, Davis writes, "[Jenny] strained her boy closer to her breast, giving him as she did every day for the future coming, both soul and body, to God's care" (April 10, 1869, 251).

These moments of romantic sensibility do not, however, fully dominate the text. Although Jenny is depicted as a religious figure, Davis does not obscure the realities of the hard work Jenny endures in order to bring about Nalbro's transformation. While Davis does not specifically outline the role Jenny adopts during her sojourn with Nalbro, Davis does chronicle Jenny's behavior through the eyes of an observing, yet removed, boarding-house keeper. When asked about Nalbro's behavior, the woman replies,

He'd have been steady enough but for his wife . . .
. A poor, shiftless do-nothing! She was a mill-
stone on that young man's neck It don't
do for a workman's wife to be dawdling like a
fine lady. She wanted this, she wanted that; she
kept him slaving, till your heart would have
ached—him looking like a corpse half the time.
She never lifted her hand to help; She
walked with him to the mill; she carried him his
lunch, and went to come back with him in the
evening Then at night she dragged him
about to concerts, to theatres, to Methodist
revivals. (March 27, 1869, 218)

This neighbor's rendition of Jenny's character is enlightening on several counts. Initially, it provides a detailed account of the hard work Jenny undertakes in her efforts to reform Nalbro. She does not undertake this effort with a reliance on religion that precludes her own action. Instead, Jenny embodies a blend of a somewhat romantic sensibility—her reliance on prayer—with a practical understanding of the hard realities of industrialized life. This is again evident in the final lines of the novel in which other characters exclaim that "the fight is over forever," but Jenny practically recognizes that there may be other battles ahead and continues to pray for the welfare of her children (April 10, 1869, 251).

The boarding-house keeper's description of Jenny is also important for the way it allows Davis to argue for the value of the domestic role while at the same time

commenting on the misunderstandings that may be associated with the adoption of this role. Davis urges readers to view the "domestic" woman not as a controlled woman but rather as a controller, a shaper of futures, her own, her husband's as well as her children's. For Davis, there is a discrepancy between the "domestic" label which might be applied to Jenny, its outside interpretation and her ultimate role as the facilitator of the success of Nalbro's personal and professional lives. Jenny's influence even extends into the industrial realm by virtue of the fact that her hard work brings Nalbro's invention to ultimate success. In her portrayal of the domestic woman as savior, Davis does adopt one common ideology among temperance women, as Ruth Bordin articulates,

In the temperance movement women could view themselves as protecting the home. In this sense it was a maternal struggle. If they took public acts, took public stands, it was only in their role as nurturant mothers who must insure a good environment for those dependent on them. (9)

Davis's use of a domestic woman reinforces her own ambivalence about "progress," including changes in social roles. Jenny's main objective in taking an assertive quasi-public role is to be able eventually to move her family back to a "pre-industrial" setting in which she will return to a fully domestic role. In contrast to much

temperance fiction, Davis is not arguing for an increasingly public role for women; rather, she is advocating a return to traditional roles, with an understanding of the realities underpinning those roles.

Davis's use of the domestic female is not then an endorsement of sentimentality, nor is the ending of the novel a complete concession to the generic "temperance" label Davis questions in other parts of the novel. Instead Davis's characterization of Jane as the domestic female once again evinces her distrust of an industrial age and the ensuing upheaval of gender roles. The "domestic" label also serves with other labels as a means of raising questions about the truths behind rhetorical constructs while at the same time raising questions about Davis's use of "domestic" as an acceptable and normalizing term. So while the ending of the novel does reiterate the broad message of the text as a whole in which Davis urges readers to demonstrate cultural discernment by questioning social ideologies and the constructions they generate, readers must then decide whether to apply her challenges to the very constructions Davis herself would find to be legitimate.

Chapter Four

“‘What are you pious a-goin’ to do with us?’”: Rhetoric Versus Real Reform in Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s *Jack the Fisherman and A Singular Life*

Published in 1894, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s novel *A Singular Life* invokes religious allegory to tell the story of the Christ-like figure, Emmanuel Bayard, an aspiring minister who is ultimately repudiated by the religious hierarchy and denied ordination because of his “heretical” views on certain tenets of theology. The church into which Bayard was to be ordained is the First Church in the fishing village of Windover. Bayard appears late for the ordination examination after interfering in a street fight in Angel Alley—a poor, rough area of Windover—during the course of which the life of a little boy is threatened by his drunken father. Upon arriving at the church, despite his late appearance, initially, “Bayard felt no serious concern as to the outcome of the examination” calling it a “mere form, a husk, a shell, with which it was not worth a man’s while to quarrel” (67). Eventually, however, the tone of the examination turns against Bayard, and Bayard realizes that “the smoke was curling in the fagots at his feet; that the stake was at his back, the chains upon his

hands; that he was in danger of being precondemned for heresy" (67). When the Council returns their verdict that Bayard has been "refused ordination to the Christian ministry" (74), Job Slip, the drunken sailor whom Bayard saved from murdering his son and who subsequently followed Bayard into the church, misunderstands the reasons motivating the Council, believing that Bayard has been denied ordination because of his involvement in the street fight. Although other members of the street crowd attempt to quiet Slip, he insists upon defending Bayard: "'I'll stick up for the minister every time. It ain't *his* fault he was late to meetin'. You hadn't oughter kick him out for that, now! It's all along of me, gentlemen!'" (75). When Slip realizes that the "venerable Christians" are failing to listen to him, he poses a question that highlights a central thematic thrust of the novel:

'Won't hear us, won't they? Well, we'll see! There ain't a cove of the lot of them could knock me down! Jest to save a little fellar's bones! Gentlemen! Look a' here. Look at us. We're the delegation from Angel Alley, Sir. Now, sir, what are you pious a-goin' to do with us?' (76)

In this scene, Phelps sets up a dichotomy that persists throughout the novel: on one hand she portrays the under-privileged, working-class as afflicted by sundry vices, most prevalently alcoholism. On the other hand, she

presents the wealthy, religious upper-class who rhetorically supports reforms for the disenfranchised, but Phelps finds this rhetoric to be a façade for an ideological and practical support of a social hierarchy contradictory to some of the democratic impulses of reform rhetorics, and specifically those of temperance reform. In *A Singular Life* Phelps seeks to bring to light these contradictions and to imagine a model temperance reformer, Emmanuel Bayard, whom she uses to address the chasm between the two classes of people. In the generic context of the temperance reform novel, Phelps's critiques of reform rhetoric have larger ramifications for the relationship between class and reform. Yet while only a few critics have commented on *A Singular Life*, those who have, such as Carol Farley Kessler and Susan S. Williams, have concentrated on Bayard's character: Kessler centers her analysis on Bayard as a male with traditional attitudes toward women whereas Williams focuses on Bayard as a "figure for the author" (153). These investigations are important for their attention to a work that was popular in its day but has since suffered from scholarly inattention. By primarily attending to only one character, however, we may miss the wider, generic implications for the ways that *A Singular Life*, in the context of temperance reform,

presents a radical message, by contradicting the idea of a natural nexus between the ideologies of a capitalistic society and a desire for widespread temperance reform.

The gap between religious reform rhetoric and the practical outworking of reform is nowhere more evident than in Job Slip's inquiry as to his place in the church. In the narrative, Job's question remains unanswered by the church body, but the implications of the question persist throughout the novel as Phelps suggests that, ironically, the church is particularly unable to provide an appropriate response to Slip's resounding query as to the place of the intemperate outcast within conventional social organizations. Despite an abundance of social reform discourses, Phelps depicts the prevailing social institutions as having few mechanisms, with the singular exception of exclusion, for handling Job Slip's drunken social intrusions. In both the novella *Jack the Fisherman* (1887) and *A Singular Life* Phelps tells temperance stories as a means of countering the threads of conventional, institutional reform discourses—including economic and religious threads—that emphasize the collusion of morality and class mobility as a means for creating a social space and voice for the intemperate and disenfranchised. As a reform discourse that weaves together ideologies of

capitalism and Christianity, the temperance form is particularly suited for Phelps's critiques: instead of the social promotion of class mobility often touted by temperance rhetoric, Phelps finds class and religious structures that reinforce social evils, specifically intemperance, as a means of maintaining social boundaries and differentiating distinct classes. Contrary to traditional temperance rhetoric, Phelps depicts significant economic and religious barriers to temperance reform among the lower classes and, therefore, at times questions the possibility of reform itself. Thus, Phelps responds to Slip's inquiry by demonstrating that often societal structures, in effect, have no room for "the likes" of Job Slip.

Phelps, Reform and the Temperance Movement

Phelps's background and introduction to temperance reform provide an important context for understanding her skeptical analysis of temperance's "upward mobility" rhetoric. In her autobiography *Chapters from a Life* Phelps maintains the importance of social reform in the context of her life and fiction:

A maker of books with any tendency towards the activities of moral reform may be at some peculiar disadvantage. As I look back upon the last twenty-five years of my own life, I seem to myself to have achieved little or nothing in the

stir of the great movements for improving the condition of society which have distinguished our day; yet I am conscious that these have often thrust in my study door and dragged me out into their forays, if not upon their battle-fields. The grandfather who belonged to the underground-railway, and the grandfather of the German lexicon, must have contended in the brain cells or heart cells of their unconscious descendant, . . . for the reformer's blood and the student's blood have always had an uncomfortable time of it, together, in my veins. (249)

Indeed Phelps's dual emphasis on writing and reform characterizes her basic theory of art: Phelps writes that art should "picture life as it is" (*Chapters from a Life* 260), but she asserts that an ethical or moral purpose is key for her vision of life, arguing that "[m]oral character is to human life what air is to the natural world;--it is elemental" (261).²⁴ Thus, much of Phelps's fiction, such as her popular *The Gates Ajar* series and *The Story of Avis*, evinces a continuing concern with contemporary social issues, most prevalently with issues facing women.²⁵ While

²⁴ Writing in the age of realism, Phelps's emphasis on social reforms and "morals" impacted contemporary reception of Phelps's work as it currently complicates any scholarly labeling of her texts. For further information see Susan S. Williams's article "Writing with an Ethical Purpose: The Case of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps," Lisa A. Long's "The Postbellum Reform Writings of Rebecca Harding Davis and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps" or "The Silent Partnership: Naturalism and Sentimentalism in the Novels of Rebecca Harding Davis and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps" by Sara Britton Goodling.

Phelps's involvement in reform focused heavily on issues relating to women, she also worked and wrote about class struggles as well as on behalf of reforms such as vivisection and most importantly for this study, temperance.

Phelps's literary engagement with temperance spans several short stories, a novella, *Jack the Fisherman*, and the novel *A Singular Life*. Her concern with temperance issues evolved out of her personal experiences during her summer residences in the seaside port of Gloucester. In *Chapters from a Life* Phelps chronicles her unintended initiation into temperance reform by describing driving through the streets of Gloucester and coming upon a crowd of people from whom she learns of a drunken brawl which has resulted in the murder of one of the participants.²⁶ Phelps proceeds to the home of the widow to provide comfort to her and to her children, thus embarking upon an unsought tenure in temperance reform. Following her encounter with the widow and her family, Phelps began holding temperance services at the "rum-shop" where the murder occurred. In

²⁵ Phelps's attention to women's issues is pronounced enough to cause critics such as Carol Farley Kessler to write that women were Phelps's "central cause" (preface).

²⁶ For Phelps's full account see *Chapters of a Life* pages 198-220.

subsequent summers, Phelps developed an affiliation with a local Reform Club, working in conjunction with the club to promote temperance among the local fishermen.

Throughout her discussion of her personal involvement with temperance, Phelps distinctly portrays herself as an outsider to the national temperance movement, relating her unfamiliarity with temperance means and rhetoric. Phelps contextualizes her experiences with her lack of history with temperance work:

when I was a very young lady, I personally besought a liquor-seller in behalf of some ruined family in which I was interested, to abandon the error of his ways; he received me politely and continued them steadily. But as for what is known in this country as the Temperance Movement, it was as unfamiliar to me as the gossip of Tahiti. I was reared in circles which pursued their own proportion of Christian charity in their own ways, and which knew but little of this form of ethical progress. In a word, I was without education for that kind of service to humanity; and I had, hitherto, paid no more attention to it than any woman of society. In fact, if the truth were to be told, I had, perhaps, little more confidence in the wisdom of its prevailing methods. (*Chapters* 206)

Although Phelps never disparages the work of the larger organization, she clearly identifies her efforts on behalf of temperance reform as an outgrowth of service to her community rather than as a loyalty to the institutionalized temperance organization and its methods. Personal

experience rather than temperance rhetoric provides the key for breaking down her prejudices:

That Gloucester murder, and the short sunset hour which I spent in that devastated home, did for me what all the temperance conventions and crusades of America, generaled by braver and broader-minded women than I, had failed to do. All my traditions went down, and my common sense and human heart came up. From that day 'I asked no questions; I had no replies;' but gave my sympathy without paltry hesitation to the work done by the women of America for the salvation of men endangered or ruined by the liquor habit. (Chapters 206-7)

In fact her fiction depicts success among temperance workers who are involved in the intimate, local work; her work is not specifically engaged with the larger, political, national temperance movement, such as is characterized by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).

Although *Jack the Fisherman* and *A Singular Life* do not specifically critique any named national temperance reform organizations, they participate within the realm of temperance discourse and provide a unique response to the rhetoric employed by the larger temperance movement. Lacking a formal association with a specific national temperance reform movement affords Phelps an outside perspective on common temperance rhetoric, allowing her to point out discrepancies within temperance's typical

rhetorical appeals and her perception of hypocrisy among reformers. Along this line, Nicholas O. Warner asserts that Phelps in "Jack" is "reacting to the increasing dominance of the coercive wing of temperance that she sees as self-righteous and hostile in its attitudes toward the drinker" (196).

The Temperance Rhetoric of Economics and Class

An important factor in the nineteenth-century temperance movement's rhetorical appeals for sobriety centered on the promise of economic success with the application of temperance ideals. This type of rhetoric, as outlined by Joseph R. Gusfield, was prevalent in temperance fiction:

Temperance fiction was probably the most effective media of mass persuasion in the Temperance cause. It often played on the theme of drinking as an indication of outcast or low social position and abstinence as a symbol of middle-class life. In Temperance tales the drinker is not only an immoral and sinful man in his alcoholic vice. He is also about to be ruined. With drink comes economic deprivation. The drinker loses his industrious devotion to work. He loses his reputation for reliability. Finally he is without any employment at all. Retribution is possible. Reform, sobriety, and the pledge to abstain are rewarded by the return of economic virtues and the reappearance of economic reward. (50)

Gusfield's analysis emphasizes the persuasive power of the rhetorical connection between middle-class morality and

middle-class economic status within temperance rhetoric, by explaining that "[t]he assertion that Temperance is morally right and that it is a way to middle-class membership is taken for granted" (82). Gusfield proceeds to assert that "the Temperance advocates assumed that the drinkers should be converted to the modes of life of the middle-class, respectable citizen" (82). Thus, middle-class morality, specifically temperance, becomes a direct means for attaining middle-class economic/class status. Within this paradigm, economic reward motivates the intemperate, usually a male, to alter his behavior. Conversely, intemperate behavior causes "outcast" social position: "With drink comes economic deprivation" (50).

Phelps modifies this concept, exploring the idea that intemperate behavior serves as a marker of—rather than as a causal factor for—low class status. In Phelps's fiction, intemperate behavior results from low socioeconomic standing rather than causing it, and a depressed economic status functions as an invitation for the alcohol industry to prey upon the lower classes. Additionally, in Phelps's fiction, the middle-class not only fails to encourage reform but instead promotes the indulgent lifestyles that lead to intemperance. Rather than being reform-focused, middle-class values, in Phelps's depiction, center on the

accouterments of a burgeoning capitalistic society and are thus self-centered rather than reform-centered. Whereas the larger temperance movement often hails middle-class morality and capitalism as means for the socially depressed to attain a higher class status, Phelps implicates middle-class values along with capitalism and class hierarchy in the continued presence of alcoholism and poverty as well as in the failure of middle-class reform methods.²⁷

Discounting the efficacy of applying middle-class morality to remedy intemperance, Phelps questions temperance's class-based rhetoric and the mobility associated with it. Indeed, the fallibility of class mobility was a theme familiar to Phelps's readers. Phelps had explored the difficulties of class mobility in other works such as *The Silent Partner*. In her examination of *The Silent Partner*, Amy Schrager Lang finds that in Phelps's fiction, "economic mobility is rendered next to impossible" (274). Lisa A. Long agrees that Phelps's "work consistently negotiated issues of class" (*Postbellum Reform . . .* 263). Specifically in these temperance-themed works, Phelps associates the middle-class with a self-centered

²⁷ Despite Phelps's criticisms of the middle-class, critics find that her own middle-class position compromises her critiques. For example, Susan S. Williams argues that "Neither Phelps nor her characters . . . can escape their own white middle-class consciousness" (166). See also Amy Schrager Lang's "The Syntax of Class in Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *The Silent Partner*."

materialism rather than with other-centered reform—highlighting a paradox between the material possessions temperance rhetoric relies upon as a lure for behavioral change and the same possessions which foster a materialistic self-interest among a middle-class with no interest in encouraging reform. While much of temperance rhetoric relies upon class consciousness and a desire to improve one's class standing to promote a temperate lifestyle, Phelps's fiction proposes a rejection of assumptions about class morality rather than an emphasis on them.

Phelps's deconstruction of the importance of class consciousness and middle-class values within reform discourse begins with an acknowledgment of the general permeance of class consideration even in religious circles where class might seem to be of little concern. In the opening chapter of *A Singular Life*, Phelps delineates the class connections of various members of Bayard's seminary class, describing one student, Holt, as

in the Special Course. He was a converted brakeman from the Heccla and St. Mary's, a flourishing Western railway. Holt, being the only student present who had not received any undue measure of collegiate culture, was treated with marked courtesy by his more liberally educated fellow-students. (3)

Phelps proceeds to outline the class connections, or lack of connections, of various other students as well. For example, Phelps writes that Tompkinson "studied much without a fire, for the club board at the 'short price' cost him two dollars and seventy-five cents a week. His boots were old, and he had no gloves and a cough" (2). Phelps does not describe the social positions of these characters because they are important to the overall progression of her narrative, but rather these descriptions serve to provide an added dimension to Phelps's treatment of class and reform, an admission of the extent of class awareness and of the inefficacy of complete class assimilation even--or especially--in religious circles.

One character whose economic standing does further Phelps's plot development is Fenton, who becomes an important part of Phelps's characterization of the middle class. Phelps describes Fenton as

a snug fellow who took honors at Amherst; a man who never spent more than five hundred a year in his life, yet always wore clean linen and a tolerable coat, had a stylish cut to his hair, and went to Boston occasionally to a concert. (2)

Although Fenton is not wealthy, he enjoys the creature comforts and status symbols that identify him a solidly middle-class.

In addition to his characterization as middle-class, Phelps also depicts Fenton as a capable theologian. His ability to utilize his sound theology as a means of ministering to the lower classes, however, is compromised, at least in part, by class and status concerns as his personal comfort and middle-class status gain preeminence over his reform convictions, providing a scathing commentary on the melding of middle-class morality with a realistic reform agenda. Fenton's ultimate failure to become the icon of Christian reform that Bayard becomes is foreshadowed in an early conversation with Bayard himself. When Bayard suggests he believes comfort might have to be sacrificed for ministry, Fenton replies,

'Oh, come Bayard! . . . There's where you miss it. Why not be comfortable? I don't see that Christianity and misery need be identical. You are certain to have a tough time if you go on as you begin. Talk about election, foreordination, predestination! You take the whole set of condemnatory doctrines into your hands and settle your own fate beforehand. A man doesn't leave Providence any free will who sets out in life as you do.'

(8-9)

Indeed although Fenton receives three offers of employment, he initially "accepted none[because] [h]e expected to be married in the fall, and looked for a larger salary" (50). As Phelps's symbol of the middle class religious establishment, Fenton ascribes to the doctrine of comfort

above all, which ultimately lessens his ability to engender reform and instead positions him as the enforcer of the status quo.

Whereas traditional temperance rhetoric touts the ability of middle-class values to evoke reform, through the character of Fenton, Phelps questions this premise. For Fenton class comforts act as a stumbling block rather than as a conduit for reform. Phelps actually uses Fenton to emphasize the distaste of the religious middle-class for ministry and reform efforts among the poor because of the high importance the religious middle-class places upon middle-class status and comforts. Even showing an interest in Bayard's reform work is difficult for Fenton because after the First Church of Windover fails to ordain Bayard, the members eventually call Fenton to be their minister. Prior to his actual ordination, Fenton visits the mission work Bayard began after his failed attempt at ordination within the institutionalized church. Fenton's visit to Bayard's mission must take place before his actual ordination because he will be "in a very delicate position, when [he] become[s] the pastor of that church" (150). In the course of the dialogue between the two, Fenton reveals an absorption with middle-class materialism and a lack of interest in the ministry-based reform that

characterizes Bayard. When prompted by Bayard to talk about himself, Fenton elaborates upon his success both professionally and economically,

'The call was unanimous. Perfectly so.'
'That must be delightful.'
'Why, so it is . . . And the salary—they've raised the salary to me, Bayard. . . . Anyhow, I'm to have three thousand dollars I shall be ordained immediately . . . and bring my wife. They are refitting the parsonage. I went in last night to see that the carpets and papers and all that were what they should be. I am going to be married . . . next week.' (149)

Instead of commenting on his excitement at the prospect of beginning his ministry, Fenton immediately lapses into his excitement over his material prospects. Again when Bayard redirects the conversation toward the situations of their former classmates, Fenton communicates his preoccupation with class status, answering that Tompkinton "has a fine parish. He's to have two thousand—that's doing well for a man of his stamp" (150). Bayard, on the other hand, dismisses Fenton's emphasis on the material, replying, "I don't think Tompkinton is the kind of man to think much about the salary . . . he struck me as the other sort of fellow." Fenton, however, continues his assessment of their comrades in material terms adding that Bent is "sure to boom" and that Holt "is slumming in New York city." Despite the fact that Holt is "slumming" Fenton reports

that Holt is "really very useful. He has some sort of mission work, there, at the Five Points. I'm told he makes a specialty of converted burglars" (150). The tone of the entire conversation conveys Fenton's subordination of ministry to materialism.

While Fenton's preoccupation with class allows Phelps to question middle-class morality, Bayard's devaluation of class status becomes a model for emulation. Fenton's emphasis on class serves as a foil for Bayard's outright rejection of class status. Resisting the middle-class reformer, Phelps instead positions her reformer/hero, Bayard, outside of middle-class reform rhetoric; thus Bayard serves as a counterpoint to temperance's use of middle-class status and values as an incentive for reform. In contrast to Fenton's seemingly intent interest in securing his middle-class status, Bayard's rejection of class-based rhetoric, including his own upper-class status, leads to his evolution into an effective minister and reformer. His efficacy is ultimately tempered by his untimely demise which Williams suggests signifies Phelps's own middle-class consciousness impacting her treatment of Bayard. Williams argues that Bayard's "death saves him from becoming fully assimilated into . . . [an] underclass world" (157).

His death does not, however, diminish his passionate rejection of class status during his life, and in this way Bayard follows in his mother's footsteps. Reared in an affluent family, Bayard's mother depletes her inheritance when she marries a poor, ill minister who dies young, leaving her with one-year-old Emmanuel. When his mother dies also, Bayard is left in the care of his wealthy uncle, who disapproved of his sister's lack of attention to class concerns in her marriage. Bayard's uncle raises Bayard "delicately, and as became a lad of gentle birth, who will do what is expected of him, and live like the rest of his world" (26). Bayard's uncle, however, fails to recognize that Bayard will not "live like the rest of his world." Indeed at least from his time at seminary, Bayard consciously sets aside his upbringing, "purposely refrain[ing] all winter from th[e] luxury [of double windows] lest he should seem to have more comforts than his poorer classmates" (10).²⁸

In spite of his traditional, privileged upbringing, Bayard takes an untraditional theological stance while at seminary. Bayard refuses to compromise on his unusual

²⁸ Again in her analysis of Bayard, Williams finds that Bayard must struggle "to overcome his class-consciousness," but because he "shares his classmates' concern with material wealth and comforts. . . his status as martyr is all the more conflicted" (156).

theological beliefs, even though espousing unorthodox beliefs causes him not only to lose his position as a minister but also to lose favor with his uncle, who proposes that Bayard's education has been a "waste" and that now he might have to secure Bayard "a place to sweep a store" (85). Although Bayard's uncle eventually admits that he would not turn Bayard out of his house, Bayard chooses to leave his privileged upbringing behind and to continue to pursue ministry in Windover among the poorer segments of the community. Rather than returning to live in his childhood home in affluent Boston, Bayard chooses to live with a poor fisherman's widow, Mrs. Granite, and her daughter Jane. Standing firm in his theological convictions and refusing to compromise for wealth and social standing, Bayard even postpones marriage when to be able to provide comfortably for his love would mean forsaking his ministry and relying on his uncle's wealth.

In fact, in Phelps's temperance fiction, the forsaking of wealth or status and the ensuing poverty seem almost a necessity for occasioning true reform. Phelps implies that the most effective reformer does not reach down from a higher social status to pull-up the needy (as middle-class temperance rhetoric suggests), but instead the successful reformer speaks to the needy out of an understanding of the

circumstances surrounding the need for reform—in this case a true grasp of poverty is key. Thus, the singularity of Bayard's life, including his rejection of class status, stands out among Windover's other clergy allowing him to make significant inroads in reforming the liquor industry. Phelps highlights the poverty of the reformer figure, Mother Mary, in *Jack* as well. Teen, Jack's wife, describes Mother Mary as "the real kind" (68). Mary and her husband were "poor folks themselves . . . and understood poor folks, and did for them all the year round, not clearing out like rich ones, when it came hot weather, but stood by 'em" (68). When Jack first meets Mary, he notes that indeed she "did not look rich" (68).

The reality of the organized temperance movement, however, was that temperance leadership found its locus squarely within the middle-class. Gusfield explains that "the middle classes were the sources of Temperance support and the models for emulation" (80). He continues,

The middle-class location of Temperance adherents is supported in data gathered on the occupations of husbands of WCTU leaders. At the local level the organization was led by wives of independent professional and small businessmen. The wives of physicians, lawyers, doctors, and ministers made up a large segment of the WCTU leadership. (80-81)

Portraying her own ideal rather than the reality of the temperance movement, Phelps, in her depictions of effective temperance reformers, moves reform away from an upward straining class consciousness, to focus more particularly on the plight of the downtrodden.

Bayard's denunciation of class concerns illustrates for Phelps an important counterpoint to traditional temperance reform rhetoric, and thus she depicts the hazards of tying reform to a particular class rhetoric. On one level, with her characterization of Fenton, Phelps paints a picture of middle-class morality that is patently unconcerned with engendering moral reform among members of the lower class. In this portrait, the middle class becomes self-absorbed, interested only in perpetuating its own culture of materialism and self-advancement. While even this description may seem somewhat harsh, on another level, Phelps pushes her point further by ascribing to certain members of the middle-class an even more sinister agenda than simple unconcern.

In contradiction to temperance rhetoric's claim of middle-class morality's provision of a framework for personal temperance reform, Phelps indicts a segment of the middle-class who based upon a lack of morality and an immersion in capitalistic, material pursuits actually

encourages intemperance as a means for personal economic gain.

Prior to exploring this theme in *A Singular Life*, Phelps introduces this idea in her temperance novella *Jack the Fisherman*. This novella chronicles Jack's inherited tendency toward alcoholism by sketching out the demise of Jack's father due to alcohol before more carefully detailing Jack's own downfall. Although Jack does become a steady drinker, the text makes an emphatic point about his repeated attempts at reform, as Phelps once again hints at the futility of reform. Not only does the following passage describe the uselessness of reform efforts; the text also implies that hypocrisy within the reform system engenders at least some of its failures. The narrator describes Jack as

A steady drinker at nineteen. . . .
Of course he reformed. He would not have
been interesting if he had not Jack was
always reforming.

Jack, as I say was always reforming.
Every temperance society in the city had a hand
at him. They were of the old-fashioned, easy
type which took their responsibilities
comfortably. They held him out on a pair of
moral tongs, and tried to toast his misdemeanors
out of him, before a quick fire of pledges and
badges; and when he tumbled out of the tongs,
and asked the president and treasurer why they
didn't bow to him in the street when he was
drunk, or why, if he was good enough for them
in the lodge-room, he wasn't good enough to
shake hands with before folks on the

post-office steps (61-62)

This passage outlines a general, social hypocrisy found in certain segments of the temperance movement—those whose preoccupation lies with image and class concerns rather than with the welfare of those struggling to reform. Instead of exhibiting an overarching desire to reach down and help those of lower class status attain a higher measure of respectability, the text insinuates that these temperance workers evince a desire to maintain a social distance from “reforming” drunkards. Thus, Warner alleges that Phelps depicts “Jack’s alcohol abuse to be largely conditioned by environment and heredity, . . . [and she] scoffs at temperance devotees” (196).

This hypocrisy becomes even more deceitful and damaging as Phelps ties the reform movement to an economic system that aspires to material gain at any cost—even by individually and privately encouraging the very behaviors the larger public movement decries. For Phelps perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the hypocrisy that she chronicles amongst temperance reform is the moral and religious façade which covers a raw lust for power and economic gain. The significance of this theme can be seen as Phelps returns to it in similar scenes in both *Jack the Fisherman* as well as in *A Singular Life*.

In *Jack the Fisherman*, Jack finds himself in a church, wondering if he is on the verge of actual reform. He looks around and sees "a thin old lady with blue eyes, sitting in a black alpaca dress with her hands clasped on her gingham apron" (62). The woman reminds him so vividly of his deceased mother that he wonders, "'Have I got the jim-jams?'" (62). Then, however, "he remembered that he was sober. He could sing no longer after this, but bowed his head and looked into his old felt hat, and wondered if he were going to cry or get religion" (62). At this moment pregnant with possibility for Jack's actual reform, Phelps undermines the entire system of temperance hierarchy by highlighting the flaws of a religious reform system that masks a promotion of intemperance for capitalistic gain. The narrator explains that although Jack was on the verge of weeping or making a religious conversion,

In point of fact, he did neither of these things, because a very old church-member arose just then, and said he saw a poor castaway in our midst tonight, and he besought the prayers of the meeting for his soul. Jack stopped crying. He looked hard at the old church member. He knew him; had always known him. The fisherman waited till that prayer was through,--it was rather a long prayer,--and then he too sprang to his feet. He looked all around the decorous place; his face was white with the swift passion of the drinking man.

'I never spoke in meetin' in my life,' said Jack in an unsteady voice. 'I ain't religious.'

I drink. But I'm sober to-night, and I've got something to say to you. I heard what that man said. I know him. He's old Jim Crownoby. I've always knowed Jim Crownoby. He owns a sight of property in this town. He's a rich man. He owns that block on Black street. You know he does. You can't deny it. Nor he can't neither. All I want to say is, I've got drunk in one of them places of his, time and again; and if there ain't anybody but him to pray for my soul, I'd rather go to the devil.' (62)

Phelps illuminates the irony and hypocrisy of the church's role in temperance reform when Crownoby, who gains material benefit from Jack's drinking, prays for the reformation of his soul. Phelps implies that Crownoby's desire for financial gain—as evidenced by his financial stock in drinking establishments—outweighs his desire for a realistic reform of the needy, and thus the reform of the church is compromised. Crownoby's middle-class respectability also calls into question temperance rhetoric's claims concerning the morality of the middle-class and its ability to elicit emulation among those of lower class standings. Indeed critics such as Karen Sánchez-Eppler have described this tension between a temperate middle-class morality and a indulgent middle-class materialism as a central irony of capitalism, and

more specifically of the temperance movement's relationship to the growth of capitalism.²⁹

Phelps seems so disturbed by the disjunction between the middle-class's desire to embrace both the liquor industry with its ability to generate capital and a temperance reform agenda that repudiates the very things the liquor industry seeks to promote that she includes this theme in *A Singular Life* as well. When Bayard moves in with Mrs. Granite and her daughter, Jane, he makes the acquaintance of Ben Trawl, Jane's fiancé. Trawl, whose father is an important member of the liquor industry, becomes a representative figure for the entire liquor trade. Phelps's depiction of Trawl, thus, has significance for how she views the members of the liquor industry. Phelps is careful to relate, and to repeat, that Ben Trawl "did not drink" (102). Not only does the narrator recount this fact about Trawl, but Mrs. Granite also repeats the fact, commenting that "'His father's Trawl the liquor

²⁹ Sánchez-Eppler asserts that "temperance serves middle-class interests. The prevalent image of the temperate home as the place capable of reconciling restraint and indulgence installs and affirms as dominant the elasticity of the middle-class position (stretched to encompass both producers and consumers) within capitalism's new, swiftly industrializing, national order. Thus these images of the temperate home domesticate, and so naturalize, the strains that result from capitalism's double call to work and leisure, to save and spend, to be temperate and profligate" (76).

dealer, down to Angel Alley, opposite our place, a little below. But Jane says Ben don't touch it; and he don't'" (104). Trawl himself remarks, "'We don't drink-me, nor my father We ain't such----fools!'" (249). Phelps also aligns Trawl with other virtues upheld by middle-class capitalism, calling him "respectable" while Mrs. Granite refers to him as "'a stiddy fellow . . . [who is] able to support [Jane]'" (104). Yet Trawl's identification with middle-class virtues is not indicative of a morality worth emulating. Not only does Phelps label Trawl as possessing a "cruel violence" (104), readers witness the outgrowth of that violence as Ben repeatedly attempts to murder Bayard when Bayard's actions begin to threaten the profitability of the liquor trade.

Through her depiction of Trawl, Phelps suggests that at the heart of intemperance is an entire industry pursuing a middle-class version of economic capitalism by creating addiction to alcohol. Thus one segment of the population aspires to middle-class status and morality through decidedly immoral actions. According to Phelps this brand of capitalism preys on the weakness of the sailors, who find themselves targeted by saloons:

The town overflowed with men of unmistakably nautical callings, red of face, strong of

hand, unsteady of step . . . [All] ready for a song, a laugh or a blow, as the case might be, equally prepared to smoke, to love, to quarrel, or to drink, liable to drift into a prayer-room or a bar-room, just as it happened, and there was small space to doubt which would happen Open and secret, lawful and unlawful, [saloons] were of an incredible number, if one should estimate the size of the short street. Angel Alley overflowed with abomination, as the tides, befouled by the town, overflowed the reeking piers of the docks whisky ran in rivers. Men went into open doors with their full trips' earnings in their pockets, and staggered out without a penny to their shameful names. Fifty, seventy, a hundred dollars, vanished in the carouse of a single hour. (178-79)

In addition to the obvious attempts of the liquor trade to entice drinkers, Phelps outlines even more sinister methods used by the liquor trade to ensnare the lower classes. In one instance Job Slip recounts how he falls from sobriety into drunkenness:

'Ben [Trawl], he sent a bar-boy after me come to say I needn't drink unless I pleased, but not to be on-social, and to come along with the crowd. So I said, No, I was a goin' home to my wife and kid. When the fellar was gone, I see he'd slipped a bottle into my coat pocket. It was a pint bottle XXX. The cork was loose and it leaked. So I put it back, for I swore I wouldn't touch it, and I got a little on my fingers. I put 'em in my mouth to lick 'em off—and, sir, before God, that's all I know—till I come to, to-day.' (187-88)

Although Slip continues to pursue reform and expresses a strong desire to live a temperate lifestyle, the liquor industry refuses to let his money out of their grasp.

After another fall into drunkenness, the narrator relates that "when Job came to himself, poor fellow, the truth came with him. Job had been the blameless victim of one of those incredible but authenticated lots which lend blackness to the dark complexion of the liquor trade" (315). As the story unfolds, Job's victimization at the hands of an organized liquor movement becomes clear:

Job was working ashore . . . being out of a chance to ship; and he had been upon the wharves, salting down fish, and came out at his nooning, with the rest, for his lunch. There was a well, in a yard, by the fish-flakes, and a dipper, chained, hung from the pump.

It came Job's turn to drink from the dipper. And when he had drunk, the devil entered into him. For the rim of the dipper had been maliciously smeared with rum. Into the parched body of the 'reformed man' the fire of that flavor ran, as flame runs through stubble in a drought.

The half-cured drunkard remembered putting down his head, and starting for the nearest grog-shop on a run, with a yell. From that moment till Bayard found him, Job remembered nothing more. Such episodes of the nether world are not rare enough to be doubted, and this one is no fiction. (315)

With these examples, Phelps implicates middle-class "morality" along with the temperance movement in her indictment of the liquor industry by highlighting that the temperance movement's tolerance of "moral" members whose very livelihoods depend upon the alcohol consumption of others. The pervasiveness of this "moral" façade becomes

clear with Bayard's resistance to the liquor trade. At one point in the narrative, Mrs. Granite warns Bayard that his life is at stake:

'There's them in this town wouldn't stop at nothing, they have that feeling to you.'

'To me?' cried Bayard

'Rum done it,' stammered Mrs. Granite, instinctively using the three familiar words which most concisely covered the ground. 'It's your temperance principles. They ain't pop'lar. They affect your standing in this community.'

This was the accepted phrase in Windover for all such cases made and provided. It was understood to contain the acme of personal peril or disgrace. To talk to a man about 'your standing in this community' was equivalent to an insult or a scandal. Poor Mrs. Granite . . . felt as if she had said to the minister, Your social ruin is complete for all time, throughout the civilized world. (242)

Although common temperance rhetoric claimed that middle-class morality rewarded the renunciation of alcohol, the reality in Phelps's fiction is that social standing is tied to the acceptance of the status quo, which includes a quiet resignation to the role of alcohol in the community. In Bayard's case a rejection of alcohol leads to social exclusion as well as personal, physical danger and eventually death.

Organized Religion and Real Reform

Just as the promises of the moral middle-class fall short of spawning effective reform, *A Singular Life* also

depicts the failures of religious institutions in dealing effectively with intemperance among a host of other issues facing the lower classes. *A Singular Life* exposes the hypocrisy of the church but also decries the lack of training provided for those sent out as ministers. This lack of training signals a dearth of interest in true reform which is passed from the church hierarchy down to the ministers themselves.³⁰

Similarly to Phelps's exposure of middle-class economics as exclusionary rather than inviting the moral reform of the lower classes, these narratives find organized religion also heavily invested in the maintenance of social boundaries rather than in the elevation of those in the lower classes in need of reform. As I noted above, Phelps links the hypocrisy of the temperance movement to the church in *Jack the Fisherman* by portraying prominent temperance church members as being key players in the

³⁰ Phelps's criticisms of organized religion in *A Singular Life* mark a literary return to questions about the methods of Christianity she raised in her earlier series *The Gates Ajar*. Some critics find that her skepticism toward religion in that series centers on a lack of femininity in orthodox theology. See for example, Gail K. Smith's "From the Seminary to the Parlor: The Popularization of Hermeneutics in *The Gates Ajar*;" Nancy Schnog's "'The Comfort of My Fancying': Loss and Recuperation in *The Gates Ajar*;" or Lisa A. Long's "'The Corporeity of Heaven': Rehabilitating the Civil War Body in *The Gates Ajar*."

liquor industry, tying in the church's complicity in valuing economics over people. Jack recognizes this and comments about the connection between Crownoby and the church that "them churches that subleases to a rum-seller, I don't think they onderstand a drinkin' man. Hey? Well ain't he their biggest rooster, now? Don't he do the heft of the payin', and the tallest of their crowin', consequent? Thought so'" (63). He follows up by differentiating himself from the hypocrisy, "Better leave me go . . . I ain't a pious man; I'm a fisherman'" (63).³¹ Again in *A Singular Life* Phelps echoes this sentiment when Trawl informs Bayard that the church's support lies with the liquor industry rather than with Bayard's reform movement. When Trawl threatens to murder Bayard, Bayard reminds Trawl that the punishment for murder would be hanging. Trawl, unconcerned, replies,

'I could get a dozen men to swear to an alibi! . . . You ain't so popular in this town as to make that a hard job. You've got the whole liquor interest ag'in' you. Lord! The churches would back 'em, too, that's the joke of it!'

He laughed savagely.

Bayard made no reply. He had winced in the dark at the words. They were worse than the grip at his throat. (248)

³¹ The language here may ironically suggest the common Christian image of Jesus Christ himself as a "fisher of men."

The church's betrayal of Bayard's beliefs causes him more suffering than the physical pain of Trawl's assault. In this case Bayard's distance from organized religion, caused by Bayard's "heresy," allows this painful separation to have thematic significance: while Phelps discounts the reform theologies of "the church" as an organized body, she is able to uphold the reform ideals of a "true" Christianity as embodied by Bayard, whom Phelps describes as "my dearest hero" (*Chapters* 273). Indeed although the respected reformer, Mother Mary, in *Jack the Fisherman* is married to "a parson" (68), the couple ministers at a "mission" rather than a "church," a linguistic clue Phelps provides to indicate that they too are distanced from the institutionalized church body and its hypocrisy.

According to Phelps's analysis, the hypocrisy of the church as a body is not surprising given the training afforded its leaders. Phelps's portrayal of Cesarea, the seminary town where Bayard is trained, finds its basis in Andover, Massachusetts, the seminary town in which Phelps herself was raised. Williams finds "striking similarities" between Bayard and Austin Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's father (159), and Kessler, too, views Bayard as "a memorial to [Phelps's] . . . father" (101). Phelps's depictions of seminary life are thus informed by her own upbringing as

the daughter of a professor of theology, and her intimate knowledge of seminary life adds credence to her unflattering depictions of the training afforded Cesarea graduates.

In *A Singular Life* Phelps finds a lack of training feeds a general unconcern among ministers for addressing the very real issue of alcohol abuse and its ramifications. Although alcohol is acknowledged throughout the novel as Windover's "prevailing disease" (83) and the community is well aware of its devastating effects, from the physical and emotional abuse of family members to a shipwreck with several fatalities, intemperance is a topic that the church conspicuously fails to address. When Bayard becomes aware of the pervasive and insidious nature of alcoholism among his congregation, he speaks out against an intemperate lifestyle, surprising his listeners:

The expression of affectionate reverence with which his audience had listened to Bayard up to this moment now changed into a surprise that resembled fear. Before he had spoken ten words more, it became evident that the young preacher was directing the full force of his conscience and his intelligence to a calm and deliberate attack upon the liquor habit and the liquor traffic—one of the last of the subjects (as it is well known) conceded to be the business of a clergyman to meddle with in any community, and the very last which Windover had been trained to hear herself held to account for by her clerical teachers. (143)

The audience's surprise stems from the lack of redress the issue of intemperance had received from the pulpit—despite a general perception, often found in temperance fiction, of the church's affiliation with temperance work. Gusfield argues, "At all times the Temperance movement in America has drawn its membership, its energies, and its moral code from organized religion." He continues by asserting that "[i]n the final quarter of the nineteenth century, when Temperance was again a significant social and political activity, much of its tone was permeated by the spirit of Christian concern for humanitarian justice and sympathy" (72). Similarly Gusfield finds that temperance fiction often links social institutions, such as the church, with temperance reform, explaining that often the temperance formula brings about the redemption of an intemperate "through the love of a child Interestingly, the child is usually led to Temperance through the dominant institutions of the society—church or school" (82). In contrast to other types of temperance fiction, Phelps's depictions here contradict the idea of the church as a conduit for actual reform.

Instead of utilizing temperance tropes that emphasize the church as a site of reform, Phelps portrays ministers, and by extension the entire church, as completely

unprepared for encountering intemperance and for inspiring genuine reform in those caught in an intemperate lifestyle. For example, Professor Carruth, one of Bayard's seminary professors and the father of Bayard's love-Helen, is completely oblivious to the need for the church to be engaged in practical reforms. The Professor, unable to conceive of the fact that members of the liquor industry would attempt to inflict bodily harm upon Bayard, confronts Bayard, receiving real life instruction from his one-time student. Phelps writes that "the theologian was disconcerted by this glimpse into real life. He had been so occupied with the misery of the next world that he had never investigated the hell of this one. He was greatly perplexed" (385). Bayard explains to him the stranglehold liquor has on the community, asserting, "I have successfully offended the liquor interests of the whole vicinity. The new chapel represents to them the growth of the only power in this town which they have found reason to fear.'" The Professor responds by asking, "But the churches, Bayard—the Christian classes? The ecclesiastical methods of restraining vice?" Bayard responds, "The ecclesiastical methods do not shut up the saloons, . . . Angel Alley is not afraid of the churches.'" The Professor then reveals even a basic lack of knowledge about

temperance reform, commenting, "I am not familiar with the literature of the temperance movement It is a foreign subject to me. I am not prepared to argue with you'" (386). Earlier in the narrative, Bayard, too, laments his own lack of preparation for dealing with the evils associated with the liquor trade, even admitting in his sermon that "I was not taught how to save drunken men in the schools where clergymen are trained. I must learn now—we must learn together—as best we can'" (145).

While Phelps is critical of the lack of practical training the clergy receives because this lack of preparation leaves ministers unable to enact effective reform, *A Singular Life* goes one step further by demonstrating how a lack of practical training actually desensitizes the clergy to the very need for reform. Phelps highlights this lack of concern for reform through the character of Fenton. Fenton's visit to Bayard at his Christlove mission coincides with Bayard's first sermon against alcohol and the liquor establishment. The subsequent conversation between Fenton and Bayard illustrates Bayard's desire to gain an understanding about how best to provide practical help for his followers while also showing Fenton's lack of interest in practical reform. In the following lengthy passage, Phelps develops an

important contrast between her vision for the role of the church in reform work, as espoused by Bayard, and the prevalent unconcern as expressed by Fenton. Fenton, confronting Bayard, proclaims,

'I never took you for this sort of fanatic. It seems so-common for a man of your taste and culture, and there can be no doubt that it is unwise, from every point of view, even from your own, I should think. I don't deny that your work impressed me, what I saw of it to-night. Your gifts tell—even here. It is a pity to have them misapplied. Now, what was your motive in that outbreak to-night? I take it, it was the first time you had tackled the subject.'

'To my shame—yes. It was the first time. I have had reasons to look into it, lately—that's all. You see, my ignorance on the subject was colossal, to start in. We were not taught such things in Seminary. Cesarea does as well as any of them—but no curriculum recognizes Job Slip. Oh, when I think about it!—Predestination, foreordination, sanctification, election, and botheration,—and never a lesson on the Christian socialism of our day, not a lecture to tell us how to save a poor lost woman, how to reform a drunkard, what to do with gamblers and paupers and thieves, and worse, how to apply what we believe to common life and common sense—how to lift miserable creature, scrambling up, and falling back into the mud as fast as they can scramble—people of no religion, no morals, no decency, no hope, no joy—who never see the inside of a church'—

'They ought to,' replied Fenton severely. 'That's their fault, not ours. And all seminaries have a course on Pastoral Theology.'

'I visited sixteen of the dens of this town this last week,' replied Bayard . . . 'I don't blame them. I wouldn't go to church if I were they It is too horrible to tell. I wouldn't even *speak* what I saw men and women

live I fancy it's a fair, average seaport town I can't get at the number of dens If it isn't the business of a Christian church to shut them—whose is it? If it isn't the business of religious people to look after these fellows—whose is it? I say, religious people are answerable for them, and for their vices! The best people are responsible for the worst, or there's no meaning in the New Testament, and no sense in the Christian religion.' (152-54)

Fenton's belief that Bayard's pursuit of practical, temperance reform is a "misapplication" of Bayard's talents indicates the church's apparent disinterest in effecting lasting, social change. Fenton's emphasis is, instead, on maintaining standards of "taste" and "culture" rather than on breaking down social barriers that preclude the inclusion of men like Job Slip among the body of the church.

Christian Socialism, Genre and the Possibilities of Real Reform

Bayard's replies to Fenton articulate one facet of Phelps's vision about how best to bridge the schism between organized, social hierarchies and reform rhetorics of upward mobility: Christian socialism. Bayard's lament over his lack of training in Christian socialism resonates with certain of the sentiments expressed by Frances Willard, president of the WCTU from 1879-1898. As somewhat of a radical figurehead of the WCTU, Willard argued for a

Christian socialist approach to temperance reform. According to Gusfield, Willard's position "placed Temperance in a framework of multiple social problems, rather than visualizing it as the cornerstone of all social reform" (92). He adds, "Willard implied that Temperance was itself a consequence of the economic and social structure. An immoral society produced immoral people" (92). Similarly to Phelps, Willard also made certain rhetorical moves that distanced her use of Christian tropes within temperance discourse from the language used by institutionalized religion—a common idea in WCTU rhetoric. Mattingly asserts that

WCTU women constructed their own [Christianity], differentiating explicitly between organized patriarchal religion and a God-centered Christianity. They saw themselves as divine agents. When they drew religious warrants for their work, they most commonly likened women of the WCTU to Christ's apostles and their new commission to a Pentecostal visitation. (*Well-Tempered* 49)

Alongside the example of Willard, Phelps's espousal of Christian socialism as well as her desire to distinguish a true Christianity from organized religion may seem to position her ideas within mainstream temperance; however, several distinctions are worth noting. Although Willard was the President of the WCTU, her ideas about Christian Socialism actually placed her in a revolutionary position

within her own organization. These ideas caused her to take what Gusfield refers to as "a most heretical step for the advocate of Temperance; she maintained that intemperance is itself a result of social conditions" (92). Accordingly,

Willard's views were never the 'official' doctrine of the WCTU or of any other Temperance organization. Some members were shocked by her Socialism. For many reasons as well as ideology, there was a brief movement to unseat her. (92)

Also, while the ideology of the WCTU sought to incorporate elements of religious rhetoric while distancing itself from organized and patriarchal religion in order to promote women's causes,³² Phelps's purpose seems more universal in nature, by virtue of her choice of the male protagonist, Bayard, in *A Singular Life* as the primary temperance hero. Phelps's description of Bayard as her "dearest hero" has caused consternation among critics such as Kessler who finds Bayard's "behavior toward women [to be] . . . traditional" (99). Kessler proceeds to argue that "[t]he women surrounding Emanuel Bayard reveal . . . the price they pay for his Christ-like martyrdom, an issue not recognized by Phelps, who presents Emanuel favorably" (97). For Kessler Phelps's admission that Bayard was her favorite hero is

³² For more information on the particularly feminist bent of the WCTU, see Mattingly's *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric*.

problematic because his traditional treatment of women can be interpreted as contradicting Phelps's unfavorable portrayals of traditional male/female relationships in her other fiction. I would submit an alternative framework from which to analyze Bayard's behavior. Williams proposes that "Phelps used biblical precepts to convert spiritualism from 'women's work' into a model of strong 'masculine' individualism" (163). In a similar manner Bayard's concentrated involvement in temperance work may suggest Phelps's desire to universalize an increasingly feminized temperance rhetoric, not only to redirect attention back to the larger alcohol issue but also perhaps to project a measure of "masculine" strength into representations of temperance reform. This framework is supported by Long's contention that "Phelps . . . work[ed] to dismantle gender identity" ("Postbellum Reform . . ." 266).³³ Thus, the ideologies Phelps expresses in *Jack the Fisherman* and *A Singular Life* advocate a method of reform that disrupts the rhetoric of the female temperance movement's status-quo.

While Phelps holds out the social gospel as a means of engendering true reform, she simultaneously complicates her own visions for the possibilities of reform through the

³³ For more information on Phelps's representations of masculinity and femininity, see also Jennifer Cognard-Black's *Narrative in the Professional Age: Transatlantic Readings of Harriet Beecher Stow, George Eliot, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps*.

inclusion of generic devices in both narratives that draw upon determinism and naturalism.³⁴ My purpose here, however, is not to argue for the inclusion of *A Singular Life* or *Jack the Fisherman* in any one generic tradition but rather to identify generic threads that challenge the viability of temperance reform, especially as propounded by mainstream temperance rhetoric.

Certain naturalistic elements of *Jack the Fisherman* become evident as the story opens. The central character of *Jack the Fisherman* is, similarly to Job Slip,³⁵ a fisherman with an ongoing alcohol problem. Early on the story hints at a certain naturalistic tendency by recounting Jack's inherited predisposition toward drink, as the tale opens with the revelation of Jack's father's intemperate behavior and ultimate demise. Jack himself, at the age of twelve, embarks upon a lifestyle of intemperance shortly before the death of his mother. Upon the death of

³⁴ As noted above, Phelps's work remains difficult to categorize according to commonly accepted definitions of genre. Long comments that Phelps "is labeled religious and sentimental as often as she is assigned a place in the realist tradition" (266). And Long herself seeks to complicate the traditionally held notions of reform fiction, specifically as they apply to Phelps and Rebecca Harding Davis. Goodling, on the other hand, delineates the naturalistic tendencies of sentimental fiction, relying on Phelps's fiction to support her claims.

³⁵ Kessler describes Jack as "[a] second version of the Slip family . . . where Phelps makes the temperance problem central" (95).

Jack's mother, the narrator provides commentary that serves both as a general criticism of the efficacy of organized reform as well as providing deterministic undertones to the progression of the story. The narrator relates that

the curse of his heredity came upon him. She [Jack's mother] never knew, thank Heaven. Her knowledge would have been a kind of terrible fore-omniscience, if she had. She would have had no hope of him from that hour. Her experience would have left her no illusions. The drunkard's wife would have educated the drunkard's mother too 'liberally' for that. She would have taken in the whole scope and detail of the future in one midnight moment's breadth, as a problem in the high mathematics may rest upon the width of a geometrical point. But she did not know. We say—I mean, it is our fashion of saying—that she did not know. God was merciful. (59-60)

The deterministic tone of this passage subverts the reform rhetoric of the temperance movement, asserting that heredity and circumstances have conspired to render Jack irredeemable—even by his first drink. Analyzing Phelps's reform fiction, Long asserts that "Phelps . . . use[s] human corporeality's resistance to reform as a way of expressing the impracticability of all reforms" ("Postbellum Reform . . ." 275). Thus, Jack's biological propensity for alcoholism can be seen as thwarting any theoretical possibility of reform.

While this early passage from *Jack* undercuts the potential of Jack's personal reform even at Jack's

initiation into an intemperate lifestyle, in a later passage, Phelps further develops this idea, revealing that even the temperance movement would find Jack an unsuitable candidate for reform after several years of hard drinking: "At twenty-five he was what either an inexperienced or a deeply experienced temperance missionary would have called incurable. The intermediate grades would have confidently expected to save him" (61).

In her exploration of Phelps's naturalistic literary tendencies, Sara Britton Goodling finds that "naturalism's pessimistic determinism does not allow for innocence, redemption, or change, and the naturalist novel generally ends in despair" (16). Unlike many temperance stories that invoke a melodramatic yet happy ending in which the drunkard is reformed and restored to his place in society or is redeemed on his deathbed, Phelps ends this story on a more somber note: when Jack is returning home from one particular fishing expedition, he learns that prior to shipping out, he, in a drunken rage, murdered his wife. Understanding the hopelessness of his situation and experiencing grief because of his actions, Jack drowns himself. In her analysis of others of Phelps's stories, Goodling argues that

Phelps give[s] us glimpses of naturalism

even in [her] sentimental endings, for [she] impl[ies] that there is no way out for [her] naturalistic characters but through death. [She] offer[s] hope of a great hereafter, but [she] suggests that the here and now cannot be changed, and in [her] texts, little does change for [her] naturalistic characters. (16)

The final sentences of *Jack the Fisherman* typify the endings Goodling describes by outlining the natural forces against which there was no hope for Jack. The narrative ends with the following image of despair:

The waters of Fairharbor seemed themselves to leap to greet him as he went down. These that had borne him and ruined him buried him as if they loved him. He had pushed up his sleeves for the spring, hard to the shoulder, like a man who would wrestle at odds.

As he sank, one bared arm, thrust above the crest of the long wave, lifted itself toward the sky. It was his right arm, on which the crucifix was stamped. (84)

Although this final image reaffirms the narrator's earlier remarks regarding the predetermined outcome of Jack's intemperate life and the inefficacy of the church at reforming Jack, Phelps includes a postscript to the story that provides a small window of hope for Jack's child. Phelps adds, "[Teen and Jack's baby is adopted by Mother Mary, and the fisher community of Fairharbor finds hope that the child will be reared in this new environment. Ed.]" (84). This postscript adds another layer to Phelps's picture of temperance reform by implying that the causation

of intemperance is a nexus of heredity and environment. While the postscript offers the possibility of a positive outcome, the nature of the information, delivered as a postscript, suggests that the tenuous hope for a better outcome is anything but sure for Jack's child.

A Singular Life, too, gestures toward the determinism found in *Jack the Fisherman*. At one point in the narrative, when Bayard realizes his love for Helen but feels unable to act upon his love because of his financial standing, he is driven by a force larger than himself to visit her in Cesarea. Phelps writes, "Nature was mightier than he, and drove him on, as it drives the strongest of us in those reactions from our strenuous vow and sternest purpose" (333). If Bayard is subject to the forces of Nature, how much more so is a character such as Job Slip, who although he, like Jack, vows time and again to stop drinking alcohol, struggles against his addiction, which Phelps describes in naturalistic terms:

The fisherman . . . wavered to and fro between Christlove and the ancient grog-shop. In the dark weather the figure of the man seemed to swing from this to that like a pendulum; at moments he seemed to have no more sense or sentience. He was hurled as if he were forced by invisible machinery; he recoiled as if wound by unseen springs . . . He tried to climb up [into the chapel]; but something—call it his muscle, call it his

will, call it his soul; it does not signify—something refused him, and he did not get beyond the second stair. Slowly, reluctantly, mysteriously, his feet seemed to be dragged back. He put out his hands, as if to push at an invisible foe, he leaned over backwards, planting his great oiled boots firmly in the ground, as if resisting unseen force; but slowly, reluctantly, mysteriously, he was pulled back. At the steps of the saloon, in a blot of darkness, on the shadowed side, he sank; he got to his hands and knees like an animal, and there he crawled. (183-84)

In this particular scene, Phelps allows the social gospel to rescue Job as Bayard comes and pulls him to safety, but Bayard's murder at the end of the novel leaves Job's fate, and the fate of others like him unclear. Although Bayard has managed to persevere in the face of the unmitigated hate of the alcohol industry, closing "saloon after saloon" and "[n]ameless dens that used to flourish the prosperity of their sickening trade" including the Trawl establishment (398), the alcohol industry murders Bayard. Thus, Phelps is ultimately ambiguous about the fate of Windover and its inhabitants. Phelps melds the sentimental trope common to reform fiction, the death of the sentimental hero, with an undercurrent of despair common to naturalism that leaves the reader questioning the ultimate outcome of Bayard's administration of the social gospel and of the efficacy of any type of temperance reform.

Unlike much temperance reform fiction that offers simple (in ideology if not in practice) solutions for overcoming an intemperate lifestyle, Phelps's temperance reform fiction problematizes commonly held notions of temperance reform on many levels. While both *Jack the Fisherman* and *A Singular Life* are careful to acknowledge the important role characters such as Job Slip and Jack play within the context of the larger society, according to the fiction's analysis, that role is carefully calculated to maintain social distinctions between the contingents of an Angel Alley and the society at large. Phelps, thus, complicates contemporary religious, as well as social and economic responses to prevalent social ailments, particularly those affecting the lower classes and utilizes the temperance motif as a specific means of underscoring barriers that hinder the lower strata of society from upward mobility even in the context of the rhetoric linking moral with economic progress. Not only does Phelps question the rhetoric employed by the temperance movement, but in a larger sense she questions the very notion of the possibilities of reform, leaving Job Slip's query as to his place in society hanging, without a clear answer.

Conclusion

"Do Everything:" Re-imagining the Scope of the Female Temperance Tradition

[Frances] Willard [long time president of the WCTU] coined a number of slogans as a way of capturing and presenting her key ideas. One of the most important was 'The Do Everything Policy,' a slogan with many applications, which is what Willard intended. It was first of all the answer to the question of what should be done to fight the liquor problem. The temperance movement should be involved in all social and reform activities, said Willard. But perhaps more importantly, the slogan was an answer to the question of what women should do as reformers, or how much women should do in the temperance crusade and in the political realm in general. Within the context of Victorian middle-class structure, Willard's answer was radical, for it meant that women should do everything men do. Willard's genius was in couching an essentially feminist political agenda for women in the thoroughly respectable framework of Christian temperance work and in presenting it in such a way as to attract women who ordinarily would have shied away from such an activist role. By urging 'Do Everything' as a program for the temperance movement, she was also allowing that women's temperance must, of course, do everything. (H. Levine 54-55)

Given Frances Willard's promotion of the umbrella policy of "Do Everything" as a hallmark of women's temperance reform, the broad scope of thematic concerns literary women such as Sigourney, Harper, Davis and Phelps address in their "temperance" fiction ought not to surprise us. Much of this literature has, nonetheless, suffered an

off-hand dismissal for being overly sentimental and for relying too heavily on temperance formulas, yet the temperance formulas sometimes found in this fiction often function as entrance point for meaningful discussions on a wide range of contemporary issues. For Sigourney, Harper, Davis and Phelps, temperance does not stand alone; to various degrees and in diverse ways, temperance is intimately connected with topics such as women's concerns, community, capitalism and reform among a host of other pertinent social topics.

As Harry Gene Levine notes above, the very fact of these authors' engagement with the public, political issue of temperance places them at the forefront of efforts to reconceptualize women's roles in society. Their entrance into the public square as women with ideas about temperance and corollary topics is not, however, indicative of a homogenous perspective of what women's roles should be; instead these women's texts represent a broad continuum of responses to "the woman question." While Harper depicts a flawed domestic sphere and replaces the domestic female with a woman who embraces the public, political role of reformer, Davis decentralizes the female concerns typically at the center of women's temperance fiction and reintroduces the domestic female as a powerful reformer but

only in the private realm. Ambiguously, Sigourney seems both to promote and delimit women's involvement in the public sphere, whereas Phelps seems uncharacteristically disinclined to broach specifically female concerns within temperance reform.

For these authors, in these temperance stories, an examination of the role of woman as an individual leads to a consideration of the positions of these women within a larger community. While each author views community as a significant social entity, these authors define important communities in different ways. For example, Sigourney's equivocations about the role of the individual woman in the public square are paired in her fiction with a strong emphasis on female community, which she describes as a powerful agent for promoting temperance. Harper, on the other hand, defines community along racial lines, urging the black community to reject the values of a white, middle-class culture that she sees as leading to intemperance on many different levels. Davis warns against the breakdown of the agrarian community, finding in individualism and industry a recipe for intemperance and destruction, while simultaneously questioning the efficacy of temperance-minded communities of accountability to evoke real change. Finally, Phelps asks readers to examine why

traditional reform rhetoric creates a community that excludes the lower classes from participation.

A third important theme that ties together the works of Harper, Davis and Phelps is their perception of the failures of capitalism. In contrast to traditional temperance rhetoric that espoused a capitalistic work ethic as an indicator of a temperate lifestyle, these authors question the relationship between temperance and an intemperate materialistic culture supported by a selfish bent to capitalism's rhetoric of progress. Even in their skepticism toward capitalism's consumer culture, this fiction is heavily nuanced. Harper rejects capitalism's middle-class rhetoric as a means of advancement for the black community, where Davis pairs capitalism with industrialization, finding the promotion of intemperance and destruction in the wake of "progress." From a different point of view, Phelps argues that a capitalistic ethos encourages the "successful" to prey upon the lower class.

This variety of perspective on a range of issues culminates in a disparity of opinion about reform itself. Although each of these works self-consciously engages in a reform-based discourse, the methods these authors advocate are sundry and varied with authors such as Phelps

ultimately even questioning the viability of reform. Readers of this fiction must, thus, evaluate whether private or public reform methods are most effective, if religion can effectively play a role in practical reform and whether economic standing can motivate lasting change.

As a portrait of female culture these temperance stories paint a picture of difference and subtlety that is anything but stereotyped and formulaic. Admittedly, these authors at times invoke the themes and conventions commonly associated with temperance literature, but they just as readily adapt, change, question or reject the tenets of temperance. Adhering to Willard's admonishment to "do everything," these authors tackle everything from the domestic to the public, from the local to the universal and much in between. "Do Everything" for these women authors means to question, reject, accept and modify the very conventions and forms that their fiction seeks to navigate.

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