"WEAVING A NEW WREATH OF IMMORTAL LEAVES":

_BILDUNG, AWAKENING, AND SELF-REDEFINITION_

_IN THE FICTION OF ELIZABETH STODDARD_

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Rula B. Quawas, B.A., M.A.
Denton, Texas
August, 1995
"WEAVING A NEW WREATH OF IMMORTAL LEAVES":

*BILDUNG, AWAKENING, AND SELF-REDEFINITION IN THE FICTION OF ELIZABETH STODDARD*

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Rula B. Quawas, B.A., M.A.

Denton, Texas

August, 1995

Elizabeth Stoddard (1823-1902) has been overlooked by most modern literary critics and scholars. She needs to be incorporated into the canon of the American novel in order to establish a deserved critical visibility and to retain it for many years to come. Her groundbreaking fiction, unconventional by any nineteenth-century standard, especially as evidenced by The Morsesons and by some of her short stories, is characterized by penetrating psychology, individuality, and enduring literary qualities. Stoddard deviates from the prevalent sentimental conventions of her time as consistently as she conforms. She not only participates in the sentimental tradition of her day, but she also aspires to move beyond this tradition and to surpass its conventions in an attempt to better express woman's situation and growth. Since Stoddard recognized that a more expanded approach is needed to depict the woman's Bildung, she reinterprets the literary paradigms and patterns of the sentimental genre in accordance with her own aesthetic vision and her philosophical outlook. The prevailing literary paradigms and strategies of the nineteenth-century sentimental novel are never completely defied and overthrown, but are rather incorporated into a new formulation which better depicts the woman's maturation processes that include her awakening and apprenticeship to life.

Stoddard's enlightened views and her bold confidence in women and their
capacities as individuals assure her place as a great novelist. She not only authentically presents the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of women, but she also portrays their growth, their awakening, and their self-redefinition from a feminine perspective. She writes about female empowerment, and espouses self-assertiveness, not self-denial; strength, not nurturing; independence and power, not dependence and passivity. Through her fiction, Stoddard elevates womankind and develops a feminist consciousness that bears harvest for feminists today. Before long, she will rest on her richly deserved and well-earned laurels, and her "immortal leaves" will come to constitute a valuable and rewarding chapter in the history of American literature.
Copyright by
Rula B. Quawas
1995
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I wish to express my deepest thanks and appreciation to His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan for his enormous support, kindness and generosity, and unflagging encouragement. His strong commitment to his country, his infinite reservoir of faith in his countrymen, and his belief in the value of learning and the pursuit of knowledge have been a constant source of inspiration.

I would also like to record my special thanks and deep appreciation to my supervisor, Professor James Tanner, for his perspicacious and incisive comments on the chapters of the entire dissertation. He has provided keen insight, intellectual stimulation, and scholarly advice, as well as constant encouragement and sustained support. I am also eternally indebted to Professor Jake Kobler, who offered generous advice and perceptive criticism at a time when both were especially helpful. His invaluable help, unfailing encouragement, kindness, and understanding will always be remembered and appreciated. My sincere thanks must also go to Professor Giles Mitchell and to Professor Emily Hoffnar for their support and professionalism.

I also give heartfelt thanks to my family. They have given me more than I can possibly acknowledge. Their affection, wisdom, support, and inspiration lie close to the heart of my work. This work is lovingly dedicated to the memory of my own father, Butros Quawas, and to my mother, Hanny Quawas, whose love, courage, self-knowledge, and honesty have provided me with a model I am proud to emulate.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>THE SENTIMENTAL TRADITION: THE LITERARY HISTORY OF WOMEN'S SENTIMENTAL WRITING</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>THE EMERGENCE OF ELIZABETH STODDARD: A FEMALE ARCADIAN</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>THE MORGESONS: A PILGRIMAGE INWARD</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>TWO MEN: A QUEST FOR SELF AND IDENTITY</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>TEMPLE HOUSE: FORGING A SENSE OF SELF</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>SELECTED SHORT FICTION: PORTRAITS OF SELF-ACTUALIZING WOMEN</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Cultivation precedes fruition.
Cynthia Ozick

Elizabeth Stoddard (1823-1902) has been overlooked and banished to oblivion by most modern scholars. She has been "lost" to the literary world for decades or even centuries, and denied "canonization." Notable American Women omits her; so does Alexander Cowie's Rise of the American Novel. The Literary History of the United States refers only to the "critical acumen" of poet Richard Stoddard's "moody wife," and later discusses her "forgotten novels" in one paragraph (810, 880).¹ Stoddard gets even less critical attention and recognition in other works that deal with the nineteenth-century American novel. The most comprehensive bio-critical study of Stoddard is an unpublished dissertation by James Matlack (1968). Unfortunately, in spite of Matlack's definitive study and some fine scholarly articles appearing thereafter, Stoddard still remains virtually unknown among scholars and students of American literature. Stoddard needs to be incorporated into the atlas of the American novel in order to attain her deserved critical visibility and to retain it for many years to come. Undoubtedly, her rediscovery and revival will put a new imprint on the nineteenth-century American fiction of her day.

Some first steps in rediscovering Stoddard have been taken by Lawrence Buell
and Sandra Zagarell with a 1984 edition of Stoddard’s first novel, The Morgesons. One of Stoddard’s short stories, "Lemorne Versus Huell," has now been published in three American literature anthologies: the Norton, the Harper, and the Harcourt. In fact, Stoddard is so new an arrival in the anthologies that there is yet no agreement about whether she is to be called Elizabeth Drew Stoddard or Elizabeth Barstow Stoddard. Whatever the outcome, Stoddard, whom Buell and Zagarell consider, "next to Melville and Hawthorne, the most strikingly original voice in the mid-nineteenth-century American novel" (xi), has finally started to emerge on the literary horizon. Surely, her reemergence from the abyss of obscurity is long overdue.

Stoddard, unquestionably, deserves critical attention and recognition. Her groundbreaking fiction, unconventional by any nineteenth-century standard, especially as evidenced by The Morgesons and by some of her short stories, is characterized by penetrating psychology, individuality, and enduring literary qualities. Stoddard deviates from the prevalent sentimental conventions of her time as consistently as she conforms. She not only participates in the sentimental tradition of her day, but she also aspires to move beyond this tradition and to surpass its conventions in an attempt to better express woman’s situation and growth. Since Stoddard recognized that a more expanded approach is needed to depict the woman’s Bildung, or total development of the personality, she reinterprets the literary paradigms and patterns of the sentimental genre in accordance with her own aesthetic vision and her philosophical outlook. She revises the literary conventions of plot, theme, and characterization of the sentimental novel so that she can openly inauthenticate
stereotyped definitions of women and, thereby, provide models for change. The prevailing literary paradigms and strategies of the sentimental novel are never completely defied and overthrown, but are rather incorporated into a new formulation which better depicts the woman's maturation processes that include her awakening and apprenticeship to life. Stoddard's fiction not only epitomizes her point of view, her intellectual complexity, her ambition, and her resourcefulness, but it also contributes to our understanding of the diversity of sentimental writing of antebellum women novelists.

Unlike most mid-nineteenth-century American women novelists who have appropriated and rehabilitated the prevailing sentimental conventions and tropes for their own feminist use and who have written "cover stories" of female dependence or "palimpsestic" works, "whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning" (Gilbert and Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic 73),2 Stoddard opens up a new literary territory and uncovers the subversive possibilities in her texts by revising and rewriting the formulas and conventions of sentimental writing and by writing overtly radical novels. Her engagement with the tradition of sentimentality and her efforts to reword its conventions come to mark her works as catalysts for new literary directions in the nineteenth century, directions that have also contributed to the development of the modern novel. Stoddard not only works within the dominant sentimental conventions, but she also creates her own innovative literary techniques because she is determined to tell the naked truth "regarding human emotion—the turbulence, the repression, the
expression of passion" (qtd. in Matlack, "Literary Career" 549). Her philosophical outlook and her feminist vision simultaneously support and challenge the culture out of which she wrote.

In her fiction, Stoddard unlocks the door to the inner workings of the female self. She throws aside the veil which hides the human heart, traces the windings of its tortuous labyrinths, and watches the fierce conflict between the passions that inhabit them. Her texts subvert cultural codes and ideologies, undercut cultural icons, challenge and debunk mythical illusions, and decode hidden meanings. These texts call for readers as construers of meaning, interpreters of value systems, and suppliers of bridges over gaps in signification. Evidently, Stoddard expresses a remarkable individuality. As W. D. Howells rightly and perceptively contends, "She [Stoddard] never would write like anyone but herself. In whatever she did she left the stamp of a talent like no other" (Literary Friends and Acquaintance 77). Stoddard indeed writes like no one but "herself," and her genuine and penetrating feminist voice, which bespeaks a personal vision of life's meaning, deserves to be heard and reclaimed from the depths of obscurity.

The study of Stoddard, a once forgotten woman author, and her fiction will not simply pave the way for the study of other forgotten women novelists, but will also add a new dimension to American literary history. To ignore Stoddard is to ignore a significant writer within the structure and fabric of nineteenth-century society and to distort the entire organization of nineteenth-century culture. Stoddard has to be placed in a more appropriate position in the history of nineteenth-century American culture,
early feminism, and women's writing and their literary female tradition. As one of the most unflinching novelists of her time, Stoddard reinvents womanhood and probes female psychology and emotions. Her definitely progressive, if not revolutionary fiction, as exemplified by her mode of narration, her characterization, her elliptical style, and her rhetorical strategies and discourse, is indicative of both her engagement with and revision of the traditional women's story that has formed the basis of sentimental fiction. Stoddard consistently displays a subtle feminist point of view, and her feminism is revealed especially through her characterization of women. Her contribution to the feminist movement lies in her commitment to what may be called the free republic of the woman's spirit, the liberation and the assertion of the woman's spirit and self. The female hero achieves self-assertiveness, experiences communion with herself, and faces the future with integrity of vision and independence of character. She becomes an attractive ambassador of her republic of the spirit; a victor, not a victim in the life struggle.

The purpose of this study, then, is to develop and foreground the importance of Elizabeth Stoddard as an index not only of the history of American literature but also of the literary production of American women in the second half of the nineteenth century. The dissertation deals with Stoddard's subversive strategies and her feminist ideology as manifested or illustrated in her three novels, and in a collection of her best stories. The Morgesons (1862), Two Men (1865), and Temple House (1867), as well as a selection of Stoddard's best short stories, constitute her greatest literary achievements. The 1860s marked her great novelistic productivity, and all of her
short fiction was written for prominent New York newspapers and magazines between 1859 and 1895. In fact, Stoddard's literary career spanned a period of about fifty years, during which she wrote newspaper columns, novels, poems, short stories, biographical sketches and essays, and even a children's book. Her writings have gained her some critical acclaim, but not much popularity. In her lifetime, although she was compared to Balzac, Tolstoy, George Eliot, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and the Brontë sisters, her works were not widely read because they used the sentimental tradition only to push it far beyond its accepted or expected limitations. No matter how she fared during her lifetime, Stoddard's works should now secure her a well-deserved niche among novelists in the history of American literature.

This study of Elizabeth Drew Stoddard consists of eight chapters, framed by this introduction and a conclusion. In chapter two, "The Sentimental Tradition: The Literary History of Women's Sentimental Writing," the sentimental journey of American women writers is explored and examined. Any consideration of mid-nineteenth-century women's writing must begin with a discussion of one of its most problematic categorizations: sentimentalism. The controversies over sentimental writing are discussed in broad terms, for, evidently, women's sentimental fiction has been judged and assessed in multiple, divergent ways, which, in their turn, suggest the complexity of the sentimental tradition. A sweeping review of women's sentimental writing, as it is discussed in a variety of critical works, shows that sentimentalism has been used to define women writers either as angelic upholders of or collaborators with the hegemony of male power and ideology or as angry saboteurs who incessantly
undercut and challenge that same cultural ideology in the subtexts of their works. In other words, while some scholars believe that sentimental fiction is ideological because it encodes domesticity and the "cult of true womanhood," which is the American version of the "angel in the house" mythology, many others, especially feminist critics, contend that this fiction is covertly "radical," disclosing a subtle distaste for the status quo and its male custodians. Over the course of the last two decades, feminist criticism, in its revisionist stance, has helped foster renewed interest in women's sentimental fiction. Fortunately, American women writers are no longer dismissed from the literary heritage, and their "sentimental" novels are no longer relegated to the status of the sub-literary.

The third chapter of the dissertation, "The Emergence of Elizabeth Stoddard: A Female Arcadian," explores and examines Stoddard's early writing career as a New York correspondent to the Daily Alta California. Stoddard's bimonthly newsletters, which encompass a broad range of topics, help us better understand her feminist ideology, her literary aspiration, and her literary achievement in the novels and the short stories. Her frequent commentary on and appraisal of contemporary authors reveal her likes and dislikes and attest to the fact that she is unwilling to compromise her intellectual integrity and artistic merit for the sake of popular and critical acceptance. Although Stoddard enjoyed most of the best-selling women's fiction of her age, she couldn't help but treat some of the sentimental novelists of the 1850s and 1860s with contempt and derision. Her full admiration was reserved for the likes of the Brontës and George Sand. Interestingly, however, Stoddard never attempts to
model a career on theirs. Instead, she corresponds closely to the conventions of sentimental fiction; yet, in the process, she interrogates these conventions and ploughs uncharted literary fields. She has, unquestionably, broken an incredibly barren piece of literary ground in her creation of the female characters who populate her fictional world. After all, Stoddard could conceive of a new woman and of a new world.

As for the ensuing three chapters, each is devoted to the examination of one of Stoddard's three novels: "The Morsesons: A Pilgrimage Inward"; "Two Men: A Quest for Self and Identity"; "Temple House: Forging a Sense of Self." In her three novels, Stoddard, with certain variations and differences, chronicles the groping and growth of her female protagonists and depicts their journey into self-knowledge and their struggle against male oppression and patriarchal conventions. She traces the emergence of women from their cultural conditioning and their ensuing progress towards the goal of full personhood, through their efforts to reconstruct their lives according to their personal vision of life's meaning. In Stoddard's fictional world, the female hero's growth, her self-discovery, and her recognition of her right to her own mode of being strengthen her day-to-day confidence to extricate herself from the psychology of oppression and from the self-denying myths that she has incorporated and internalized within her own consciousness. She acquires a philosophy of life and an art of living that will enable her to define her self in a definitive way and to further her Bildung. Instead of settling for being a warped half person, the female hero awakens and emerges from her husky existence, casting off role definitions and creating a new identity, a new vision of the self. The female hero's Bildung, her
awakening, and her self-redifinition come to mark her quest for an authentic self.

In fact, the female hero's story, in each of these novels, is one of apprenticeship, and education; of a coming to development and growth of self; a quest for authenticity, of rebellion and of resolution. The female's journey into self-knowledge and selfhood is not without anguish, perturbation, and discomposure. She, undoubtedly, comes into conflict with the harsh realities of nineteenth-century cultural mythology of men, but she manages to discover her own inner strength and capabilities, to acquire prudence, to sustain her growth, to negotiate male and female values, and to gain respect, equality, and freedom in society and in her relationships with men. On no account does the female hero bargain away her independence for the promise of love and security in a marriage or a love affair with a male devil. The female has to seek strength and renewal from within herself in order to define her individual existence and worth; she must, in other words, validate herself as an autonomous person before she gets married. Certainly, then, the closure of the female's quest in marriage does not mean her relinquishment of power and her tacit subservience to the hegemony of male power. The female's marriage to the man of her choice is neither a sell-out nor a deterrent to her growth; it is, moreover, not a form of self-immolation, bondage, and servitude, for it precludes her containment or enclosure in marriage. Besides, the female hero's growth and her self-development towards self-fulfillment and self-determination have come to project her growing sense of power and control and to manifest the success of her quest for selfhood and autonomy. In her marriage, then, the female hero prevails and moves into a new
world that she fills with new images and new values. She builds in her story a bridge from past to future so that other women might find their way across.

While chapters four, five, and six explore and examine the fictional world of Stoddard's three novels, chapter seven, "Selected Short Fiction: Living Portraits of Self-Actualizing Women," focuses on some of Stoddard's best short stories that have the earmarks of genius. Stoddard wrote more than sixty pieces of short fiction, some of which are based on her New England childhood. Her multifarious stories, which have never been collected in book form, can still be located and found in a great number of nineteenth-century periodicals, newspapers, and magazines. The best and most interesting stories, however, are the ones that can be read as protofeminist statements. These stories embody self-assertive protagonists who extricate themselves from the strangling formalities that shackle their spirit and who transcend their own limitations. Stoddard's female protagonists are far more intense and multidimensional than even the most captivating literary characters of the day, for they are vigorous, conflict-ridden, and ever-questioning. In their struggles, they gradually come to understand themselves and the world around them. Their self-knowledge brings forth their self-awareness, which, along with their burgeoning experiences, enables them to discover their inner power and to shed encumbrances to their growth.

This study of Elizabeth Stoddard's work concludes with a brief summation of her literary achievements, which are important indices for the study of the growth of the American novel in the nineteenth century. Stoddard's enlightened viewpoints and her bold confidence in women and their capacities as individuals assure her place as a
great novelist. She not only authentically presents the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of women, but she also portrays their growth, their awakening, and their self-redefinition from a feminine perspective. She writes about female empowerment, and espouses self-assertiveness, not self-denial; strength, not nurturing; independence and power, not dependence and passivity. Through her fiction, Stoddard elevates womankind and develops a feminist consciousness that bears harvest for feminists today. Her fiction comes to manifest not only a fresh new talent but a uniquely feminist voice. Obviously, Stoddard belongs among the important American novelists, and her best works, especially her creative work The Morge sons, deserve an elevated niche in the American literary canon. Before long, she will rest on her richly deserved and well-earned laurels, and her "immortal leaves" will come to constitute a valuable and rewarding chapter in the history of American literature.
Notes


2For useful, recent studies of nineteenth-century women writers who have critiqued the realities of nineteenth-century culture and who have attacked the tenets of patriarchal authority, see Joyce W. Warren, ed., The (Other) American Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1993).

3For Stoddard's almost complete publication checklist, see James Matlack, "The Literary Career of Elizabeth Barstow Stoddard," diss., Yale U, 1968, 625-31. Matlack gives an accurate publication list, except for a few mistakes in bibliographical information, such as dates of publication and volume as well as page numbers. Notwithstanding, these mistakes can be easily spotted and redressed.
CHAPTER II

THE SENTIMENTAL TRADITION: THE LITERARY HISTORY

OF WOMEN'S SENTIMENTAL WRITING

Thus, towards the end of the eighteenth century a change came about which, if I were rewriting history, I should describe more fully and think of greater importance than the Crusades or the Wars of the Roses. The middle-class woman began to write.

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

Nineteenth-century America was characterized by unprecedented change and tension. On the whole, this tumultuous age embodied diversity and multiplicity of elements and paradoxes. It was a "time of industrialization, knowledge explosion, immigration and vast population growth, urbanization, geographical expansion, changing race relationships, and the greatest armed conflict on American soil" (Howe 507). By the 1840-60 period, the contours of American Victorian culture were dramatically changing and evolving and steadily contributing and adding to the growing pains of a budding, unsettled society. In fact, the sweep of Modernization was forcefully under way at mid-century America, and rapid technological advances were in full swing, bringing about an increasing upward social mobility and restlessness. Also, the fluid and economically expanding American society seethed with intellectual movements and idealistic reforms that absorbed both elite and popular cultures: Bloomerism, Expansionism, Transcendentalism, Feminism (The Women's
Rights Movement), domesticity, and the prominent issues of slavery and Abolitionism. Hence, nineteenth-century Americans faced profound changes in virtually all phases of their lives, changes that prompted their burgeoning growth into a continental power.

The fifth and sixth decades of the nineteenth century were, undoubtedly, shaped by a compelling presence of political, legal, and economic power. However, these decades were not only the site of social and economic mobility, they were also a time of dramatic and literary productivity. During the late antebellum period, an immense number of American literary texts and a mélange of literary materials were produced. Indeed, by the middle of the nineteenth century, antebellum literature flooded the American literary marketplace, and the novel, having become increasingly popular since its genesis in the early eighteenth century, emerged as the dominant and most popular form of literature. Also, American women writers of the 1850s and 1860s wielded their pens on diverse levels of literary achievement and emerged as the dominant producers of the predominant form of women's fiction in this period: the sentimental novel.

Although the sentimental novel was the form most commonly written by American women throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, it would be a mistake to think of all women's sentimental novels that were produced during that period as monolithic. It is true that women's sentimental novels may share common properties and deep structures, yet their literary landscape is not one field with a single path. There are divergent tracks that cover the vast area of this literary landscape.
Besides, literary sentimentality in the nineteenth century constituted a complex and pluralistic engagement with antebellum ideologies and literary culture. The term "sentimental" was used to identify and define a variety of literary traditions, including sensational fiction, children's literature, regional literature, and a wide range of acceptable female behavior that reinforced the so-called cult of domesticity.5

The sentimental novels, as discussed here, are a product of the American women writers of the 1850s and 1860s, who were, in their own turn, a product of a predominantly white, middle-class, Anglo-American tradition. These sentimental novels tend to be related to each other in their close attention to women and their domestic lives that are characterized by diverse and multidimensional experiences. Most commonly, in these novels, American women writers follow the life of a female protagonist and trace her growth from early adolescence to young adulthood, the period when the person usually works out questions of identity, career, and marriage. Throughout the course of the novel, the female protagonist generally comes to discover herself through the experiences of love, friendship, and the hard realities of life. After painful soul-searching, she usually marries the right suitor, a man whose values are realistic and moral. In most cases, the sentimental novel ends on a dramatic note of renewal and happiness. In fact, it makes a stop or a formal break, like the curtain going down.

Evidently, American women writers of the 1850s and 1860s produced some of the best-selling sentimental novels of the age and worked a revolution in American literature. By the end of the decade 1845-55, during which works appeared by
Emerson, Poe, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman, everyone knew that one of the most important books of the age was *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. To be sure, within the mid-nineteenth-century fictional context, women writers were not invisible or silent. In fact, they were among the most influential public voices through the unprecedented popularity of their sentimental fiction.

The critical readings of women's sentimental novels that dominated the literary scene in the 1850s and 1860s and the critical discussions of the sentimental genre that consider this fiction dishearten, yet also stimulate the reader in his search for a comprehensive study of women's sentimental fiction. Since the sentimental genre is closely associated with women's literature, most of the critics' readings and interpretations of women's sentimental novels have been shaped by their assumptions about the literary value (or lack thereof) of sentimentality as a literary strategy. Over the years, a substantial number of critics, according to their literary politics, have addressed the sentimental novels of American women, with interestingly diverse and productive results. In fact, the diverse terms in which critics have discussed antebellum women's fiction reveal the dynamic nature of literary analysis and its constant engagement with cultural and political practices.

In many ways, the critical attention to and controversies over the sentimental tradition have contributed to the undervaluation or misinterpretation of the literary complexity of the sentimental novel. Until quite recently, the pejorative treatment of the term "sentimental" in conventional critical usage has dismissed women's fiction. Nina Baym notes the pejorative component of the word as it has been used in
conventional criticism: "The term `sentimental' is often a term of judgment rather than
of description, and the judgment it conveys is of course adverse" (Woman's Fiction
24). Instead of judging women's novels according to their merits, some critics have
measured women's writing against critical theories that impose male standards or
gender-related restrictions upon literature. The exclusion of women from the canon of
American literature is not simply a matter of aesthetic taste; it is a political act and an
exercise in prejudice.  

Most of the nineteenth-century women's sentimental novels have been
patronized, denigrated, dismissed, and excluded from the cannon of American
literature. Ultimately, however, feminist critics, in their reconstructionist approach,
have challenged the critical biases of traditional critical theory and rejected the
dominant critical tone. Most of these feminist critics have turned older critical
approaches upside down and demonstrated, among a multitude of things, that women's
sentimental literature, which has been previously thought to be weak and mindlessly
deferential to public opinion, is, in fact, intellectually aggressive and characterized by
cultural power. The advent of feminist criticism and the emergence of academic
feminism, with its commitment to recovering women's experiences, have contributed to
the gradual revaluation of women's sentimental fiction in the nineteenth century.

Male interests rather than aesthetic concerns have always dictated the direction
of American literary history. In fact, Nina Baym claims, with some truth, that any
literary text that fails to engage male interests is either ignored or dismissed with
scorn. In her groundbreaking essay, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories
of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors," Baym contends that classical
American literature is considered worthy of assessment simply because it is either
written by a male or is able to engage male interests and values (123-39). She reveals
the traditional critical construct of the American Renaissance to be essentially
masculine and individualistic in its vision of the "confrontation of the American
individual, the pure American self divorced from specific social circumstances, with
the promise offered by the idea of America" (131). The dominant tradition in
nineteenth-century American literature mainly focuses on the male individualist, the
American white male who is more often than not at the center of American literature.

Mid-nineteenth-century American women's sentimental fiction was an integral
part of the literary discourse long before the turn of the nineteenth century. As early
as the 1850s, the sentimental novel by, about, and for women was questioned and
criticized. For one, Nathaniel Hawthorne addressed the question of literary evaluation
and called for the construction of evaluative criteria for the work of nineteenth-century
women writers. Hawthorne believed that the proliferation of women's books by
women and the unprecedented sales of a new kind of story by women writers
contributed to the loss of audience he suffered in the early 1850s. His often-quoted
outburst against the "damned mob of scribbling women" is the best known critical
statement about early American women writers. Writing to his publisher, William D.
Ticknor, from England on January 19, 1855, Hawthorne complained that the women
novelists were selling "by the 100,000" (304). He proceeded: "I should have no
chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash--and I should be
ashamed of myself if I did succeed" (304). Hawthorne's resentment of the popularity of "scribbling women" and his dismissal of their writing as trash set the major criterion for most of the subsequent critical appraisal of nineteenth-century women's sentimental novels. In fact, the phrase "scribbling women" became more or less a paradigmatic epithet that set the tone for the misogynist evaluations of women's fiction that followed.

Mid-nineteenth-century American women's sentimental novels continued to be objects of neglect, dismissal, and scorn. Almost one hundred years after Hawthorne's disparagement of women writers, Leslie Fiedler, in his influential book, Love and Death in the American Novel, discusses women's sentimental novels only to dismiss them with a snicker. Fiedler describes women writers as creators of the "flagrantly bad best-seller" against which "our best fictionists" had to struggle for "their integrity and their livelihoods" (93). His ridicule of women novelists is revealed when he refers to these women as "lady purveyors of genteel, sentimental fiction" (83). He remarks ironically: "What, then, was the nature of their achievement? What did Sentimental Love Religion and the novel of analysis become in their hands?" (83-84).

For Fiedler, neither inwardness nor character, however, interested the scribbling ladies at all. They sought, however unconsciously, the mythical beneath the psychological--and rendered the myth in sub-literary or pre-literary form, degraded it to the stereotype. (84)

According to Fiedler, women novelists should be regarded as subordinate to the tradition of male individualist fiction, for they are soggy sentimentalists who have written essentially feminine, florid, and frivolous novels.
The sentimental novels of women were the source of critical argument and a tradition of dismissive judgments even some time before Fiedler. These novels have, for instance, incurred the wrath of Herbert Ross Brown, whose 1940 study *The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860*, patently exposes the gender-determined underpinnings of the edifice that is called sentimental fiction. If nothing else, Brown's evaluative criticism of sentimentality represents a long-entrenched trivializing and contemptuous view of sentimental novels written by women. In his study, which has been for years the definitive source on American literary sentimentality and still remains the only book-length treatment of the subject, Brown denigrates American sentimental novels as aesthetically bad and castigates the American women sentimentalists. He argues that the sentimental novel is a moral tract first and an art form second, if at all.

In outlining the antebellum sentimental novel, Brown mockingly invokes what he calls the "sentimental formula" and lists the crimes sentimentality commits against verisimilitude. He claims that the didacticism and pedagogical concerns of the sentimental novel only help generate predictable and unrealistic results:

It [The sentimental formula] was informed throughout with a moral purpose to which all its other elements were subordinated. . . . The final solution was neatly reserved for the last chapter where the punishment was made to fit the crime, and the reward to equal the virtue. To achieve it, authors subjected the long arm of coincidence to the rack of expediency where it was stretched and fractured to suit every need of the plot. The reader, meanwhile, was made to cry—and to wait. As a "true-feeler," he was expected to match pang for pang, and sigh for sigh with the persecuted victim; he was mercilessly roasted over the slow fires of suspense. (176)

Ironically, Brown here uses sentimentality as his weapon in his indictment of
sentimentality itself. His effusive discourse of emotions is significantly revealed when he remarks that coincidence in the sentimental novel is stretched and broken, while the reader is roasted alive. Brown, it seems, undermines or hammers away his own credibility.

Although Brown does not dismiss the sentimental genre offhandedly, he moves quickly to claim that the literary tradition of sentimentality has plummeted when women writers have appropriated the sentimental tropes as their property and incorporated them into their writing. By dwelling upon antebellum sentimental fiction, Brown finds most of women's sentimental-domestic novels to be both ahistorical and emotionally effluent. He asserts that women sentimental novelists "were escapists, artfully evading the experiences of their own day. . . . They fed the national complacency by shrouding the actualities of American life in the flattering mists of sentimental optimism" (360). He also proclaims that women's sentimental novels overindulge the reader by triggering in him or her (and it is usually obvious which) an excessive emotional response and by immersing him or her in the mire of feeling. He comments, "Nothing less than emotional dissipation followed [the] constant striving to keep the reader's chords of sympathy in perpetual vibration" (171). Obviously, the severe limits that Brown ascribes to women's sentimental fiction have, in his view, the potential to distort and destroy the narrative meaning. According to Brown, sentimentality and its formal properties have fared well in the hands of the English masters Richardson and Sterne, but they have dissipated and lost their hegemony when co-opted by American women novelists. For him, women's novels are excessively
emotional, weak and trivial, unrealistic, and devoid of any intrinsic merit.

Brown's literary judgment of American women's sentimental novels at mid-century and his critical bias have left most of these women's texts exposed to the harshest censure and scrutiny. It is apparent that when the critical evaluation of women's sentimental novels is under active consideration, most of the critics of American literature tend to share a set of priorities upon which to base judgments about the literary value of these novels. These critics, it seems, find it both convenient and comfortable to ridicule women's sentimental novels with dismissive contempt and to exclude them altogether from the literary canon. This is true of Fred Lewis Pattee, who, unlike Brown, focused exclusively on nineteenth-century women's sentimental fiction. In 1940, Pattee surveyed women's sentimental novels and published The Feminine Fifties, a book deservedly condemned by feminist critics as acrimonious and prejudicial. Pattee's intense desire to attack and mock women's writing is easily perceived. What is more, his associations of women with irrationality and excessive emotionalism and his cutting remarks are relentlessly malicious. For Pattee, as the title of chapter nine of his study reads, women are nothing more than a "damned mob of scribbling women." For him, as was for Hawthorne long before him, women writers are only scribblers. Clearly, Hawthorne's observation about the "scribbling women" still resonates in the hearts of his countrymen.

In the introduction to The Feminine Fifties, Pattee outlines the dismissive nature of his study and depicts a trivializing view of femininity. He launches a sarcastic attack on sentimental literature because such literature is feminine.
There are at least ten "f" words that describe phases of the decade: *fervid, fevered, furious, fatuous, fertile, feeling, florid, furbelowed, fighting, funny*. . . And to find a single adjective that would combine them all--can it be done? . . . Unquestionably. (3)

Certainly, the word that combines Pattee's category of alliterative adjectives is "feminine." Pattee himself states what that word is within the space of a few lines, although the need to document that word is, by no means, necessary. The implication is crystal clear.

In fact, the word "feminine" that Pattee uses to characterize all of what he calls "f" words might as easily be called sentimental. Pattee uses "feminine" and "sentimental" interchangeably to denote something aesthetically inferior and shoddy. His equation of sentimentality with a deprecatory view of femininity marks his definitive dismissal of mid-nineteenth-century American women's novels, which are so closely identified with the sentimental genre. From the start, Pattee's engagement with the "Feminine novel" (115) and the sentimental impulse has contributed to his disdain for womanly sentiment and to his aversion to women's writing. For Pattee, the 1850s was a "veritable swamp of furbelowed sentimentality" (284) and women writers were only swamp-hatched butterflies.

Writing within the paradigm, advanced by Brown, Pattee, and Fiedler, that women's writing was both inferior and shamelessly expressed in sentimental, effusive terms, Ann Douglas, in *The Feminization of American Culture*, argues that a coalition of Protestant ministers and middle-class, Northern women led to the sentimentalization of American popular literature between 1820 and 1880. In her 1977 study of nineteenth-century American women's literature, Douglas equates "sentimentalization"
with a trivializing definition of domestic feminization and dismisses each for its close affiliation with the other. What is more, she forcefully attacks the tenets of sentimentalism which are, in her view, detrimental to good writing. Obviously, Douglas finds the display of sentimentality a compromise of art.

Douglas also finds the feminine protest manifested as sentimental literature an insincere attempt to challenge the androcentric cultural norms and the most powerfully aggressive capitalist system in the world. She even goes so far as to suggest that women have, in fact, wanted to protect the pedestals which, she claims, mark a middle-class life of leisure:

Sentimentality is a complex phenomenon. It asserts that the values a society's activity denies are precisely the ones it cherishes; it attempts to deal with the phenomenon of cultural bifurcation by the manipulation of nostalgia. Sentimentalism provides a way to protest a power to which one has already in part capitulated. . . . [Women sentimental writers] were in the position of contestants in a fixed fight: they had agreed to put on a convincing show, and to lose. (12)

Douglas finds that, by framing their objections in sentimental terms, women writers are only buying into the very cultural values they criticize. For Douglas, the sentimentality that is lodged in women's literature is essentially dishonest, manipulative, and destructive; it is an expression of passive power or powerlessness rather than an expression of confidence and power.

Douglas's underlying premise about mid-nineteenth-century women's sentimental novels is that these are bad and confused books. In her attempt to theorize the meaning of women's sentimental fiction, Douglas interprets women's sentimental fiction as an apology for patriarchy and views the women writers as
participants in their own victimization. By regarding these women writers as deluded victims, Douglas casts them in the role of villains and dismisses their novels as inflated and overdone:

Nineteenth-century American women were oppressed, and damaged; inevitably, the influence they exerted in turn on their society was not altogether beneficial. The cruelest aspect of the process of oppression is the logic by which it forces its objects to be oppressive in turn, to do the dirty work of their society in several senses. (11)

For Douglas, women writers at mid-century and the sentimentality they purveyed have not merely a "not altogether beneficial" effect on their society but a decidedly negative one. As one would expect, Douglas moves quickly to blame women writers for causing a precipitous decline from the long-enduring strength and theological rigor of Calvinist culture and for bringing about the rise of an anti-intellectual consumerism, a "mass culture" that "perhaps limited the possibilities for change in American society" (13). Douglas's pejorative reaction to sentimentality, along with its commonly-used conventions, sets women and their writing at a discount.

Douglas's study of nineteenth-century American women's literature has left its imprint on later literary criticism of American women's sentimental fiction. To a certain extent, her belief in the pernicious effects of domesticity and sentimentality on women's fiction has found its way into Mary Kelley's *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*. In her 1984 contextual study of American women's novels at mid-century, Kelley dwells upon the societal, crippling pressures that women writers have experienced in their lives. She contends that nineteenth-century women writers or the "literary domestics" (viii), as she calls them,
were truncated as artists by the striking contradictions of their lives and roles. She clearly identifies the huge degree of conflict that the "literary domestics" have experienced between the socially mandated privacy of the domestic sphere and the publicity of the world of the successful novelist.\textsuperscript{21} Women writers, who place themselves, through their writing, in a world beyond the home, experience unresolved conflicts that are reflected in their writing.\textsuperscript{22} The ideology of separate spheres is one of the stumbling blocks that has made it difficult for women to cope. According to Kelley, the "literary domestics" "experienced a continuing crisis of identity" (111), and their very success "made them displaced people in part" (111).\textsuperscript{23}

Interestingly, when Kelley speaks about women writers and their writing, her assumptions about sentimentality emerge. According to Kelley, sentimentality, which she unhesitatingly links to domesticity or to the private world of women and the family, marks the woman writer as an impostor, an essentially domestic being who is out of her sphere:

\begin{quote}
[Unquestionably] literary domesticity was an office enveloped in a mystique and trappings and characterized by a perspective and a language different from those of a male creator of culture. The heart was the symbol of woman, of woman's traditional being, of woman's involuntary life, of woman's nurturing, caring for, and living for others. The heart's record was the woman's revealed record of her life of domesticity, the only life she could have. In her mind the woman is not the emperor of culture. She is, by default, the empress of heart. And just as the woman is only nominally a writer, her tale is only superficially imaginary. \ldots [T]he domestic and the literary become one, or rather the domestic and literary become one, or rather the domestic absorbed the literary and the private woman of the home intruded upon the pages of a public literature. (221)
\end{quote}

Kelley strongly believes that the woman's connection to the "life of the heart" makes
her "only nominally a writer." She finds any representation of domesticity negative and intrusive. For Kelley, the narrative emphasis on sentiment and emotion reveals unresolved conflicts and a writer's lack of control over her material.

To study scholars such as Fiedler, Brown, Pattee, Douglas, and Kelley is to realize that antebellum sentimental literature has been undervalued from a literary standpoint, that women novelists have been ignored or downgraded as literary artists, and that women's sentimental novels may never be regarded as candidates for the canon of American literature. But the views of the above scholars have not gone unchallenged. The majority of the recent work of academic feminist scholars on nineteenth-century women's novels challenges the distorted assumptions of those earlier scholars and provides revisionary readings of women's sentimental novels and reevaluative thinking on the nature of literary sentimentalism, both of which have helped bring about the discovery or recovery of a distinctively female literary tradition. In truth, this female literary tradition bespeaks a female literary voice that is creative, rich, and assertive.

Most feminist critics have recently jettisoned traditional male-centered views and practices regarding literature and brought in new sets of values and perceptions. Discussing the American sentimental novels by women as intriguingly powerful and feminist, most feminist critics have not only called for a reclamation and revival of previously neglected women writers, but they have also raised questions about the reasons for their disappearance in the first place. Images like Adrienne Rich's "revision" recur repeatedly as feminists attempt to communicate their new sense of
rebirth into sight, and even the more secular speak of "a radical alteration of our vision," another "turn of the lens," or "the colored glasses through which one views," both theory and text. If nothing else, feminist criticism is concerned with a radical re-evaluation and re-examination of American literature, a constructed reinterpretation of traditional texts, and a revision of the standard literary canon. Indeed, feminist criticism can be viewed as a healthy antidote to the dismissive treatment and judgment of women's literature. Obviously, the world of literature and literary criticism, once a secure masculine stronghold, is changing.

As the critical evaluation of American women's fiction continued into the second half of the twentieth century, the profound depth of women's sentimental novels and their potential for effective feminist protest began to emerge or surface in the work of feminist critics, such as Papashvily, Baym, and Tompkins. What is clear, though, is that although these feminist critics have uncovered a female literary heritage that has been lost; and although they have foregrounded a great number of mid-nineteenth-century women's sentimental novels that are characterized by a unified feminist consciousness, there is, of course, much exploring yet to done in the area of women's literature, a still largely uncharted territory.

For instance, one novelist of the 1860s who was unearthed but not much cultivated is Elizabeth Stoddard. Stoddard, who is the focus of this dissertation, is to a great extent, bypassed by critics or given only token attention. She, in fact, has not received much notice and recognition in the literary histories of the United States. Also, no large-scale study has yet produced in-depth readings of Stoddard's fiction.
What work has been done either exists in articles or in chapters of books whose major focus is elsewhere, such as Lawrence Buell's *New England Literary Culture: From Revolution Through Renaissance* (1986), and Alfred Habegger's *Henry James and the "Woman Business"* (1989). Stoddard may have been underwritten and decentered, but the small number of articles dealing with her and the recent references to her in a small number of scholarly books seem to indicate that she will finally be recognized as one of the most original and introspectivist women writers of her age. To be sure, Stoddard will no longer remain a footnote in American literature.

The exclusion of Stoddard from the revisionary and revaluative studies of feminist critics will be, I optimistically assume, corrected. In the meantime, however, the reconstruction and reclamation of women's sentimental fiction have been carried forward to new ground. Given that the critical common sense of the twentieth century held mid-nineteenth-century women's sentimental novels to be teary and absolutely apolitical, it was with great surprise that a critic found in those same novels radical, uncurbed possibilities and an oppositional political content. Helen Waite Papashvily, in *All the Happy Endings*, can be viewed as the first critic who has discovered or detected the existence of protest and rebellion within the thematic and rhetorical frameworks of women's sentimental novels.

In her 1956 study, Papashvily notes the anger and dissenting messages lying beneath the sentimental novels written by women at mid-century. She even connects these novels to the political and social agitation at Seneca Falls, and opens her study with a striking image of their political nature:
No man, fortunately for his peace of mind, ever discovered that the
domestic novels were handbooks of another kind of feminine revolt--
that these pretty tales reflected and encouraged a pattern of feminine
behavior so quietly ruthless, so subtly vicious that by comparison the
ladies at Seneca appear angels of innocence. Even so astute an observer
as Vernon K. Parrington could dismiss the sentimental novel as weak
"cambric tea." Like the rest of his sex, he did not detect the faint bitter
taste of poison in the cup nor recognize that these books were rather a
witches' broth, a lethal draught brewed by women and used by women
to destroy their common enemy, man. (xvii)

Obviously, the women writers here are seen in a completely different light. They are
no longer the ineffectual and lachrymose women we have seen so far in the critical
discussions of women's sentimental fiction. Now, they are witches and their texts
seethe with literary poison and bubble over with a subtle distaste for the nineteenth-
century prevailing conservative ethic and male supremacy.

Papashvily challenges the established interpretations of women's sentimental
novels and effectively undercuts assumptions about their weaknesses and impotence.
In her analysis of these novels, she argues that, by placing women at the center of
their fiction and by writing anti-war and temperance novels, women writers are
wreaking their vengeance against the status quo and its male custodians. With telling
effect, she explains the goals of women's sentimental novels: "To maim the male, to
deprive him of the privilege of slavery and the pleasure of alcohol . . ." (95). In her
view, women writers believed that "female superiority . . . had to be established and
maintained" (95). In a society that bolstered the social and legal authority of the male,
hundreds of women writers have found "their Declaration of Rights, their Statement of
Intentions" within the pages of their deliberately subversive sentimental novels
(Papashvily xvii). Women's sentimental novels have thus become for women a
vehicle of liberation, a medium for self-assertiveness and self-actualization.

Adding to our understanding of the feminist concerns of American women writers and of the feminist ideological content of their sentimental literature is the perceptive work of Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*. In her groundbreaking 1978 study of mid-nineteenth-century women's sentimental novels, Baym sets out to reconstitute or reconsider the sentimental literary experience and to see women and their novels from a completely new perspective. She first undertakes a redefinition of the genre that is commonly called the "sentimental" novel, and then takes it upon herself to rename that genre "woman's fiction" (ix). Also, she gives serious treatment to a group of women writers and argues strongly and persuasively for the value of their fiction written between 1820 and 1870. Baym, who could have easily incorporated Stoddard in her study of woman's fiction, establishes the significance and power of woman's fiction by making a claim for its popularity and for its strength in portraying capable, self-reliant, and self-defined women. In her analysis, women's novels, which encompass "tales about the triumph of the feminine will" (14), are success stories that emphasize female self-reliance. Beyond all doubt, these novels, which have been immensely pleasurable to a huge number of American women, should make a substantial contribution to the archives of the history of American literature.

In her detailed analysis of "The Form and Ideology of Woman's Fiction," Baym dismisses charges of sentimentality against women's novels and attacks the biases and cultural prejudice of many critics. In her view, the terminology that is used to label
women's novels is "misleading" because it "puts the emphasis on a presumed ambience in the fiction rather than on the implications of the basic plot" (24). By dismissing what she terms "ambience," Baym focuses upon the plot and characterization of women's novels in order to find their unity, meaning, and value. She argues that these novels tell one basic story, the "successful negotiation of the undifferentiated child through the trial of adolescence into the individuation of sound adulthood" (12). For Baym, the genre of "woman's fiction" is constituted by the female Bildungsroman. As she suggests, the chronicle of the female's groping and growth forms the "overplot" (12) of woman's fiction. It tells the story "of a heroine who, beset with hardships, finds within the qualities of intelligence, wit, resourcefulness, and courage sufficient to overcome them" (22). Self-mastered, the heroine then achieves independence from circumstances and control over her own life. She eventually wins "her own way in the world" (11).

Women writers, Baym contends, tend to convey through the example of the heroine, a "pragmatic feminism" (18) that is advocated within the nineteenth-century sentimental cult of domesticity. Baym asserts that this feminism "is not in the least covert but quite obvious, needing only to be assessed in mid-nineteenth-century terms rather than those of a later century" (18). One of Baym's main purposes is to see women's literature in its social, cultural, and historical context, which is the nineteenth-century sentimental cult of domesticity. This sentimental cult of domesticity, according to Baym, "meant not that woman was to be sequestered from the world in her place at home but that everybody was to be placed in the home, and
hence home and the world would become one" (27). In fact, Baym suggests that the domestic ideology "bolstered [the woman's] self-esteem, supported her inclinations toward self-fulfillment, and justified a search for means of exerting influence that were compatible with her woman's nature" (29). Thus, even from her own domain, a woman can acquire a significant measure of power and rise to take practical charge of her life. The phrase "woman's sphere is in the home" could appear to mean "woman's sphere is to reform the world" (29), Baym contends.

By claiming that the nineteenth-century sentimental cult of domesticity is aimed primarily at establishing a domain for women under their own rules, Baym makes a case for the study of this cult hitherto trivialized and dismissed with scorn. However, Baym knows full well that though the domestic ideal of the antebellum period is praised and valued positively in women's novels, these novels also value the opposing ideal of female independence and equality. Although women writers by and large in their writing have set domesticity up, as Baym says, "as a value scheme for ordering all of life" (27), they themselves have lived lives that go far beyond the threshold of the home. Accordingly, Baym places women writers beyond the perimeters of domesticity, claiming that these writers argued that children and husband "are not necessary for [women's] identity" (38) and that "marriage cannot and should not be the goal toward which women direct themselves" (39).

Baym even goes on to suggest that while most of the heroines in woman's fiction do eventually marry, the stories assert that neither the "inevitability" nor the "permanence" of marriage can be assumed and that "a commercial marriage is worse
by far than a single life" (39). In their novels, many women writers have created women's stories in which women, who are prepared for both economic and emotional self-support, get to show their capability of improving their lot and of negotiating male and female values amid social possibilities. Interestingly enough, as Baym points out, all woman's fiction embodies stories with a relatively straightforward and unconflicted message about female development and domesticity. In essence, all woman's fiction shows their female readers how to live.

Baym's fine study of "woman's fiction," as well as her positive reevaluation of the woman's story that is embodied within this fiction, shares basic assumptions with Jane Tompkins's recent study of mid-century women's sentimental novels. However, in spite of Baym's and Tompkins's similar attempts to see women's sentimental fiction in a new light, Tompkins is the one who takes an extreme position in arguing for the cultural authority and power of sentimentality. In Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860, Tompkins convincingly argues for a radical revision of attitude towards women's sentimental novels. In her attempt at redeeming women's novels from their victim status, Tompkins finds that these novels offer a number of significant texts that are "complex . . . in ways other than those that characterize the established masterpieces" (126). As she suggests, if we dismiss mid-nineteenth-century women's fiction from consideration a priori, we will never come to understand the basis of its appeal, "unless we choose to believe that a generation of readers was unaccountably moved to tears by matters that are intrinsically silly and trivial" (130). From the start, Tompkins accepts without question the power and value
of women's novels. She even uses words like "monumental" and "dazzling" (125) to describe Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the tradition of which it is a part. To be sure, the nature of Tompkins's work and her approach overshadow the previous dismissive analysis of scholars and open up the possibility of creative rereadings.

In her insightful 1985 study, Tompkins chooses to take sentimental fiction by women seriously, claiming that it is powerful and important in its own right and equal in value to the fictions produced by nineteenth-century American men. She goes on to read mid-century sentimental novels as an affirmation of women's sphere and an assertion of their cultural authority within it. She states that "women in these novels teach one another how to 'command' themselves, they bind themselves to one another and to God in a holy alliance against the men who control their material destinies" (163). She thus encounters the Douglas-Kelley thesis that women writers were victims and that their writing was marred and blemished by the fact of their victimization. Tompkins also exposes the cultural biases of most twentieth-century scholars. As she contends, most detrimental to the evaluation of nineteenth-century fiction has been that criticism which suggests that women's sentimental novels cannot stand up to "modernist demands for psychological complexity, moral ambiguity, epistemological sophistication, stylistic density [or] formal economy" (xvii). She observes that "twentieth-century critics have taught generations of students to equate popularity with debasement, emotionality with ineffectiveness, religiosity with fakery, domesticity with triviality, and all of these, implicitly, with womanly inferiority" (123).
Tompkins clearly posits her position on the sentimental and its relation to women's social influence. In her definition of the sentimental as a woman's genre, she includes a domestic ideology that suggests "the story of salvation through motherly love" and the elaboration of "a myth that gave women the central position of power and authority in the culture" (125). Tompkins clearly suggests that the values of sentimentality and domesticity that seep through women's sentimental fiction are translated into social power and authority for the women who are defined in terms of these enduring values. She even argues for the ubiquity of these values:

From a modern standpoint, the domestic ideal is self-defeating because it ignores the realities of political and economic life. But those were not the realities on which Americans in the nineteenth century founded their conceptions of the world. . . . The notion that women in the home exerted a moral force that shaped the destinies of the race had become central to this country's vision of itself as a redeemer nation. The ethic of submission and the celebration of domesticity were not losing strategies in an age dominated by the revival movement. They were a successful bid for status and sway. (171-72)

Just as the practice of submission became, in the context of evangelical Christianity, the basis for a claim to mastery, so the celebration of domesticity also became a means of personal fulfillment. For Tompkins, women's sentimental novels celebrate self-possessed women who are capable of growing and making a difference in their lives.

Obviously, over the decades, mid-nineteenth-century American women's sentimental literature has generated a wide range of readings and complex interpretations. The scope and significance (or lack thereof) of this literature in general, and of individual sentimental texts in particular, have been extensively valued
and revalued. Whereas Brown, Pattee, and Douglas, to name only a few, have
denigrated women's sentimental novels and deprecated the literary achievements of
their writers, feminist critics, such as Papashvily, Baym and Tompkins, have, through
their revisionary readings, reclaimed these novels and argued their value and cultural
power. In the light of this fact, and as Joanne Dobson has perceptively remarked,
women's sentimental novels "can be strong or weak; they can be radical or
conservative; they can be personally empowering or restrictive; they can be embodied
in powerful language or poorly written; they can adhere to the strictest limitations of
stereotype and conventional narrative patterns, or they can elaborate the possibilities of
convention in significant ways; they can be exploitive or sincere; they can be spurious
or honest" ("The American Renaissance Reenvisioned" 171-72).

Although a great number of women's sentimental novels at mid-century have
evoked a hermeneutical nightmare for readers and interpreters, the diverse and
multiple readings and interpretations of these texts have vastly expanded the
perimeters of the debate about women's sentimental literature. Feminist critics,
naturally enough, have been active participants in this debate. After all, much of their
research has been focused upon nineteenth-century women writers and many of their
objectives have been to rewrite the literary history of American literature and to right
the wrongs done to literary women. By asking new questions, challenging traditional
critical interpretations, applying standard critical theories in new ways, examining
neglected works or works dismissed as flawed and sentimental, looking at literature
from a female perspective, most feminist critics have not only performed what Elaine
Showalter calls a "hermeneutic sleight of hand," but they have also made significant discoveries and major contributions to literary criticism. Consequently, women's sentimental novels have emerged as literary achievements. Indeed, feminist reinterpretations of women's sentimental literature have not only unearthed a female tradition of literary achievement, but they have also helped us see the history of American literature as if for the first time. Finally, under the wide umbrella of feminist criticism, women's sentimental literature is evolving, a phoenix rising out of the cold, yet smoldering ashes of its past.
Notes

1Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (New York: Harcourt, 1929) 70.

2The 1830s and 1840s were not a time of overt feminist activity; they were rather a time for social reform, specifically in relation to such issues as temperance and abolition. The American women's movement crystallized with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, but it still remained committed to a diversity of causes, including child welfare, the reformation of prostitutes, and the abolitionist movement. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and the Grimkes' became recognized figures and strong advocates for the rights of women. They courageously challenged the nineteenth-century prevailing restrictions on women and called for women's emancipation from the stultifying dogmas of the past and for their sexual freedom and equality.

Rewriting the Declaration of Independence, Stanton and Mott summarized the essential goals of the women's movement. They added "and women" wherever "men" appeared in the original document, and they declared that it was time for women to shed their shackles and to assert their individuality. They believed that women deserved the same rights as men and that men had no right to assign women to a circumscribed sphere of action. Although the nineteenth century saw an improvement in the position of women, American women still faced limited work opportunities and no real freedom from the domestic ideologies.


3The pre-civil war period has long been recognized as the richest in America's literary history. F. O. Matthiessen identifies this period as the "American Renaissance." He, however, ignores works written by women writers at the time because women writers, with the exception of Emily Dickinson, are not usually considered as able and full-fledged daughters of the American Renaissance. Matthiessen conceives American culture from purely masculine perspectives. His most important sentences are these:

The half-decade of 1850-55 saw the appearance of Representative Men (1850), The Scarlet Letter (1850), The House of the Seven Gables (1851), Moby-Dick (1851), Pierre (1852), Walden (1854), and Leaves of Grass (1855). You might search all the rest of American literature
without being able to collect a group of books equal to these in imaginative vitality. (vii)

The tendency to relegate nineteenth-century women's novels to the status of the sub-literary constitutes one big portion of literary scholarship. Critics have often demoted women's works to the category of "popular literature" and made sweeping generalizations in their judgment of women writers. This is even true of David Reynolds's recent study of the American Renaissance. Although Reynolds devotes one chapter of his mammoth study to what he calls the "American Women's Renaissance" and discusses women's works that have been omitted from literary study, he still views these works as valuable only for their relevance to the canonized texts. See F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (New York: Oxford UP, 1941). Also see David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Knopf, 1988) 387-437.


5Women sentimentalists have often been regarded as the primary proponents of the nineteenth-century cult of domesticity. In her often-quoted article "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151-74, Barbara Welter presents her monolithic paradigm of "True Womanhood" and contends that the closely-knit attributes of this model or standard, which she divides into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity—, reflect many aspects of nineteenth-century feminine behavior. Welter's representation of the cult of true womanhood as the ideological lynchpin that defined the lives of nineteenth-century American women has attracted considerable attention over the years. However, not long ago, her thesis, which has been cited in an impressive number of journal articles and textbooks, has been challenged, revised, and redefined by feminist historians and critics. Nancy Cott, for one, divides the scholarship into three successive interpretations. For an overview of these interpretations, see Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977).

However, since Cott's analysis, there have been other additional approaches to the study of women in antebellum America. For a study of the experiences of nineteenth-century women and their perceptions of reality, see Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1984). Also, for a perceptive study of the strong presence of the Ideal of Real Womanhood, a popular ideal other than the supposedly monolithic one of True Womanhood, see Frances B. Cogan, *All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Athens: The U of Georgia P, 1989).

6A combination of other novels that were immensely popular at the time
include such books as *The Wide, Wide World* (Susan Warner, 1850), *The Lamplighter* (Maria Cummins, 1854), *Tempest and Sunshine* (Mary Jane Holmes, 1854), *Ruth Hall* (Fanny Fern, 1855), *St. Elmo* (Augusta Jane Evans, 1867), *Little Women* (Louisa May Alcott, 1869), and many novels produced by E. D. E. N. Southworth after 1849. These women writers, along with hundreds more, turned out thousands of titles that sold millions of copies. For one, Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* swiftly sold one hundred thousand copies and became a domestic staple. The expanding railroads made it easy for books to be circulated all over America. Boston, Philadelphia, and especially New York became cultural centers and offered the greatest market for fiction. Books were among the foremost products of industrial America. By 1855, Harpers, one of the most dominant publishing firms, manufactured books on an efficient assembly line. For more information, see William Charvat, *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870: The Papers of William Charvat*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (Columbus: Ohio UP, 1968). See also Susan Geary, "The Domestic Novel as a Commercial Commodity: Making a Best-Seller in the 1850s," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 70 (1976): 365-93.

7 In his study of American bestsellers, Frank Luther Mott contends that to label bestsellers as bad literature "is statistically a mistake" (4). Upon a re-examination of the overall list of bestsellers, Mott finds the "low-brow" bestsellers not only "successes but many admitted masterpieces" (4). According to Mott, popular literature should be treated as a valuable source in the construction of American culture and history, for it "furnishes subject matter for important and fascinating studies" (5). His list of books, which meets his own criterion for all-time bestsellers from the 1850s, includes eight novels by American writers. Two of these are Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*, and a third is Melville's *Moby-Dick*. The other five of those eight novels are all written by women. See Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1947).

8 Many nineteenth-century women writers knew full well that their works might be misunderstood and even belittled because of their gender. Since these women were viewed in terms of their gender first and assessed as writers second, they attempted to seek refuge in a male pseudonym or to sign their works "anonymous." Also, a substantial number of women came to validate their writing by finding legitimate reasons for their writing practices and literary production. One of the most legitimate reasons they found was the financial imperative. Indeed, the economic motives of the woman writer presented one of the most compelling needs for women to attempt the pen. Susan Warner and Fanny Fern are two cases in point. On how women writers were forced to support themselves and their children, see Helen Waite Papashvily, *All the Happy Endings* (New York: Harper, 1956). Also for information on the context within which mid-nineteenth-century American Women writers worked, see Ann D. Wood, "The 'Scribbling Women' and Fanny Fern: Why Women Wrote," *American Quarterly* 23 (1971): 3-24.
It is interesting to note that as early as the seventeenth century Ann Finch (1661-1720), whose first book of poetry was published anonymously, decried the prejudiced views of male critics with respect to women's writing.

Alas! a woman that attempts the pen,
Such an intruder on the rights of men,
Such a presumptuous Creature, is esteem'd,
The fault, can by no vertue be redeem'd.
They tell us, we mistake our sex and way;
Good breeding, passion, dancing, dressing, play
Are the accomplishments we shou'd desire;
To write, or read, or think, or to enquire
Wou'd cloud our beauty, and exaust our time,
And interrupt the Conquests of our prime;
Whilst the dull mannage, of a servile house
Is held by some, our outmost art, and use. (71-72)


9Feminist critics do not, of course, represent a unified bloc of opinion on women's sentimental fiction in the nineteenth century. While some feminists represent one end of a continuum with their belief in the negative effects of domesticity and sentimentality on women's writing, others represent the other through their valorization of women's sentimental fiction.

Mary Ellmann calls contemporary literary criticism "Phallic Criticism" because of the biases and prejudices it brings upon works by women. She asserts that "books by women are treated [by male critics] as though they themselves were women, and criticism embarks, at its happiest, upon an intellectual measuring of busts and hips" (29). She argues that male critics have been preoccupied with the sex of women writers to the extent that the woman becomes more important than the work. She goes on to say that it is as if "women wrote with breasts instead of pens" (35). See Mary Ellmann, Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt, 1968) 28-54.

As early as 1929, Virginia Woolf raised questions about the evaluative processes through which texts achieve their classic status.

Speaking crudely, football and sport are "important"; the worship of fashion, the buying of clothes "trivial." And these values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction. This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room. A scene in a battlefield is more important than a scene in a shop--everywhere and much more subtly the difference of value persists. (80)


Also, in her study of nineteenth-century American sentimental novels by
women, Nina Baym echoes Woolf's earlier remarks. Baym sums up the biases and cultural prejudice of critics.

Women's experience . . . seems to be outside the interests and sympathies of the male critics whose judgments have largely determined the canon of classic American literature. . . . The tremendous vogue of woman's fiction in the middle years of the nineteenth-century is cited simply as evidence of the deplorable feminine taste in literature. . . . I cannot avoid the belief that "purely" literary criteria, as they have been employed to identify the best American works, have inevitably had a bias in favor of things male—in favor, say, of whaling ships rather than the sewing circle as a symbol of the human community; in favor of satires on domineering mothers, shrewish wives, or betraying mistresses rather than tyrannical fathers, abusive husbands, or philandering suitors; displaying an exquisite compassion for the crises of the adolescent male, but altogether impatient with the parallel crises of the female. (14)


11Hawthorne's comment was written to his publisher about Maria Cummins's The Lamplighter (1854), which had sold 40,000 copies in its first three weeks of publication. His aversion to women writers was not something new. In fact, no one can possibly forget Hawthorne's fear of women writers as articulated earlier in a biographical sketch of Mrs. Hutchinson. In this sketch, Hawthorne comments on the innate aggressiveness of his feminine rivals: "the ink-stained Amazons will expel their rivals by actual pressure, and petticoats wave triumphant over all the field" (18). For the complete sketch, see Nathaniel Hawthorne: Tales and Sketches (New York: The Library of America, 1982) 18-24. For an overview of the letter, see Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Letters, 1853-1856, eds. Thomas woodson et al., Centenary ed. Vol. 17 (Ohio: Ohio State UP, 1987) 303-04. 20 vols.

However, it should be noted that although Hawthorne had indicted women writers and penned his protest against their popularity, he made a few exceptions. For instance, in a letter to his publisher William Ticknor on February 2, 1855, he expressed his admiration of Fanny Fern, who had just published a novel entitled Ruth Hall. A few years later, he was so impressed by Elizabeth Stoddard's first novel The Morgesons that he wrote her a congratulatory note. Hawthorne's comments on Fanny Fern are quoted in full by Ann D. Wood, "The 'Scribbling Women' and Fanny Fern: Why Women Wrote," American Quarterly 23 (1971): 3-24. As for his comments on Stoddard's novel, they will be quoted in their entirety in chapter four of this study.

12One of Fiedler's mistakes in his assessment of women writers is that he tends to make sweeping generalizations about women writers, and he does not base his observations on sound critical judgment. Interestingly, Richard Chase, like Fiedler, excludes women's sentimental works from his classic study of the American novel, claiming that they are atypical. Chase derives his definition of the dominant tradition

Brown not only castigates the American sentimentalists but also their British models. He, in fact, assumes that the American version of the genre is mainly derivative.

The foundations of American fiction were laid at a lustreless period in the history of the British novel. . . . The tenth-rate scribblers who produced [late eighteenth-century sentimental novels] succeeded in copying merely the externalities of the work of the great geniuses of the mid-century. The facility with which they were able to supply the novel market by slight variations of a simple formula seemed to bring the writing of fiction within reach of anyone capable of holding a pen.


Brown's "sentimental formula" has been reduced to an amusing recipe within the span of two years. Alexander Cowie, who has followed Brown's suit, is one of the first critics who has attempted to define the sentimental-domestic novel written by women and to portray women novelists as conservative sentimentalists. His entertaining recipe for a sentimental-domestic novel epitomizes the patronizing attitude of modern literary historians and their conclusion that women novelists are in no cases "first-rate writers," for their books only "looked like literature" (422). Cowie claims that women's fiction demonstrates an ethos of conformity, for it only "functioned as a sort of benign moral police, whose regulations were principally comprised under the heads of religion and morality" (420). For further details, see Alexander Cowie, "The Vogue of the Domestic Novel 1850-1870," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 41 (1942): 416-24. Also, for a related discussion of the domestic sentimentalists, see Alexander Cowie, *The Rise of the American Novel* (New York: American Book, 1948), ch. 10.

Sentimental-domestic novels, Brown asserts, are "as limited in scope as the narrow sphere of interests of the women readers for whom they were designed" (282). These novels only seek "to exalt the dignity of the housewife's position" (288) and "to extol the household virtues" (281). They are preoccupied with marriage, and the favorite role of the woman is that of the "long-suffering, uncomplaining wife who bore her domestic cross with meekness and humility" (108). "The nursery, the school, the sickroom, the chamber of death, and the various domestic relationships afforded heroines their opportunities for ministrations of mercy and of love" (106). For more information on women's sentimental-domestic novels, see Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860* (Durham: Duke UP, 1940), bk. 2.

Judith Fetterley and Susan K. Harris discuss Pattee's *The Feminine Fifties* in
terms of its depreciatory delineation of women writers. Fetterley convincingly argues that Pattee's observations are so out of line that he must not have read the books he has critiqued. Pattee quotes reviewers of women's fiction rather than the novels themselves, according to Fetterley (22). See Judith Fetterley, ed., Provisions: A Reader from 19th-Century American Women (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985), Introduction. Also see Susan K. Harris, 19th-Century American Women's Novels: Interpretative Strategies (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990).

17Although Fred Lewis Pattee defines mid-nineteenth-century America as "feminine," he includes certain men's texts in that category. For instance, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Hiawatha" receives a full chapter treatment. See Fred Lewis Pattee, The Feminine Fifties (New York: Appleton, 1940).

18Pattee even patronizingly remarks that "Gentle Mrs. Stowe, who cried so easily and who was so motherly and tender of heart, had no intention of throwing a bombshell into the South and helping to bring on a ghastly Civil War" (130). For Pattee, Stowe, whose Uncle Tom's Cabin has moved a whole nation, is "sentimental" and apolitical. See Fred Lewis Pattee, The Feminine Fifties (New York: Appleton, 1940).

19What is clear is that Ann Douglas relegates only to male authors of the nineteenth century the strong impulse "to bring their readers into direct confrontation with the more brutal facts of America's explosive development" (5-6). Thoreau, Cooper, Melville, and Whitman, she says, 'wrote principally about men, not girls and children, and they wrote about men engaged in economically and ecologically significant activities' (6). Douglas's critical biases are plain. She, it seems, has either forgotten or ignored Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, which is, after all, a realistic rendition of the "brutal facts" of life. See Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Knopf, 1977).

20Kelley is one of the first critics who reaches beyond the purely literary in order to support her reading and interpretation. She examines the writers' biographies and the letters, journals and other nonliterary materials produced by both the novelists themselves and other writers and readers in the nineteenth century. Her contextual-historical approach constitutes a full-length study of nineteenth-century American women's novels.

21Similarly, in The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar persuasively demonstrate the "anxiety of authorship" that has infected generations of women writers. They coin that phrase to describe the feelings of vulnerability experienced by women writers in a patriarchal culture. They, however, suggest that some women writers may have attempted to transcend their anxiety of authorship by revising the prevailing male-defined literary genres and by
recording their own dreams and stories in disguise (49).

22 Although Kelley points out the restrictions imposed on women and their writing, she fails to examine how some women writers have been able to work within and around these restrictions. Elizabeth Stoddard, as will be illustrated in chapter three, is a case in point, for she has exercised agency.

23 Judith Fetterley takes issue with Kelley's premise. In Provisions: A Reader from 19th-Century American Women (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985), Fetterley suggests that mid-nineteenth-century American women writers were more comfortable with the idea of writing than were their male counterparts. She contends that many of the women writers she read "seemed to manifest a considerable degree of comfort with the act of writing and with the presentation of themselves as writers and relatively little sense of disjunctiveness between 'woman' and 'pen'" (5).

24 A host of feminist critics, in a movement Elaine Showalter approvingly calls "gynocritics," have shifted their attention to a sustained investigation of literature by women. The "gynocritics," such as Elaine Showalter, Ellen Moers, Nina Baym, Patricia Meyer Spacks, and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, have foregrounded the rich tradition of women's writing that literary historians have kept hidden for so long. By focusing primarily on women writers and by dealing in much depth with their literature, these "gynocritics" have demonstrated that the rich tradition literary women have needs to be acknowledged in bibliographies and literary histories and also needs to be studied by scholars and students.

Ellen Moers, who explores the lives and works of major English, American, and French women writers of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries in Literary Women: The Great Writers (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), argues convincingly that a woman's literary tradition does, in fact, exist. Indeed, Moers is the first to discuss this separate but powerful tradition, remarking. "Not loyalty but confidence was the resource that women writers drew from the possession of their own tradition. And it was a confidence that until very recently could come from no other source" (42-43). She even cites evidence that women writers have always read each others' works and been influenced by them. What is more, women's literature, Moers asserts, shares common characteristics which she lists in chapters four, five, nine, and eleven.

Like Moers, Elaine Showalter and Patricia Meyer Spacks have written comprehensive studies of women writers, providing evidence for the existence of a female tradition in literature and suggesting common characteristics many women writers share. In A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977), Showalter divides the work of nineteenth-and twentieth-century women novelists into three stages: the feminine (Brontë), the feminist (Olive Schreiner), and the female (Woolf). In her study, Showalter emphasizes the connections between women's lives and their art by drawing on history, biographical data, and textual evidence. Also, Spacks, in The Female
Imagination (New York: Knopf, 1975), notes the qualities that women writers share. She groups the works of women authors into thematic categories, such as "The Artist as Woman," "Taking Care," and "The Adolescent as Heroine," in order to reveal the psychological connections between women writers.

By the same token, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New York: Yale UP, 1979), enable us to see against the familiar bold peaks and valleys of the male literary tradition some trees and other mountains that were hidden in the background. Gilbert and Gubar trace continuities in the nineteenth-century female literary imagination and point out the sense of kinship women writers had with one another. They believe that the key to women's creative vision is the struggle not only to create as women but also the struggle to create themselves as women.

Moreover, in Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870, 2nd ed. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1978), Nina Baym analyzes the works of the major women writers between 1820 and 1870 and identifies an "overplot" in which all the novels participate and which defines this exclusively female genre. In her study, Baym undertakes a redefinition of the genre commonly called the sentimental-domestic novel and seriously addresses the concerns of women writers and their feminist ideologies.

In a sense, learning to see—literally to see the world anew, as if for the first time—is the defining experience of feminist criticism. The emblematic feminist concept is that of "re-vision," originated by Adrienne Rich.

Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. (18)


There are two dominant feminist critical modes: "gynocritics," or the study of women writers as a group or "subculture" of their own, and "re-visionary rereading," the reinterpretation of traditional texts (both male and female) with the new tools of feminist analysis. Both critical modes are valid new perspectives and interpretative models. There will never be only one correct "feminist" reading of a certain text. Pluralism of methods needs to be seen as strengths, not as signs of weakness and chaos.


In chapter four of his study, Henry James and the "Woman Business" (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), Alfred Habegger discusses Stoddard's fiction and James's reaction to it (85-101). Habegger focuses on five mid-nineteenth-century women writers because "they were the heirs of traditional women's novels of the 1850s" and because "they helped bring Henry James, Jr., into being" (23). He calls these women the "Civil War women agonists" (23).


As Judith Fetterley says about conventional critical thinking, "since many of the critics who use this term [sentimental] do little more toward defining it than to count the number of tears shed by Ellen Montgomery in The Wide, Wide World, one might ask whether 'sentimental' is not in fact a code word for female subject and woman's point of view and particularly for the expression of women's feeling" (25). For Fetterley, the critic understands nothing if he dismisses the wife's tearfulness by means of the epithet sentimental, which is only used to silence or mute the voices of women. See Judith Fetterley, ed., Provisions: A Reader from 19th-Century American Women (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985), Introduction.

Dee Garrison, like Papashvily, suggests that the writers of sentimental fiction are "clearly women in revolt" (83). In her discussion of sentimental novels by women, Garrison contends that "common to all these best-sellers is a rejection of traditional authority, particularly in domestic life, in religious faith, and among class-ordered mankind" (74). See Dee Garrison, "Immoral Fiction in the Late Victorian Library," American Quarterly 28 (1976): 71-89.
Since Nina Baym published Woman's Fiction in 1978, it has become academically respectable to acknowledge interest in works like Susan Warner's The Wide, Wide World or Fanny Fern's Ruth Hall. Actually, in a subsequent fine article, Baym said that her aim in Woman's Fiction "was to make the works better known and interest other people in working on them" (8). Indeed, Baym, along with other feminist critics, has triggered interest in women's novels. See Nina Baym, "Rewriting the Scribbling Women," Legacy 2 (1985): 3-12.

Baym's approach is indeed different. For instance, Baym sees the impossible piety of the heroine as an assertion of her moral strength against those who consider her a weak, empty vessel. As she matures, the pious heroine becomes more self-reliant, until by the end she has "developed a strong conviction of her own worth" (19) and become a woman endowed with female power. For a detailed overview of Baym's approach, see Nina Baym, Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870, 2nd ed. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1978).

Nina Baym argues that women writers "saw themselves not as 'artists' but as professional writers with work to do and a living to be made from satisfactory fulfillment of an obligation to their audience" (16). For an overview of the women writers she deals with, see Woman's Fiction.

In their fiction, women writers carefully record the experiences and suffering of the domestic woman. They fail to represent sexuality not because they are too weak-willed to deal with its implications in their lives, but rather because they know full well the pernicious dangers associated with sexuality. Besides, the fate of the "fallen woman" is inimical to these writers, Baym asserts: "A graceful death that created remorse in all one's tormenters was nothing to the purpose of these authors, which was to show their readers how to live" (25-26).

Nineteenth-century women lived in emotional proximity to one another. They formed a female world, a milieu in which women could develop a sense of inner security and self-esteem and form minds of their own by interacting with other women. The mentoring relationships and solidarity among women are the real signposts of negotiation and survival in a patriarchal culture. For an overview of women's relations and their importance in nineteenth-century America, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York: Knopf, 1985).

CHAPTER III

THE EMERGENCE OF ELIZABETH STODDARD:
A FEMALE ARCADIAN

I am very much inclined to look on the "two-shilling" side of things--that is, the best side. I wish to believe in false hair and teeth, if I can. Occasionally the veil of society is thrown aside by a strong wind of circumstance, and I am forced to look into depths and chasms that are too deep and too broad for the scanty robe of convention to cover. . . . I am disposed more to speculation on the interior life of man. I wish to realize the cause of things, being indifferent to their effect.

Elizabeth Stoddard, Daily Alta California

Many American women's sentimental novels from the middle of the nineteenth century have emerged from oblivion and started to appear in the field of literary study, thanks to the revisionary, full-length studies by feminist critics discussed in chapter two. As Papashvily, Baym, and Tompkins have observed, women's sentimental novels are not only endowed with cultural power but they are also often the site of moderate, if not radical feminism. Beneath the thematic surface of the sentimental story, women writers have explored the ramifications of the patriarchal system in a manner which, intentionally or subliminally, subverts that system and undercuts male control. In novel after novel, if the female hero submits, she also defies. If she is to some extent
powerless in the face of convention and is swept farther and farther down a whirlpool of oppression and deceit, she comes to learn how to combat the detrimental forces of convention. She changes from a more or less helpless pawn of society to a bolder, more optimistic woman with a greater measure of control over her own life and over the kind of relationship she desires and achieves with a man. Indeed, women's sentimental novels written at mid-century do embed radical possibilities within their thematic and rhetorical frameworks.

The number of American women writers of sentimental novels in the second half of the nineteenth century testifies to the enduring power of the sentimental genre. By extensively appropriating and rehabilitating the tropes of the sentimental and by writing sentimental novels that embed a tradition of protest and resistance, many women writers at mid-century were able to assert their right and ability to address public issues, to intervene in public discourse, and to reinforce their cultural authority. Examples certainly must include Harriet Beecher Stowe, Susan Warner, Maria Cummins, E. D. E. N. Southworth, Caroline Chesebro', Augusta Evans Wilson, Fanny Fern, Marion Harland, and Mary Jane Holmes. One novelist of the 1860s who emerges as a particularly interesting and rich example of antebellum women's writing is Elizabeth Stoddard. Stoddard writes both within and outside the tradition and values shared by other women writers of sentimental fiction. She employs sentimental conventions, but often in ways that simultaneously claim affiliation with the tradition of women's sentimental writing and critique that tradition. Her creative reinterpretation of sentimental conventions indicates or demonstrates the malleability
of the sentimental form. Reading Stoddard in juxtaposition to other mid-nineteenth-century women writers of sentimental fiction illuminates the rich diversity in the appropriation of sentimental conventions and forms.

As a writer, Elizabeth Stoddard manifests not only a fresh, new talent but a decidedly female point of view in the handling of theme, characterization, and narration. What enables her to be outstandingly original is her attempt to go beyond the predominant sentimentalism and literary customs of her time. Although some of her feminocentric fictional works are situated within the tradition of sentimentality, Stoddard, at her best, recasts this tradition in a new mold to disclose the hidden motivations of her female characters and the deepest significance of their lives. She even confessed to James Russell Lowell, as he considered some of her early stories for publication, "I must own that I am coarse by nature. At times, I have an overwhelming perception of the back side of truth. I see the rough laths behind the fine mortar--the body within its purple and fine linen--the mood of the man and the woman in the dark or the light of his or her mind when alone" (qtd. in Matlack, "Literary Career" 185). Throughout her literary career, Stoddard never compromises her quest for human truth and her search for the complexities within human experience.

Elizabeth Stoddard, née Elizabeth Drew Barstow, was the second child of Wilson and Betsy Drew Barstow, whose first daughter died as a child three months after Elizabeth's birth. As the eldest daughter of a prominent shipbuilder in Mattapoisett, Massachusetts, Elizabeth grew up in prosperous circumstances and
enjoyed educational and cultural opportunities that helped to broaden her scope and
vision, to strengthen her intellectual tendencies, and to fulfil her passionate interest in
literature. Mattapoisett's small size, along with its provincial life, was never a barrier
to Elizabeth's educational and cultural growth. Although the town's Calvinist doctrines
annoyed Elizabeth, she befriended the astonishingly erudite and gifted town minister,
Thomas Robbins, and relished her intellectual relationship with him. Robbins, in fact,
had a profound effect on Elizabeth's life. Because he was attracted to Elizabeth's
intelligence, personality, and imagination and to her heated passion for reading, he
gave her free range of his excellent library, which was considered "the most valuable
private library in the state" (qtd. in Matlack, "Literary Career" 31). At this well-
stocked library, Elizabeth took full advantage of the opportunity to read widely and
voraciously, often in literature, especially of the eighteenth-century literature that was
off-limits for most young women of her time.

Actually, Robbins's library was the key to Elizabeth's education. Later, her
husband Richard Stoddard, in Recollections: Personal and Literary, credited Robbins
with the bulk of his wife's education:

She [Elizabeth] read Addison, Steele, and Dr. Johnson,—the Tatler, the
Spectator, and the Rambler; the delectable writings of Fielding,
Richardson, Smollett, and Sterne,—"Tristram Shandy," "Peregrine
Pickle," "Pamela," and "Tom Jones." She read "Sully's Memoirs" and
the comedies of Sheridan; if the comedies of Vanburgh and Congreve
were there (but it is to be hoped not) she read those, too. She read
hundreds, thousands of volumes in the good doctor's library, which was
to her a liberal education, and, indeed, the only education she ever had.
(109-10)

Robbins's library, however, was not the only source of her education. Elizabeth
attended Wheaton Female Seminary in Norton, Massachusetts, during the summer term of 1837 and the winter term of 1840-1841. Besides, Elizabeth furthered her education and expanded her horizon by travelling extensively along the east coast to visit friends and relatives. Her frequent trips were eye-opening experiences that enriched her life, contributed to her educational and cultural growth, and gave her materials for her later writing.

In fact, the east coast became the setting for and primary subject of Elizabeth's short stories and novels, which appeared from the late 1850s until the mid-1890s. However, in her depiction of that region, Elizabeth not only observes and reproduces the particulars of life there, but she also understands and interprets them. She, in brief, conveys both the objective reality and her subjective response to that reality.

Elizabeth's life measurably changed when she married the aspiring poet Richard Henry Stoddard on December 6, 1852. Richard Stoddard introduced Elizabeth to a circle of poets and novelists, musicians, and artists who would provide their intellectual companionship and their emotional sustenance for the rest of their lives.

In this intellectual and literary climate, Elizabeth Stoddard plunged into an endless discussion of literature and began to think seriously of pursuing a writing career. For Stoddard, economic necessity played a part in the decision to write and publish for a public audience, yet the psychological importance of writing went far beyond the income it provided. Stoddard's decision to write was primarily an expression of female power and independence and an assertion of cultural authority. Her fiction writing became for her almost a vehicle of liberation, a vehicle that enabled her to
reassert her commitment to her literary ambitions and her life of independence and to be free to test her senses to the fullest. As Stoddard proclaimed, "I long to probe with sensation the abyss of life" (qtd. in Matlack, "Literary Career" 74). Stoddard's overt purpose in her fiction was to anatomize and analyze the subtleties of the human heart and to explore the dark hidden psychology of humanity. Her highest goal was to tread untrodden psychological territory and to dig below the surface, looking for the real motivations and meanings which were hidden from the light. In the Daily Alta California, Stoddard, as quoted in the epigraph of this chapter, described succinctly and explicitly her world view. Stoddard's literary ambitions, her passion for literary expression, and her distinct personality meant strength, passion, and the potential for greatness.

All her life, Stoddard was an enigmatic figure to her contemporaries. Her intellect and acid wit, her gritty originality and vigorous insights, and her strong sense of selfhood and blunt outspokenness often overwhelmed her friends and left them in awe. Lilian Woodman Aldrich, in Crowding Memories, evaluates Stoddard's powerful and compelling presence:

I know no prototype of Mrs. Stoddard--this singular woman, who possessed so strongly the ability to sway all men who came within her influence. Brilliant and fascinating, she needed neither beauty nor youth, her power was so much beyond such aids. On every variety of subject she talked with originality and ready wit; with impassioned speech expressing an individuality and insight most unusual and rare. (14)

Indeed, Stoddard is without "prototype." However, her proficiency at repartee, her piercing wit and creativity, and her bold statements are not the only attributes that
mark her sovereign individuality. Stoddard not only dares to think and to talk with originality, but she also dares to articulate her thoughts and views in print. In an era that discouraged or was even hostile to female candor and self-expression, Stoddard is bold in her authorial / narrative voice and in her delineation of her female characters. As a fiction writer, she daringly grapples with the theme of the woman's growth in life and presents her Bildung in the form of a quest that incorporates an arduous journey to self-discovery and to self-expression. She unflinchingly depicts women who gradually surface from their submerged existence and awaken to a new perception of reality, which embodies a desire for personal choice and self-determination. Released from bondage to myths about themselves, Stoddard's fictional women grow and finally emerge to face themselves and their society. The metaphor for their liberation is rebirth, a creation of a new mode of their being.

Stoddard's marked individuality and broad scope, as well as her enlightened viewpoint and bold confidence in women and their capacities as individuals, are distinctly evident not only in her fiction writing but also in her early writing career as a regular New York correspondent to a San Francisco newspaper, the Daily Alta California. Stoddard was, as Matlack rightly states and illustrates, the first woman to become a regular correspondent for an out-of-town newspaper ("Literary Career" 127). From October 8, 1854 to February 28, 1858, Stoddard wrote for the Alta a remarkable series of bimonthly newsletters. Her concise and effective newsletters, which convey her distinct personality, touched upon literature, everyday life in New York, fashion, cultural and literary activities, politics, and her personal life. These
newsletters initiated many Californians into the realm of books and plays and kept them abreast of the latest intellectual trends and recent publications and their critical reception. As Stoddard observed in one of her newsletters, "I find that my letters to you make a sort of mental almanac; each one is a finger post to some experience or event" (Sept. 21, 1856: 1).

Stoddard's witty and sardonic *Alta* newsletters are characterized by a vibrant and commanding voice that still leaves one with a ticking in the ear. These newsletters are diverse and pervasive, but they embody most eminently her literary aspiration and her feminist ideology, both of which help us better understand her literary achievement and her fictional propensities and practises. In the course of her *Alta* correspondence, Stoddard, most remarkably, comes to articulate her intellectual and feminist thoughts on paper, to explore her own talent and literary tendencies, to reveal her literary likes and dislikes, and to reassert her commitment to literature and writing. By reviewing hundreds of books by prominent American, English, and European writers and by examining their literary value and intrinsic worth, Stoddard reveals her preferences in literature and shows her familiarity with the prevailing literary traditions of her time and her ability to construct evaluative criteria for some of the best works of nineteenth-century writers. She usually takes a brisk analytical look at books and brings to her reviews a thoughtful mind, not simply an urge to either praise or criticize. For the most part, her evaluative readings and her critical assessments are intelligent and valid. The result is a criticism energized by passionate feelings, a vigorous, dynamic, honest criticism that can withstand the test of time.
As "Lady Correspondent," Stoddard earned some money and achieved considerable public recognition. Not surprisingly, her column, usually entitled "From Our Lady Correspondent" and signed E. D. B.," was so successful that within the span of one year it had moved from the editorial page to the front-page leader in the Sunday edition. Also, the Alta emphasized and acknowledged Stoddard's standing as a writer when, upon receiving a single letter from another lady in the East, it noted that this was "not our regular correspondent E. D. B. whose letters have become so celebrated" (May 11, 1856: 2). The skill and candor with which Stoddard wrote was so impressive that more than one admiring Californian visited her in New York to satisfy their curiosity about her. In one of her Alta newsletters, Stoddard wrote that "a Californian has recently honored me with a call, solely from the desire that the reading of these letters gave him to see me" (March 30, 1856: 1). Stoddard took pride in the high quality of her achievement as a columnist and delighted in her accomplishment. As she asserted, "I must own that I am greatly pleased to be praised; whether I deserve it or not, the generous intention is fulfilled in my heart" (July 7, 1856: 1).

Stoddard's lively newsletters not only won her some money and a distinctive measure of fame and success, but, above all, they, as Sybil B. Weir contends, in "Our Lady Correspondent: The Achievement of Elizabeth Drew Stoddard," "taught [Stoddard] the craft of writing prose and helped her in her search for a viable literary form" (90). In fact, in her attempt to name the man who signed her up to be the "Lady Correspondent" of the Alta, Stoddard herself explained how her apprenticeship to the Alta was useful in more than one way:
I then made an engagement with Charles Washburn, one of the celebrated Brothers Washburn and editor of the Alta California newspaper in San Francisco, to write New York letters, which I continued till he left the paper, two years afterward. This engagement proved useful in two ways: teaching me to write prose and the earning of money. Every month I received a check for twenty-four dollars, which possessed many imaginative possibilities which were never realized. At any rate, I was the first female wage-earner that I had known, and it gave me a curious sense of independence.\textsuperscript{11} (1223)

Stoddard found self-realization and self-actualization in her short-lived journalistic career. On the whole, her apprenticeship to the \textit{Alta} enabled her to anchor herself in the rhythms of life, to follow her impulse to explore literary ambitions, and to listen to her inner voice. By serving her apprenticeship, Stoddard surfaced and emerged ready to confront the reality of authorship. Years later, she entered the literary profession and became a good writer in her own right. In fact, Stoddard's literary career testifies to her being a good writer as well as to her being a self-willed, determined, and independent woman.

Stoddard's \textit{Alta} newsletters make clear that from early in her career Stoddard entertained the idea of becoming a fiction writer and that she had very definite ideas and high ideals about literary style and rhetoric. Actually, she begins her first newsletter to the \textit{Alta} by expressing her determination "not to attempt the ornate" [style and rhetoric] so common in her age (Oct. 8, 1854: 2). She agrees with Napoleon that "someone should be employed to expunge all superfluous phrases and words in books, in order to make them concise and energetic" (Jan. 10, 1858: 1). She asserts that "we tire of three hundred pages of immense adjectives" (March 19, 1855: 2) and criticizes the poetry of Bayard Taylor for its "excessive rhetoric" (Dec. 3, 1854:
2) Stoddard spares nineteenth-century writers not a bit and admonishes some of them for their obscurity and roundaboutness. For her, candor and clarity make rather than mar a writer.

Stoddard strove for clarity, precision, and simplicity in her prose. Her Alta newsletters do achieve her ideal of style. Throughout these newsletters, Stoddard speaks to her readers, not down to them. She does not resort to tactics of stylistic indirection, but uses instead direct, complete, and honest expressions of her sharp wit and penetrating observations. Years later when Stoddard wrote her three novels, she showed she could still write concisely and effectively. Though her reviewers often suggested that she "improve" both her concise and elliptical style and her reticent, narrative voice, Stoddard, by a confident instinct and a clear judgment, decided not to change her mode of expression and her uniquely feminine literary voice. She chose to keep her own literary voice clear and true, and her style remained concise, vivid, original, witty, and sincere. In fact, Stoddard's fiction is as vital today as it was when it was breathed into being more than a century ago. Indeed, her novels and best short stories are characterized by a new and original prose style, one that not only asserts its creative presence and individuality but that also pulsates with a natural vigor, charm, and music.

In her Alta correspondence, Stoddard devotes more space to book reviews than any other single feature. Almost every newsletter assesses new books or recounts literary news. In her very first newsletter, Stoddard introduced the recently published Walden, or Life in the Woods to Californians. She recommended Walden "as a study
to all fops, male and female," for, as she asserted, this book is "full of talent, curious, and interesting" (Oct. 8, 1854: 2). Stoddard gave Walden special attention and a favorable review because she valued and appreciated Thoreau's "internal speculation," his positive "ideas of beauty," and his high regard for "individualism." She, in fact, considers such human characteristics and fictional properties important qualities in a writer. A strong individualist herself, Stoddard comes to emphasize the individualism of her female characters and to dramatize their inner worlds by taking an introspective plunge into their souls. Her three novels, especially The Morgesons, are accounts of individualists and their inner landscapes. Even Thomas Wentworth Higginson called attention to the intense individualism of Stoddard's characters. Coming from his first meeting with Emily Dickinson, Higginson wrote to his wife: "I shan't sit up tonight to write you all about E. D. dearest but if you had read Mrs. Stoddard's novels you could understand a house where each member runs his or her own selves" (473).

In another Alta newsletter, Stoddard also reviewed another major work which would prove to be a monumental landmark in American literature. In 1856, she discussed Whitman and commented on his second edition of Leaves of Grass:

I saw at the window of Fowler and Wells in Broadway . . . the sign of Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman. This must be a new edition of a book published last year by "Walt," through Fowler and Wells. It was neither read nor noticed much; but it made some sensation. Everything that convention says shall not be said, is spoken in that book. It is the experience of a thoughtful, talented, licentious man. What he knew he wrote, and he knew a great deal that may be called immensely nasty. . . . He has put the whole of himself in Leaves of Grass. (Nov. 9, 1856: 1)

Stoddard, unlike many of her contemporaries, admired Whitman for his talent and artistry. She does not seem much put off by his sexual candor, and she relishes his
honest expression of human passion and the power of the senses. In *Leaves of Grass*, passion is depicted as something natural, innate, and heedless of rules. Stoddard herself sees passion as both innate and humanly realistic. She also sees passion rather than purity as the essential element of womanhood. To further her conviction, she chose an intensely passionate woman as her narrator in *The Morgesons*. Still more, she inscribes herself as a passionate woman. With honesty and strength of feeling, she told Mrs. Sweat, "I have stronger passionate powers than most women, therefore I run riot in those matters" (qtd. in Matlack, "Literary Career" 73-74). In fact, Stoddard's strong passion never faded away or died out. In a letter to Edmund Stedman, she wrote about herself in her sixty-eighth year: "Never will the brands of passion die out in my nature, through their blackness, the red fire will suddenly appear, and run like a serpent [sic]" (qtd. in Zagarell, "Legacy Profile" 46).

Stoddard commented more briefly on other prominent American writers. She, for instance, praised Hawthorne, Poe, and Longfellow, among many others. She, however, admired Hawthorne most and ranked him "alone here in America" as a story teller (Jan. 8, 1855: 2). Of course, there are affinities and philosophical ties between Stoddard and Hawthorne. Like Hawthorne, Stoddard believed that "morals should always be left out of novels" (Dec. 21, 1856: 1). Both writers, moreover, were skeptical of Transcendentalism's idealistic optimism, which they saw as naïveté. To be sure, Hawthorne and Stoddard were no mystics. They were not only aware of the contrast between transcendental aspiration and psychological limitation, but they were also certain of the limitations of their major characters. Since they saw the darkness
and occult forces in human nature, they came to depict the failure of Transcendentalist ideals in the face of human passions and the necessities of man's physicality. For example, while Hawthorne demonstrates the failure of the utopian community in *The Blithedale Romance*, Stoddard portrays the idealist Veronica in *The Morgesons* as a character who is almost a parody of the transcendental ethereal.

Since Stoddard values an art that shows and suggests far more than it tells (April 5, 1857: 1), she deplored the fact that so many American writers resort to didacticism in their writing. In one instance, Stoddard criticized Caroline Chesebro' (a contemporary writer whom Stoddard admired) for her didacticism. Although Stoddard praised the "intellectual force" of Cheesebro', she objected "to the position {Cheesebro'} takes in regard to the reader--that of a teacher" (August 3, 1856: 1). Stoddard's stand on didacticism is clearly revealed in her review of a book she liked:

> At all events, it [*Neighbour Jackwood*, a novel by Paul Creyton (Trowbridge)] is artistically done. The partizan feeling of the reader cannot involve the author. The book is devoid of Uncle Tom-isms, and there are no moral disquisitions from beginning to end. The author evidently thought that the facts of his story possessed sufficient moral significance, and he was right. (Feb. 22, 1857: 1)

In her fiction, Stoddard avoids the didactic strain and the making of moral judgments. In *Two Men*, she presents an episode of miscegenation in a fair, impartial manner for perhaps the first time in American literature. In fact, most of her fiction, which is replete with an infinite number of floating signifiers and signifieds that ebb and flow in a never-ceasing flux, generates a wide range of different reading experiences. Generally, the reader has to grapple with the discourse in order to wrench meaning from the narrative and to account for the Hemingway-like iceberg.
omissions, which illicit multifarious interpretations and all kinds of projections of meaning that remain patiently neutral to whatever hypotheses about them the reader proposes. In a letter to John Bowen, editor of The Independent, Stoddard even explained how readers should read one of her novels: "Two Men must be read slowly, to give time for the mist of the author's mind to clear off, and for the intelligence of the reader to fill up the 'analytic gaps'" (qtd. in Matlack, "Literary Career" 543).

Surely, to read Stoddard is to engage in a creative act. The reader becomes a producer rather than a consumer of the text.

Perhaps Stoddard's most exciting contribution to the Alta is her assessment of mid-nineteenth-century women's sentimental novels. Stoddard admired a host of women sentimentalists who were able to beat all the odds against them and to achieve artistic merit, but castigated a few others who were willing to compromise their intellectual integrity for the sake of popularity and critical acceptance. Actually, she made fun of the "tribe of intellectual gardeners and vegetable growers" who displaced potentially great American women writers (April 3, 1855: 1). She frowned upon those women:

You can form no idea of the balderbash in our bookstores. . . . One of our publishers has the run of three Lunatic Asylums, another collects the "compositions" of seventeen female boarding schools. . . . Five new Minnie Myrtles have appeared since the date of my last, and three young Fanny Ferns, all warranted as good as the originals. (July 19, 1855: 2)

Stoddard also criticized crusading or muckraking women writers who let the quality of their novels slide in favor of making clear their comments on and criticisms of society. She was repelled by Fanny Fern because Fern often emerged as a socialist first and a
novelist only second, or even third. Stoddard protested: Fern is "a female Ishmael. . . She is down on everything in general" (Jan. 29, 1855: 2).

There is no doubt that Stoddard was aware of the obstacles a woman writer had to surmount if she wanted to make a career out of writing. In her second Alta newsletter, Stoddard noted the plight of women writers and even moved on to indict nineteenth-century literary critics who, most commonly, did not take women novelists seriously because they thought of these women as marginal, inferior, and incapable of producing good fiction:

All the women in this country can follow out their fancies, as far as book-making is concerned. No criticism assails them. Men are polite to the woman, and contemptuous to the intellect. They do not allow women to enter their intellectual arena to do battle with them. (Oct. 22, 1854: 2)

For Stoddard, women writers may have been allowed to publish, but they were neither encouraged nor expected to strive for artistic achievement and literary merit.

Although Stoddard took cognizance of the critics' prejudice against female intellect, she did not let that prejudice thwart or even abort her literary purposes and ambitions. Early in her career of authorship, Stoddard was determined to make her writing strong, to bring forth her talents, and to fulfil her high literary endeavor. Thus, when pondering the implications of her title as "Our Lady Correspondent," she wrote, "My sex is not betrayed, I trust, on the 'Learned Pig' or 'Five-legged calf' principle? I do not feel especially complimented when some Podgene rises up and exposes the vanity that belongs to men, by saying I am an 'hombre' in my style of writing. Intellect has no sex" (March 30, 1856: 1). Even though Stoddard's fiction was not read widely and
did not gain much popularity, she, at least, fared well with the critics and got some
critical acclaim. Her reviewers labelled her a "genius," and words such as "realistic,"
"powerful," and "vigorou" were commonly used to describe her fiction. One
reviewer, for instance, found in The Morgeseons "an assured vigor, a startling vividness
of style, a bold and almost defiant grappling with the secrets of the heart."19

Interestingly, Stoddard's assessment regarding the double standard by which
critics judged women's novels is substantiated and supported by Nina Baym's extensive
research on the literature of the nineteenth century. In Novels, Readers, and
Reviewers (1984), Baym notes the tacit agreement that existed between women writers
and literary critics:

The bargain being struck here is that women may write as much as they
please providing they define themselves as women writing when they do
so, whether by tricks of style--diffuseness, gracefulness, delicacy; by
choices of subject matter--the domestic, the social, the private; or by
tone--pure, lofty, moral didactic. (257)

Stoddard never struck the kind of "bargain" some women writers had struck. Instead,
she challenged many of the contemporary sentimental conventions for women's fiction
and took on the task of retailoring some of the literary paradigms and patterns of her
time in accordance with her own aesthetic vision. By embracing her outlook and
confirming it in her writing, Stoddard adds a new dimension to antebellum women's
sentimental fiction. Her novels and some of her best short stories come to mark her
fertile imagination and her break with some of the traditional forms and styles of
writing.

Although Stoddard did not dismiss women's sentimental novels out of hand,
she deplored their formulaic nature, since the plots were so much alike that "it is much like reading the same novel in so many volumes. You ask yourself in reading each one, if you have not read it before" (Oct. 4, 1855: 2). Furthermore, Stoddard showed her impatience with some of the women writers' tendency to utopionize some of their characters and to idealize their human behavior. She, in fact, deplored the human behavior of some sentimental characters because she believed that such behavior falsified or inauthenticated what she considered to be real human behavior and real human nature:

Why will writers, especially female writers, make their heroines so indifferent to good eating, so careless about taking cold, and so impervious to all the creature comforts? The absence of these treats compose their good women, with an eternal preachment about self-denial, moral self-denial. Is goodness, then, incompatible with the enjoyment of the senses? In reading such books I am reminded of what I have thought my mission was! a crusade against Duty—not the duty that is revealed to every man and woman of us by the daily circumstances of daily life, but that which is cut and fashioned for us by minds totally ignorant of our idiosyncrasies and necessities. (August 3, 1856: 1)

Real human behavior, according to Stoddard, was never so idealistically motivated as that of some of the sentimental heroines. Stoddard had a keen consciousness of human physicality. For her, people tend to live in bondage to their physical and material nature. With great humor, she noted that "sin [is] a physical matter, because when I eat too many buck wheat cakes, I am bad tempered; when I drink champagne, I am a patriot, and gin--the real Scheidam--gives me the spirit of a martyr! So it would seem vice and virtue are stomachic" (March 19, 1855: 2). Later, she even opposed legislation against prostitution and alcohol because she thought such
laws contrary to human nature. She wrote, "Physical excess can no more be gauged than intellectual. The tendency of all life is to excess; and if a man is cribbed and confined one way, he will break out into another" (May 19, 1855: 1).

In effect, Stoddard distinguished between characters who are fashioned according to far-fetched ideals and life-like characters who embody good and bad traits. She found *The English Orphans*, a novel by Mary J. Holmes, to be remarkably interesting because its characters "are evidently drawn from life; they are not 'beings of the mind,' but real flesh and blood" (August 3, 1855: 2). Later in one of her Alta newsletters, she criticized writers who "make their good characters impossibly good and their bad characters impossibly bad" (June 22, 1856: 1). There are no clearcut devils or saints in Stoddard's fiction. Most of her primary characters have good as well as bad qualities. In her creation of literary characters, Stoddard shows an original mind struggling to portray realistically New England people who come to mature through experience and to understand themselves and their turbulent inner forces. Her characters are beings of flesh and blood, whose struggles are expressed in throbbing hearts and aching nerves, like our own. These characters are memorable because we tend to know them more than we know anybody at all, no matter how close to us in the real world.

More importantly, Stoddard, unlike other novelists of her time, acknowledged and endorsed the power of sexuality and passion in the lives of her characters. Her male and female characters are in part shaped by their passionate nature and by their budding sexual emotions. In 1902, the perceptive Mary Moss was one of but a
handful of reviewers who recognized the anarchy of desire and intense passion that run rampant in Stoddard's fiction. In "The Novels of Elizabeth Stoddard," Moss notes that Stoddard's New England is "A country of uncurbed desire, of hereditary taints, of families divided against themselves, of violence, of excess" (261). She even goes on to describe the work of Stoddard as made of "storm-centers, whether human or meteoric," in which the relation between men and women is described as "undisguised, primitive combat" (261). Indeed, in her fiction, Stoddard creates strong protagonists who are not only richly private in their individuality, but who are also passionate and sensual in their fundamental nature. These protagonists embark on a journey of self-discovery and gradually progress towards self-affirmation, serenity, fulfillment, and autonomy. They ultimately gain the power of self-representation and find value in a world defined by romantic love and marriage.

Given Stoddard's unconventional attitude towards her characters, her unorthodox treatment of the relationship between men and women, and her complex vision of human nature, it is understandable that she was repulsed by the excessive feminine propriety conventionally demanded of women. In fact, Stoddard rejected the definition of women as moral beings or modes of chasteness with no desires or instinctive impulses:

I am glad of this opportunity to speak of the excessive prudery of American women. . . . Women seem to be on the alert for something improper in conversation or manners; feeling it to be their mission to shrink, and blush, or to keep in arms, in case anybody should venture into some sin against convention. I have been much vexed at the obscure style of talking which our women practice. One cannot understand them. They emasculate the Saxon language in order to attain to what they call "a refined phraseology." I must confess that I
am something of a horror to such persons, for I knock down my ideas with substantial English. (Sept. 21, 1856: 1)

For Stoddard, the dominant standards of decorum not only falsify the life and feelings of women, dichotomize the sexes, and assign them mutually exclusive roles and realms of activity, but they also rupture or even corrupt the very language and rhetoric that are used in literary discourses of love and sex. In her life and in her writing, Stoddard not only challenges and resists the reigning nineteenth-century views of decorum, but she also attacks and punctures the excessive, inflated rhetoric used by some women.

To be sure, Stoddard "knock[s] down her ideas with substantial English," and her language is symbolically provocative and explosive, as in the letter which began, "The sun is electrifying the frost-bitten earth, and will soon force it to unbutton its black breast, and reveal the glowing buds hidden beneath it" (May 3, 1857: 1). As a candid writer who sees passion as a natural force that lays down its own norms even its own conventions, Stoddard comes to write not what cannot be written but rather what had not been written yet. With a fresh and an appealingly personal, genuine voice, she wrote overtly radical novels that depict passionate and intelligent women who indulge their emotions, desires, and imagination. Her clear and fluid language describes women who have feelings and desires that do not always accord with those their society believes they should have. Women, in other words, are not described as only having a mediate relation to romantic love and sexual desire. Love and desire do not center on and return to women; they, in fact, do originate in women's emotions and in their body.
Stoddard's individuality and introspectiveness, her aesthetic vision and philosophical outlook, and her concept of human nature and its manifestation in literature made her identify strongly with the Brontë sisters, Elizabeth Browning, and George Sand. In one of her Alta newsletters, Stoddard lamented that even though there were many women novelists in America, "no one book has been written by a woman of erudition; no metaphysical tale, novel or poem; no story that holds in analysis the passions of the human heart. We have no Elizabeth Browning, Brontë, George Sand or Miss Bremer [a Swedish novelist and travel writer] . . . (Oct. 22, 1854: 2). Stoddard, among a sizable number of women writers in the nineteenth century, appreciated European women writers and often gained sustenance from their literary achievement. She, nevertheless, felt a closer affinity with the Brontë sisters than with anyone else. As she wrote her first novel, The Moresons, she wrote to her friend Edmund Stedman that Wuthering Heights "made more impression upon me than any book I ever read perhaps. Its directness, truth and isolation and individuality are wonderful" (qtd. in Matlack, "Literary Career" 185a).

Stoddard may have been impressed by Wuthering Heights, but her strongest tribute was reserved for Charlotte Brontë. She contributed to the Alta a memorial of Charlotte Brontë which is one of the saddest and most heartfelt passages in all of her newsletters:

I am sure the mention of one event which has lately occurred, will create an interest and sorrow. "Currer Bell" is dead. The hand that guided a powerful pen lies on a pulseless heart, and the intellect so brilliant and mature in this world has become simple and childlike in another. Now she is learning something beyond all her teachings here. (June 2, 1855: 2)
For Stoddard, Charlotte Brontë is irreplaceable: "But how could we spare the fresh and vigorous soul of Currer Bell" (June 2, 1855: 2).

Stoddard admired Charlotte Brontë's artistic achievement and found *Jane Eyre* "a daring and masculine work" (June 2, 1855: 2). She noted that "Fame and money were not her [Brontë's] incentives; she wrote, she says because she felt it 'needful to speak,' and what she experienced in her own life, or what she saw in the life of others she expressed. She was a little, frail body; sensitive and perhaps morbid, yet possessing more moral strength than the government and gunpowder heroes of the day" (June 2, 1855: 2). Stoddard may have been attracted to Charlotte Brontë by her treatment of human passion and human psychology. Also, since Stoddard avoided making moral judgments, she must have relished Charlotte Brontë's habit of keeping moral judgment secondary to literary and artistic considerations. In fact, Stoddard's first novel, *The Morgesons*, resonates with *Jane Eyre*. Both novels, which contain a coming-of-age plot and a romance, depict human behavior, its motivation, and its moral complexity. Cassandra Morgeson and Jane Eyre come of age. They learn the nature of the world, discover its meaning and pattern, and acquire the art of living. They, in brief, endure and survive.

Stoddard also reserved a special admiration for George Sand and Elizabeth Browning. She gave Sand favorable reviews because she admired her novels that feature passionate and intelligent women who are energetic in the face of a society that is bent on limiting a woman's scope and punishing those who step beyond the accepted boundaries. She hoped that the Parisian gossip that Sand was going into
religious retirement was wrong: "We have no surplus women of her genius and
passion that we can spare the intellectual revelations of one who has dared to live her
own way" (Oct. 22, 1854: 2). By the same token, Stoddard expressed admiration for
Elizabeth Browning, whose Aurora Leigh she read with great satisfaction and hearty
enjoyment. Mrs. Browning was "an exceptional woman... She is more a learned
woman than an artist, and has more genius than talent," Stoddard remarked (Jan. 11,
1857: 1). Stoddard even described Aurora Leigh as a "novel in blank verse," for "with
what consummate beauty her love stories are told, and how splendid and vivid are her
descriptions, where circumstance and nature harmonize" (Jan. 11, 1857: 1). The
honest expression of passion, the vividness of style, and the literary renderings of the
chasm and beauties of nature are especially admirable for Stoddard, who relished
sumptuous descriptions of scenery, solitude, and passions.

Not only did Stoddard deal with the walks of literature, but she also dealt with
art and women artists. She, in fact, twice took a stand in print about the issue of
women in art. At one time, she maintained an interest in the career of Rosa Bonheur,
a French painter, because she was stirred by the passionate strength and realism of
Bonheur's work. In one of her Alta newsletters, she even applauded Bonheur for her
superior talent and for her artistic achievement despite all tremendous obstacles of sex
and gender and male prejudice. In 1855, she wrote of Bonheur:

Rosa Bonheur, a remarkable woman and a remarkable artist. I like to
chronicle the success of a woman. If there be any so valiant as to
trench on the domain appropriated by men to themselves, I hasten to do
them honor. And I say--O courageous woman! What you have done
for song, or art, under the disadvantage of crying, teething babies, the
contemptuous silence of your husband, the incredulity of all your male
acquaintances, shows that a parity of circumstances would bring about a parity of intellects, between you and our good lords and patrons. (Nov. 18, 1855: 1)

Given the physical and psychological barriers to women's artistic or literary achievement, Stoddard saw a successful woman artist as a heroine of high stature. She saw Bonheur as an example of a brave woman who not only formed higher standards for herself but who was also true to her own intellect and aspirations. Years later, a Stoddard essay celebrates Bonheur's artistic efforts and successful accomplishments. In "Woman in Art--Rosa Bonheur," Stoddard noted that Bonheur's talent was so great that she "suddenly became the acknowledged rival of eminent artists, whom she was destined to leave behind in the race for fame" (145). Indeed, Bonheur cultivated her own potential, made a place for herself in male artistic circles, and adorned the walks of art.

Throughout her perceptive and discerning book reviews and her candid discussion and appraisal of women writers and artists, Stoddard appears to be cognizant of the nineteenth-century phallocentric systems of power that disadvantaged female writers and artists. Although she did not strongly align herself with any of the groups that advocated women's rights and although she was not assertively political, Stoddard was scornful of male prejudice and resentful of women's political disadvantages. She decries the encouragement of inferiority in woman and bemoans the tendency of society to praise male writers while scoffing at female writers with the insinuation that they are writing only to bring glory to themselves or to disrupt the status quo. Her argument is that women writers and artists can achieve identity,
independence, and the chance to fulfil their talents and desires if they remain true to their aspirations and wield pen or paintbrush in pursuit of creativity. Stoddard stresses the importance of the inner self, self-reliance, and the possibility of growth as a means for women to realize their goals. She even suggests that the belief that "Eve actually ate an apple and immediately ruined Adam in consequence" is good because it "speaks well for the progressive power of women" (July 26, 1857: 1).

The "woman question" and feminist ideas were part and parcel of the intellectual climate of the nineteenth century. The woman's movement had been launched in 1848 at the Seneca Falls convention, which "marked the beginning of the political organization of women in their own behalf in the United States" (Desalvo 1). Stoddard herself knew many prominent nineteenth-century women, who were connected with the strenuous feminist struggle for equity and independence and agreed with them on basic grievances. Late in 1856 she attended the Woman's Rights Convention under the presidency of Lucy Stone. Although she made fun of the conduct of some aggressively pushy women who attended, she endorsed the movement for women's rights and remarked that she was "glad to get the truth anywhere" (Jan. 11, 1857: 1). She wrote:

Taking for a text an opinion of Judge Reeves, "That a woman should have no individual rights, because her husband has the right of possession of the person of his wife"—she [Mrs. Mary Davis] came down on the audience with Thor's hammer. She talked with a daring tact. Women, she said, were the victims of a legalized prostitution. Forced by the lust of men into false and inharmonious relations with themselves, compelled to wear the painful honors of maternity, and to bring half-made wretches into the world, sapped in health and strength, their lives loathingly bitter and burdensome. Therefore, she argued the right of self-possession on the part of wives and ended her discourse.
Although Stoddard supported the feminist ideas of women and sympathized with their hopes for a better world, she tended to be somewhat judgmental of women who were complicitors in their own victimization and devaluation. Because she was an aggressive combatant for individual rights, Stoddard condemned female dependency and expressed her disdain for women who adamantly refuse to shed their ironclad conditioning and social masks or who, to use Simone de Beauvoir's language, function as Other even in their own mind. She could not tolerate women who "live with the view of being provided for in some way [and who] unhesitatingly adopt the idea of their female helplessness" (Feb. 3, 1856: 1). For Stoddard, the woman is not "Other" but central. However, although Stoddard was outspoken on behalf of women's rights to self-realization, she abhorred the very idea of feminist boasting. Once, she expressed her disapproval of Ludy Stone because Stone not only bragged about her pre-nuptial agreement with Henry Blackwell but she also advertised and published her private life to the public. Stoddard remarked, "I think a miserable egotism was at the bottom of the whole affair, a desire to gain notoriety" (June 19, 1855: 2). The truly great woman, according to Stoddard, is one who turns to herself and her inner resources to define her individual existence and worth and to solve her problems.

Primarily, Stoddard did not buy into the powerful religious and cultural notions of the cult of True Womanhood, which is a doctrine of female purity, piety, domesticity, and subservience. She was aware of the consequences of confining women to the domestic sphere (July 7, 1856: 1). She even knew that "Marriage, to a
woman, is the laying up of a treasure in the future. . . . (wheras) Marriage to a man is the immediate possession of a paradise, and when he is marched out of Eden, he straightway goes to planting and digging, and forgets all about it" (Jan. 10, 1858: 1). Thus, she endorsed the call for extending "the means of honorable and honored employment for women," for property rights, for educational opportunities, and even for the vote (Jan. 11, 1857: 1). She wrote:

The idea of women casting votes is very much laughed at; but is it so laughable a one when the mass of men voters is looked into . . . . Your correspondent, despite a hideous tendency to laugh at strong-mindedism, which she traces to the unfortunate influence of her male friends, takes an humble place in the ranks of Women's Rights and Women's Shall Haves, especially in the latter. (Jan. 11, 1857: 1)

Although Stoddard does not passionately undertake the fight for the emancipation of women, she comes to explore the ramifications of the patriarchal system and to evoke a feminist ethos. In essence, her Alta newsletters set forth her feminist views on the political and social rights of women and depict her feminist vision that calls for the liberation and assertion of the woman's self.

Stoddard may have not been a bluestocking, but she was, undoubtedly, one of the pioneers of feminist consciousness-raising. Her feminism is a quiet but constant determination to present fictional situations which in themselves suggest the necessity for social reform. Stoddard displays a subtle feminist point of view and provides us with a window to a new women's lives. As a writer, she uses an awakening and apprenticeship format to present the developing female heroes. Also, she imbues her female heroes not only with intelligence and determination but also with the lucidity to see ahead what they want in love. Cassandra, Philippa, and Virginia, as will be
argued later, are some of the female heroes who go on a quest of self-discovery and develop a true sense of control over their capacities to make their wants a reality. These main characters brazenly face life and confront their own motives and instincts. They move beyond a dead past into a new and different future and reach an accommodation with self and world. They are alive and well, living on the threshold of their future.

Stoddard's *Alta* newsletters are a rich harvest gleaned from the whole of her life. These newsletters appear to be a kind of memoir or an extended fiction in which, through an extensive and diverse series of witty and colorful letters, Stoddard not only enacts the drama of her inner soul and life, but she also forges a sense of self and creates a female voice that is original, authentic, and assertive. Over the course of her lively newsletters, Stoddard disseminates her intellectual and feminist thoughts, expresses her literary likes and dislikes, and exhibits her literary perceptions and aspirations, most of which help us better understand her literary efforts and achievement in the novels and best short stories. As Stoddard observed, her position as "Lady Correspondent" served as an important apprenticeship in prose-writing and an introduction to the domain of books and the fields of literature. Stoddard's strong individuality, free spirit, stylistic originality, and candid approach, which engrossed the Californians for more than three years and earned her a degree of success and popularity, became hallmarks of her subsequent literary career and craft. Years later, Stoddard remained strong, willful, and grand, and she wrote her fiction without fear and without preaching. Her enduring and endearing fiction blazed a trail in the wide
terrain of nineteenth-century literature, broke new ground, and created a few literary landmarks. Stoddard finally emerged as a female Arcadian and entered the realm of authorship. With great pride, she even proclaimed, "I am an Author" (qtd. in Matlack, "Literary Career" 207).
Notes

1Elizabeth Stoddard, "From a Lady Correspondent," Daily Alta California 20 Sept. 1855: 1. Subsequent quotations from Stoddard's newsletters are from this same source and will be noted in the text with the date and page number of the issue in parenthesis. Stoddard's newsletters from Oct. 8, 1854 to Feb. 28, 1858 are found on microfilm of the Daily Alta California.

2James Russell Lowell (1819-91) was the editor of the Atlantic Monthly, which had accepted Stoddard's "My Own Story" for the May issue after the sexual dimension had been modulated and kept within bounds. The Atlantic Monthly paid Stoddard a hundred dollars for her short story.

3For Stoddard's biographical information in this chapter and throughout this study, I am deeply indebted to James H. Matlack, whose unpublished dissertation "The Literary Career of Elizabeth Barstow Stoddard" (Yale U, 1968), has laid the groundwork for all subsequent study of Stoddard. Matlack's research is meticulous, fully comprehensive, and detailed.

4When Stoddard became the Lady Correspondent to the Daily Alta California, she passed on to her Californian readers her beliefs about God and her skeptical attitude towards religion. In 1855, she wrote:

A friend writes me that my letters are his Sunday morning reading.
Alas! Should I not reproach myself because there is no echo of the church-going bell in them; that I have never cried aloud to the wicked San Franciscans—"Repent! Repent!" But, sinner that I am, I confess to secular habits entirely. When I was young, I was fed on the strong dish of New England polemics. God, my teacher said, did not reside in the natural heart of man, which fact I must learn through some process that my soul refused to understand. When I go to church, I read the sermon from the congregation; that from the pulpit is a tiresome reiteration, or a mistaken assertion. Mrs. Wardentry Covell preaches to me with her rouged cheeks, and her Brussells lace. I see Mr. Abraham Large reading "1000 N. J. Con. R. R. B. C. 3-90" from a velvet prayer book. I hear Madame Wallace singing an air from the Barber of Seville, to the words "Praise the Lord." Now what kind of a knocking at heaven's gate is this? Will Saint Peter open it? Or will he reply in the words of that distinguished Ethiopian, Mr. Christy, "Stop that knocking?" (29 Jan. 1855: 2)

Interestingly, while Stoddard turned to people as her text or bible for ultimate meanings and spiritual truth, Emily Dickinson sought the ultimate truth in her observations of nature. Dickinson wrote:

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church—
I keep it, staying at Home—
With a Bobolink for a Chorister--
And an Orchard, for a Dome--

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice--
I just wear my Wings--
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,
Our little Sexton--sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman--
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last--
I'm going, all along. (J. 324)


Matlack even uses the autobiographical aspects of Elizabeth Stoddard's fiction to suggest that she attended several schools in New England, including one in Fairhaven and one in Salem ("Literary Career" 36).

As a young woman, Elizabeth was given free reign in whatever she wanted to do. Her life was neither circumscribed nor confined to the domestic sphere. She frequently went to New Bedford and Boston. Also, she travelled to Salem, Milton, Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Newport, Rhode Island, and Portland, Maine. By the 1850s, she was familiar with New York and had visited Washington, D. C. For more information on Elizabeth's versatile and volatile life, see Matlack, "Literary Career."

For an overview of Richard Stoddard's personal life and his literary career, see Richard Stoddard, Recollections: Personal and Literary, ed. Ripley Hitchcock (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1903). Also, Matlack provides ample information on Richard Stoddard's family life and childhood, his marriage to Elizabeth, and his literary career.

The Stoddards moved in literary circles that included Alice and Phoebe Cary and Caroline Kirkland as well as Thomas Buchanan Read, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Fitz-James O'Brien, William Cullen Bryant, Horace Greeley, Kate Field, Paul Hamilton Hayne, and Richard Watson Gilder. Their home became the center for the Saturday evening gatherings of Richard and his poet friends, among them Bayard Taylor, George Boker, and later Edmund Clarence Stedman, who became Elizabeth's lifelong close friend and confidant. Elizabeth maintained a strong sense of selfhood and individuality in the literary environment that she found herself in. She was a sharp, piercing wit among the New York "Bohemians" in her own right. She was even called a "Pythoness". For information on the Stoddards' literary circles, see Matlack, "Literary Career."

Lilian Woodman Aldrich came to know Elizabeth Stoddard rather well
following her marriage to the poet Thomas Bailey Aldrich, who happened to move in the same literary circles that included the Stoddards.

10It should be noted here that Matlack has a published article on Stoddard's *Alta* columns. See James Matlack, "The *Alta* California's Lady Correspondent," *The New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 58 (1974): 280-303. However, since Matlack's article is based on chapter four of his dissertation, all references will be to the dissertation.

11Elizabeth Stoddard, "Literary Folk as they Came and Went with Ourselves" *Saturday Evening Post* 2, 30 June 1900: 1126-27, 1222-23.


13Margaret Jane Muzzey Sweat was the most intimate female friend Stoddard ever had. For an overview of their relationship and their correspondence, see Matlack, "Literary Career." It is noteworthy that some of Stoddard's correspondence to Mrs. Sweat is extant. Her letters are bound in a volume that now belongs to Professor Philip A. Shelley at Penn State.

14Edmund Clarence Stedman was the Stoddards' best friend for over four decades. Their relationship had its ups and downs, but they managed to maintain their close and strong relationship till the very end. For a discussion of Stedman's lifelong relationship with the Stoddards, see Richard Henry Stoddard, *Recollections: Personal and Literary*, ed. Ripley Hitchcock (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1903), and Laura Stedman and George M. Gould, *Life and Letters of Edmund Clarence Stedman* 2 Vols. (New York: Moffat, 1910). Also, Matlack examines the relationship between Stedman and the Stoddards and highlights its most significant and interesting parts.

15Some of the writers and poets that Stoddard praised in her *Alta* newsletters include Emerson, John DeForest, Sylvester Judd, J. Ross Browne, Rose Terry, and her husband Richard Stoddard.

16Lawrence Buell, in *New England Literary Culture: From Revolution Through Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), points out some of the affinities between Hawthorne and Stoddard. By examining and comparing Hawthorne's and Stoddard's novels, Buell argues that both of these writers are practitioners of the conventions and motifs of New England gothic.

It should be noted that there are also personal ties between Hawthorne and Stoddard. Hawthorne was the means of Richard Stoddard's being appointed to the position in the New York Custom House. Elizabeth Stoddard, in "Literary Folk as they Came and Went with Ourselves" *Saturday Evening Post* 2, 30 June 1900: 1126-
27, 1222-23, explained how this came to pass:

One day Mr. Stoddard mentioned that he was going to Concord to visit Mr. Hawthorne, and went. He found Mr. Hawthorne all that was agreeable. His son Julian was playing about the study table, a little, handsome boy, with no disposition to mind what was told him. When Mr. Stoddard asked for Mr. Hawthorne's influence in obtaining a place in the New York Custom House, with his college friend, General Pierce, then President, this influence was cheerfully promised. . . . Mr. Stoddard went to Washington with a passport which let him into the White House early one morning. President Pierce received him kindly, wrote a brief note to Mr. Bronson, the Collector, and "hey, presto!" Mr. Stoddard was appointed to the debenture-room in the Custom House, where he remained as the "head" of it for sixteen years. (1126)

James Matlack has established that there was an even more intimate connection between Hawthorne and Elizabeth Stoddard. Hawthorne and Stoddard are distant cousins, according to Matlack. For information on Hawthorne's and Stoddard's kinship, see James Matlack, "Hawthorne and Elizabeth Stoddard," New England Quarterly 50 (1977): 278-302.

17 Twentieth-century readers, especially those who are acquainted with current theories on reader-response criticism, would easily recognize that Stoddard's novels are scriptible or writerly texts rather than lisible or readerly ones. Roland Barthes, in S/Z, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Noonday Press, 1974), uses the terms "lisible" and "scriptible" to distinguish between texts that have a partial fixity or closure of meaning and others that force the reader to produce a meaning or meanings which are inevitably other than final or conclusive. The "scriptible" text is more challenging than the "lisible" because it forces the reader to engage in the process of writing. A "lisible" text, in contrast, is a product rather than a production.

18 Fanny Fern (pseudonym of Sara Payson Willis Parton [1811-72]) was one of the most famous literary journalists of the second half of the nineteenth century. She was the author of Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio (1853), originally published piecemeal in the Home Journal.

19 Matlack identifies the reviewer as George Boker ("Literary Career" 221). For Boker's complete review, see North American and United States Gazette 28 June 1862: 1.

20 George Sand (pseudonym of Amandine-Aurore Lucille Dupin, Baronne Dudevant [1804-76]) was a French novelist who indicated to the whole world that she wished to be considered not as woman, but as writer and to address not just women but the brotherhood of mankind. She was, and still is, admired in the United States and Russia as well as in England, Germany, and Poland for her humanitarian ideas. She influenced many women writers, such as Edith Wharton, Gertrude Stein, Kate
Chopin, and Willa Cather, who explored Sand's autobiography for parallels to their own writing lives.

21 Harriet Beecher Stowe, Margaret Fuller, and Emily Dickinson are some of the nineteenth-century women writers and poets who admired European women writers and appreciated their literary and artistic achievement. Ellen Moers, in Literary Women: The Great Writers (New York: Doubleday, 1976), argues that American women writers and poets were part of the trans-Atlantic network of women writers who not only read each other's works but who also appreciated each other's achievement.

22 Rosa Bonheur wore male clothes so she could visit slaughterhouses and horse stables to study the animals she depicted in her paintings.

23 Stoddard's essay, "Woman in Art--Rosa Bonheur," The Aldine July 1872: 145, was pseudonymously signed "Elizabeth B. Leonard."

24 Margaret Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Norton, 1971), which was published three years before the Seneca Falls Convention, was the intellectual foundation of the feminist movement. Fuller's belief was that "What woman needs is not as a woman to act or rule, but as a nature to grow, as an intellect to discern, as a soul to live freely and unimpeded . . ." (38). She also advised women to seek their own counsel:

But men do not look at both sides, and women must leave off asking them and being influenced by them, but retire within themselves, and explore the groundwork of life till they find their peculiar secret. Then, when they come forth again, renovated and baptized, they will know how to turn all dress to gold, and will be rich and free though they live in a hut, tranquil if in a crowd. Then their sweet singing shall not be from passionate impulse, but the lyrical overflow of a divine rapture, and a new music shall be evolved from this many-chorded world. (121) Indeed, Woman in the Nineteenth Century may be called a feminist manifesto or simply "Womanifesto."

25 Women are saturated with cultural myths that reflect patriarchal values. Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, in The Female Hero in American and British Literature (New York: Bowker, 1981), point out some of the conventional myths that cause women to distrust their own perceptions. They, for instance, identify the myths of "sex difference," "virginity," "romantic love," and "maternal self-sacrifice" as self-denying myths that present women as "the Other" (18). These self-denying myths are the enemies or the "dragons" that the female hero must challenge in order to free herself from the repression and oppression of patriarchal society (18).

Virginia Woolf recounts her personal experience with the false self that meets the socially prescribed and stereotyped standard of womanhood. She names this false
self "The Angel in the House," and, in her essay "Professions for Women," The Death of the Moth and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt, 1942): 235-42, she explains what she means by the Angel of the House:

You may not know what I mean by the Angel in the House. . . . She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. . . . She never had a mind or a wish of her own. . . . And when I came to write I encountered her with the very first words. . . . She slipped behind me and whispered: "My dear, you are a young woman. . . . Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. (237)

Because Woolf finds the "Angel in the House" submissive, pure, self-sacrificing, and dangerous, she kills this self. Women living under the tyranny of the "Angel of the House" stereotype lead passive, anchored lives.

The Cult of True Womanhood as presented by Barbara Welter is basically a compound of four ideas: a sharp dichotomy between the home and the economic world outside that paralleled a sharp contrast between female and male nature, the designation of the home as the female's only proper sphere, and the moral superiority of woman and the idealization of her function as a mother and wife. For a full discussion of this cult, see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860" American Quarterly 18 (1866): 151-74. Also, see note 5 in chapter two for further details on this cult and its opposing Ideal of Real Womanhood.
CHAPTER IV

THE MORGESONS: A PILGRIMAGE INWARD

Someone had to break the curse, someone had to wake Sleeping Beauty without ultimately sending her to her destruction, someone had to shout once and for all: Fly and live to tell the tale.

Erica Jong How to Save Your Own Life

Elizabeth Stoddard's pervasive and witty newsletters in the Daily Alta California are not only the most impressive and fruitful of her apprenticeship years, but they are also her real literary debut. On the whole, these Alta newsletters have contributed to the coherent, harmonious cultivation and formation of Stoddard's individuality and professional authorship. Within a few years, Stoddard launched a literary career and began writing and publishing essays, stories, and poems in Harper's, the Atlantic Monthly, the Aldine, the Independent, Knickerbocker Magazine, and Vanity Fair. She became a writer in her own right and published in June of 1862 her first novel, The Morgesons. Starting with The Morgesons, Stoddard recast or retailed the traditional women's story that formed the basis of earlier sentimental novels and created a female Bildungsroman, which is acknowledged to be the most salient form adequately suited to express the emergence of women from their cultural conditioning and their ensuing progress towards the goal of self-growth and full
personhood.²

The Moreesons is a female Bildungsroman that chronicles the groping and growth of its narrator and protagonist, Cassandra Morgeson, and depicts her arduous struggle against the hegemony of male power and many of society’s patriarchal values and self-denying myths that have been incorporated and internalized within women's consciousness. It traces Cassandra's progress towards identity and autonomy, that is, towards selfhood. It evinces Cassandra's effort to make sense of her life and to integrate into society, an effort which embodies a desire for personal choice and self-determination. It is an expression of a woman's painful but ultimately successful journey to freedom and authentic selfhood.

The Moreesons' intense subjectivity and its presentation of female self-development, self-expression, and power make it much more like a twentieth- than a nineteenth-century text. Compared to the works of many of her contemporaries, Stoddard's novel stands out as an audacious attempt to portray a woman's consciousness as she matures from an impetuous childhood into responsible adulthood. Cassandra Morgeson is endowed with possibilities beyond those of the conventional female hero. Cassandra is, unquestionably, a new womanly woman who is not aphasic or enclosed in silence. With candor and authority and with the advantage of hindsight, she tells her tale in her own voice and encodes her individual history from her own perception and perspective. By writing and dramatizing her own story, Cassandra breaks the barrier of time that stands between past events and reported events and embarks on a quest that takes her on a soul-exploring mission and on a self-searching
expedition. As she documents her self, Cassandra not only reports the events of her past life, but she also weighs them in that she engages in a continuous act of interpretative self-reflection: what we read is relived memory. In inscribing herself into her text and thus reliving her tale, Cassandra undergoes a harrowing as well as a clarifying and cathartic experience. She not only incorporates her past into her present and makes it part and parcel of her autonomous self and her personal vision, but she also endures and reclaims her self. Her vibrant voice asserts its creative presence and individuality and becomes the self-actualizing voice of authority. Cassandra achieves an appreciable level of self-realization and emerges as the main title character of the story, the one and only Morgeson who serves as the vantage point from which events are apprehended and experienced in their fullest capacity to shock and to enchant.

Cassandra is alive and well, standing on the threshold of her future.

The critical response to *The Morgesons* was positive, with the reservation that Stoddard’s style was too obscure and too terse. Although the novel did not sell well, it was much more frequently praised than censured, and it was praised for many accomplishments. George Ripley, literary editor of the influential *New York Tribune*, gave *The Morgesons* a perceptive and favorable review. In his attempt to explain and analyze Stoddard’s purposes and her temperament, Ripley wrote:

The aim of the book, in fact, is to analyze passion, rather than to delineate personalities. It is evidently the outpouring of a singularly reflective nature,—accustomed to brood over the mysteries of life,—with a remorseless habit of stripping the veil from the softest illusions, and cherishing an inexorable sense of reality,—earnest, sincere, with noble aspirations. . . . The story will be read as a development of powerful, erratic, individual passion,—a somewhat bitter, but perhaps not unwholesome commentary on life and society,—instead of a complete,
fully rounded narrative, enticing to the imagination by pictures of ideal loveliness and romantic perfection.  

Ripley was struck by Stoddard's "remorseless habit of stripping the veil from the softest illusions." Beyond the story of The Morgesons, he saw a penetrative psychological insight that is an indication of "a far more profound genius, as well as a higher artistic gift, than the literal narratives which consist of mere photographic copies of one's acquaintance" (Review 3). Indeed, Stoddard's penetration of human psychology and her revelation of interior life surface as the most remarkable and captivating attributes of her fiction. In The Morgesons, Stoddard not only probes deeply into Cassandra's human heart and psyche, but she also unfolds the intricate complexities and subtleties that inhabit them.

Another reviewer who liked The Morgesons and favorably reviewed it is George Boker. Boker singled out Stoddard's artistic skill and literary merit and described The Morgesons as bearing the "unmistakable stamp of genius" (1). He went on to observe that this novel was "a story of New England village life, but not of that kind of village life which we are accustomed to meet with in novels" (Review 1). With reference to the novel's fictional characters, Boker claimed that they were strong and complex enough to be credible:

The best of [characters] have their imperfections, their bad tendencies and their indulged weaknesses; the worst of them have their small virtues, their moments of repentance, and sufficient latent strength to preserve them against positive crime. The effect produced on the reader's mind . . . is that of reality. The characters live and breathe, act and suffer, think, love, hate, err, and recover themselves in our very presence, and the history of their lives enforces our sympathy because it appeals to a conscious oracle within our own hearts. (Review 1)
Indeed, it is the characters and their progressive development or growth that command our attention in *The Morgesons*. In other words, the interest in this novel is derived more from marked and perceptive delineation of individual characters and their *Bildung* than from the march of events or a rapid succession of incidents. Stoddard succeeds in creating characters who are not only individuals, compounded of good and bad qualities, but who are also strongly individualized. Cassandra is a self-directed, individualistic, and assertive woman who extricates herself from the strangling formalities that shackle her spirit and candidly writes her own story after painful soul-searching. She becomes her own midwife, creating herself anew.

Some of the strongest responses and complimentary comments on *The Morgesons* were private. Nathaniel Hawthorne, to whom a complimentary copy had been sent, was so impressed by *The Morgesons* that he wrote Stoddard a congratulatory letter. Hawthorne liked the novel and its vigor and praised its literary merit highly:

> I was particularly impressed with the childhood of the heroine in *The Morgesons* [sic], and the whole of the first part of the book. It seemed to me as genuine and lifelike as anything that pen and ink can do. The latter part showed much power, but struck me as neither so new or so true. Pray pardon the frankness of my crude criticism; for what is the use of saying anything, unless we say what we think? There are very few books of which I take the trouble to have any opinion at all, or of which I could retain any memory so long after reading them, as I do of *The Morgesons*. (qtd. in Matlack, "Literary Career" 275)

In Stoddard, Hawthorne found a writer who was both genuine and absorbing. Beyond any doubt, Stoddard infuses into her narratives an intensely absorbing interest that rivets the attention and seizes the heart to the very last. In fact, the act of reading
Stoddard musters up an intense, passionate, and exciting experience. The Morgesons is a case in point. This narrative steeps the reader in a temptuous sea of voluptuous sensuality and calls out such basic human drives or emotions as affection, dislike, fear, and hope. The reader emerges from the novel with a sensation of having been buffeted and lifted by the wild and ravishing waves of the changing and overpowering sea of sensuality.

Interestingly, like his father before him, Julian Hawthorne, in "Novelistic Habits and The Morgesons," also applauded The Morgesons, noting, "it was one of the best novels ever written by a woman, and superior to all but a very few produced before or since by any American author" (869). He added that Stoddard "is, in fact, the artist pure and simple. She utters, in her own words, the result of her own observations and reflection. She is affected by no other writer, but only by life itself; and she conveys the impression that life has made on her mind by a method original with herself" (869-70). He also noticed that her characters are "real to the marrow . . . We see them grow up and grow old,--grow evil and grow purified; we wince at their wounds, and glow at their success" (870). He even suggested that the novel "will not lose its value in generations more advanced than this," for the more one "has mediated on the mysteries of human life, the more it will reveal to him" (871). No doubt, the interest of The Morgesons is not only well sustained, but it also gains consistently in interest as it advances. No reader can possibly read this novel without being intellectually, psychologically, and emotionally stirred and stimulated. The reader, who is in no way the humble servant of the text, becomes a person of flesh and
feelings and begins to complete the novel’s reality by filling the gaps and silences in the discourse.

**The Moreesons** is a remarkable achievement that is animated by a concern for the whole woman unfolding in all her complexity and richness. In this novel, Stoddard renders Cassandra a female hero who does not stoop but continues to struggle and move forward. Cassandra is, unquestionably, an unusually independent woman of her day, endowed with the capacity to act not only on individuals but also on intriguing situations. She is an articulate woman of driving practicality who not only exercises her power of choice that waives the stifling precepts of decorum and cultural stereotyping but who also does not sink into permanent despair after being subjected to the battles and trials of life in a man's world or domain. Cassandra also finds ways to work within the constrictive conventions of her society and turn them to her own advantage. She negotiates male and female values upon her visits to Barmouth, Rosville, and Belem while still protecting her own femininity. She responds to the self-suppressing pressure of society, and does not too readily acquiesce to male value systems. She scrupulously handles men's rhetoric, a social repartee which is, to her, either blatantly devoid of any sincerity of meaning or is completely unintelligible. Her retaliatory powers, freedom of mind, and private opinions are a brilliant rendition of the psychological emancipation of the female mind.

Cassandra is not a pallid, sentimental shadow of a real person. In fact, she is the embodiment of the "new woman" who is in the process of becoming, struggling to assert her individuality and to construct her own identity in a society where the
prevailing intellectual and ideological issues of the age are inimical to the very existence of women. She is a new voice that verbalizes its own desire to deconstruct the prevailing order of patriarchal societies where men are dominant and women subservient. Her heightened and abrasive discourse not only unpackages and foregrounds the oppressive and restrictive conditions of women, but it also offers new ideological possibilities. These alternatives are mainly invested in her external readers or audience, in us. Cassandra’s candid and honest tale not only delineates the prevailing intellectual and ideological issues of her age, but it also reshapes ideology closer to women’s desires and needs. It actually grows to become a book of the survival of one woman who becomes a victor, not a victim in the life struggle. In her defeat, Cassandra remains undefeated. Her self-development towards self-fulfillment and self-determination we must grant, for she matures and contributes to what Raymond Williams calls a whole way of life.

The Morgeson is dedicated to the character of Cassandra, and the most important element in the narrative is the drama of her developing character—the struggle and the triumph of her soul. Cassandra discourses freely and is not dominated by a sense of female fear of negative judgment, self-doubt, dependency, and deference to masculine authority. She passionately undertakes the voyage of self-discovery, and each of the journeys she takes represents a transit point in the process of her Bildung and maturation. Her successive journeys from her home in Surrey to Barmouth, Rosville, and Belem are used as a dramatization of her character; they project and manifest her gradual growth of character and the success of her quest for
selfhood and autonomy. These journeys are very crucial to Cassandra's development because they enable her to mature through experience and to understand herself more fully. More importantly, they lead her down into her self and open the gate for her personal awakening to her own individuality and sexuality. As Cassandra's sexual, emotional, and imaginative energies are reawakened and dramatically released, she becomes not only an objective observer but also a questioning interpreter. Her developing awareness and burgeoning experiences and her capacity to raise questions and to explore answers are emphasized as unique to the creation and birth of a new, authentic self.

In her opening self-portrait, Cassandra projects herself as having been a vibrantly healthy, energetic, willful girl. As a child, she seems to be strong-willed, determined, and impetuous. She is even accused of being "possessed." "That child . . . is possessed," Cassandra's aunt says of her in the novel's opening sentence (5). Of course, to be "possessed" means to be associated with the devilish forces of evil. Cassandra is, however, not satanically or demonically possessed. Her unruly childhood and her lawless, self-defensive actions are only signs of her developing self-possession. Cassandra knows exactly what she wants and goes out of her way to get hold of what she desires. She, in fact, tells us that she began her life as "an animal . . . robust in health—inattentive, and seeking excitement and exhilaration" (27). At ten, she is undaunted: she climbs on the bureau by its knobs, fetches her favorite book The Northern Regions, reads secular literature and proclaims she "hates" pious literature (6), pesters her great-grandparents by asking "did Ruth love Boaz dreadfully much?"
wears her new slippers out into the road "wishing that some acquaintance with poor shoes could see me" (7), and leaps off the high gatepost into the arms of her outraged aunt Mercy. Obviously, at a very early period, Cassandra not only asserts her budding self and preserves her vivid individuality, but she also disrupts the repressive social proprieties and constraints. She actually comes to grow in power, self-control, and autonomy, and her growing sense of power and control are signs of progress towards a new self-definition.

Cassandra's growth is envisioned as a movement from within to without, from ignorance to awareness as an expression of feelings, thoughts, and body. Unlike her younger sister Veronica, Cassandra has no religious or transcendental leanings that may tarnish her perceptions and cloud her vision. In fact, she is tough, venturesome, and articulate. She refuses to submit to religious doctrine that she does not believe in and disregards religious views and practices. During the town's revival, when Mr. Boold, the minister, attempts to convert her by quoting the passage "now is the day, and now is the hour; come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, I will give you rest," Cassandra replies rather flippantly but quite reasonably "But I do not want rest; I have no burden" and tells her aunt, "you have always said that I was possessed. Why did you not explain this fact to Mr. Boold?" (48). Throughout her growing up period, Cassandra also lacks the "ideal faculty" (14) that is so active in Veronica, a genius and a recluse whose life is given to pure beauty and to playing the piano. Cassandra's mind, as she writes, exists in a "rudimental state" (15), operating only on a direct, passional level:
... wherever I was, or whatever I did, no feeling of beauty ever stole into my mind. I never turned my face up to the sky to watch the passing of a cloud, or mused before the undulating space of sea, or looked down upon the earth with the curiosity of thought, or spiritual aspiration. I was moved and governed by my sensations, which continually changed, and passed away... (14)

Although Cassandra is unable to read the symbols of nature, her active mind sees through nature's surfaces to "roots" and "skeletons" (45). Cassandra, in fact, revels in the libertinism of her warmly spontaneous nature and indulges the senses passionately. She is, after all, drawn to the actual, and her instinct is to experience as much as possible.

Interestingly, the image that Cassandra consistently uses to describe herself is that of the sea. The sea, which is the novel's symbol of life, passion, and desire, mirrors Cassandra's nature and disposition, showing them to be not only powerfully enchanting, passionate, and nourishing but also at times incomprehensible. While Veronica eschews the sea, Cassandra embraces it and prefers that her room face the sea. In fact, Cassandra exults in the sea's beauty and expansiveness. "The inland scenery was tame; no hill or dale broke its dull uniformity... Seaward it was enchanting--beautiful under the sun and moon and clouds" (8). At one point in her life, Cassandra even comes to consult the sea as soon as she rises in the morning to decide how to spend the day. She once says that the sea "mingled its essence with [hers]" (214). Her communion with the sea becomes a metaphor for her passion and sexuality and a psychological basis for her understanding of her own feelings:

I watched [the sea], studying its changes, seeking to understand its effects ever attracted by an awful materiality and its easy power to drown me. By the shore at night the vague tumultuous sphere, swayed
by an influence mightier than itself, gave voice, which drew my soul to utter speech for speech. (142-43)

The sea, life-giving, yet death-bringing, calls Cassandra's soul to mazes of inward contemplation; it awakens Cassandra to a new perception of reality and stimulates in her notions of freedom.

Cassandra's passionate, uninhibited spirit and her will to live fully and passionately are vital for her growth of character, for they spur her on her journey of self-discovery. In fact, her journey into selfhood begins when she has to leave her home and family for Barmouth. Sent from her home in Surrey, the fifteen-year-old Cassandra must spend one year with her maternal grandfather, puritanical, cold and selfish "grand'ther Warren" (30) who is best remembered for his harsh treatment of his own daughters, while attending a school for young ladies where she will be "tamed" (27) and taught how to be a lady. Like Jane Eyre at Lowood, Cassandra is sent to school to be disciplined and to acquire manners. In Barmouth, however, Cassandra remains self-possessed. Although her morbid grandfather carries himself stiffly and is "petrifying" and "unyielding" in his relations with people and although his house is like a "casket" filled with "gloom," "sternness," and "silence," (28) Cassandra is not forced into passivity. She responds daringly to the pressure, becomes an acute critic of her grandfather's misogynist dictatorship and oppression, and defies all dictates of social propriety and proper female behavior. She breaks the solemn mood in her grandfather's house, answers her grandfather's prattle defiantly, and finds his religion as meaningless as the long graces he usually utters, during which "not a word . . . was heard; for his teeth were gone, and he prayed in his throat" (30). Cassandra's enduring
individualism and self-possession enable her to challenge and defy her grandfather's domineering power, to escape his effects upon her body and soul, and to affirm her self-reliance. She even loses the "meagerness of childhood" and attains the "new and delightful affluence" of physical maturity (46-47).

Of course, Cassandra's one-year stay in Barmouth is not without anguish and discomposure. She, undoubtedly, experiences emptiness and victimization. Experiencing nothingness, she comes to question the meaning of her life and of her position in the world. Cassandra, in fact, experiences an awareness that she has never known before. She gains insight into her own background and comes to understand what her mother's childhood and life had been like. She also becomes aware of the ways social prejudice and pressure can affect a person's life. At Miss Black's "genteel school," (27) Cassandra is continually harassed by her snobbish schoolmates and teacher and is often "stupefied and crushed" (35) by their ridicule. Her nasty schoolmates not only make fun of her because she is a "parvenu" (35), but they also tease her with scandalous rumors about her mother: "We have heard about your mother, when she was in love, poor thing" (40). Although Cassandra is confronted brutally and violently with this stark truth, she manages to fight back and to deny the gossip and accusation. She even hits one of her classmates in the face and raises her voice against her teacher, blurring out, "... you are a bad woman ... ; mean and cruel" (41). Obviously, Cassandra has no trouble in recognizing fools or repudiating folly. Besides, she fends off the assaults.

In Barmouth, Cassandra comes to acquire enlightening, confidential information
about her mother's childhood and past life. She actually gets to see for the first time
the wild streak in her mother's nature, a streak that bespeaks a sense of life and
sensuality that has been lost entirely. In a short, pointed conversation, Sally and Ruth,
the two "cadaverous" (30) seamstresses who occasionally work for Cassandra's
grandfather, give Cassandra a glimmering glimpse of her mother's once colorful and
passionate past:

Sally bade me remember that riches took to themselves wings and flew
away; she hoped they had not been a snare to my mother; but she
wasn't what she was, it was a fact.

"No, she isn't," Ruth affirmed. "Do you remember, Sally, when
she came out to the farm once, and rode the white colt bare-back round
the big meadow, with her hair flying?" (49)

Although Cassandra comes to relive her mother's life for a flitting moment and to see
her mother in a completely different light, she acknowledges later on that "whether
mother ever desired the expression of that exaltation of feeling which only lasts in a
man while he is in love, I cannot say. It was not for me to know her heart. It is not
ordained that these beautiful secrets of feeling should be revealed, where they might
prove to be the sweetest knowledge we could have" (58). Cassandra may have been
unable to fully penetrate the deep crevices of her mother's heart and psyche, but she
comes to have a better understanding of her mother, which is, in a way, also a form of
self-knowledge. As she matures, she even realizes that there is "no higher beatitude
than to live in the presence of an unselfish, unasking, vital love" (128). The mother-
daughter relationship is crucial for Cassandra's intellectual and emotional growth.

Although Cassandra is caught in the enmeshing web of masculine and religious
values during her stay in Barmouth and although she is "narrowed to [the] house, my
school, and the church” (42), she manages to grow in autonomy and self-control. She not only gains insight into her self and the world, but she also acquires some fortitude, firmness, and endurance. Shortly after she returns home, she even assumes an authoritative air in her relationship with family and friends and refuses to do what she cannot bring herself to do. She, in fact, begins to do as she likes and to feel as she likes. Her growing feelings of independence and her progressive power refuse to stay forever a secret, private, separate part of her being. She knows that even though "I was generally thought proud, exacting, ill-natured . . . ," still "I concealed nothing; the desires and emotions which are usually kept as a private fund I displayed and exhausted. My audacity shocked those who possessed this fund. My candor was called anything but truthfulness . . .” (58-59).

Stirred by her newly-emerging need to be recognized as an autonomous person, Cassandra assumes control over her own life, starts on a course of private reading, and acts according to her own feelings and definitions. We are told that the townspeople attribute "unlimited power" to Cassandra (60), for they see her as an extraordinarily independent woman of her day, a woman who "can do anything” (60) she sets her mind to. Interestingly, Cassandra grows to be an exemplary figure or model for the townspeople who could not help but follow her whims by the letter:

... they borrowed my dresses for patterns, imitated my bonnets, and adopted my colors. When I learned to manage a sailboat, they had an aquatic mania. When I learned to ride a horse, the ancient and moth-eaten sidesaddles of the town were resuscitated, and old family nags were made back-sore with the wearing of them, and their youthful spirits revived by new beginners sliding about on their rounded sides. (60)
Cassandra is capable of self-possessed behavior and self-assertive action. In Surrey, her growing sense of self-determination not only helps her plunge into life, but it also promotes and furthers her Bildung. Indeed, her growth over a period of two years is less a regression from full participation in adult life than a self-determined progression towards life and maturity.

Cassandra's growth gains an extra dimension when she embarks on her second journey away from Surrey. At the age of eighteen, Cassandra is invited by her married cousin Charles Morgeson to spend a year with his family in Rosville in order to attend the local "Academy" (62) and learn how to be a fashionable socialite. Her visit there is very crucial to her Bildung or development, for it opens the gate for her sexual awakening and marks her metamorphosis from a healthy, vital young woman whose inner being is still "an undiscovered ocean" (77) into an intensely passionate woman who has "suffered immensely and endured that which isolates" (150). In Rosville, as sexual tensions between Cassandra and Charles mount, Cassandra comes to recognize her own passions, to understand her sexuality, to display her feminine power, and to mature through experience. Although Charles ends up being killed in a tragic carriage accident during a ride with Cassandra, Cassandra is left unscathed except for a few physical and emotional scars that ultimately aid rather than hinder her in exploring her own capabilities and attaining her growth of character. The indelible scars on her face, like the scarlet letter on Hester Prynne's bosom, give Cassandra the strength not only to endure and survive but also to grow stronger and become a self-sufficient individual. Sybil Weir, in "The Morgesons: A Neglected Feminist
"Bildungsroman," sees Cassandra's scars as signifying "her victory over a society which proclaimed women sexual imbeciles and which would automatically condemn Cassandra for loving adulterously" (433). Significantly, Cassandra's scars, which, as she proudly proclaims, she "got... in battle," (173) will even earn her the admiration and respect of the man she will eventually marry.

Cassandra is actually different from most women in mid-nineteenth-century American women's fiction, for she not only embodies both sexuality and personal power, but she also comes to gain rather than lose from her experience. Unlike many mid-nineteenth-century American women writers who often avoided the issue of sexuality because sexuality simply placed women at a disadvantage in both life and literature (Baym, Woman's Fiction 290-91), Stoddard unreservedly endorses the sexual woman, for she believes that sexuality is legitimate and essential to full female autonomy. As Richard Foster notes, Stoddard affirms the experienced woman over the inexperienced, suggesting that "the fullness of life shall not be denied those with the wisdom to hear and the courage to answer, passionately, its call to live" (Introduction xiii).

Cassandra's and Charles's sexual attraction is the driving force in all of their relations and in Cassandra's whole life during her one-year residence at Charles's house in Rosville. In fact, in their very first meeting in Surrey, the dynamics of the sexual undercurrents between Cassandra and Charles are patently foregrounded. When Charles questions Cassandra about the sea, she could not help but notice it, "murmuring softly, creeping along the shore, licking the rocks and sand as if
recognizing a master. And I saw and felt its steady, restless, heaving, insidious and terrible" (63). Of course, the sea here is a compelling representation and dramatization of the passionate, sexual attraction between Cassandra and Charles. Cassandra is drawn to Charles in the same way he is drawn to her. Later, in depicting her relationship with Charles, Cassandra notes that, "An intangible, silent, magnetic feeling existed between us, changing and developing according to its own mysterious law, remaining intact in spite of the contests between us of resistance and defiance. . . . When in his presence I was so pervaded by it that whether I went contrary to the dictates of his will or not I moved as if under a pivot" (74). Even though Cassandra's and Charles's intense and illicit sexual passion is not forthrightly and straightly depicted, more is said silently than out loud. In fact, the "gaps" in their conversations speak volumes and communicate very clearly the sexual attraction between them, an attraction that is never consummated, except obliquely, through gestures, signs, and glances.

"Imperious, fastidious, and sarcastic," (74) Charles is a powerfully dominating and possessive man. In fact, he is a descendant of the Byronic hero and Charlotte Brontë's Mr. Rochester. He exercises control over his wife, Alice, and his property, for "not a leaf dropped in the conservatory that he did not see; not a meal was served whose slightest detail was not according to his desire" (112). It is clear that his only two interests are taming horses and growing exotic flowers. Significantly, his affinity with wild horses, which not only indicates the passion in him but also mirrors the sexual politics he practices, takes on added significance or a multilayered meaning
because Cassandra is often compared to a high-spirited horse in the chapters dealing with the Rosville sojourn. Cassandra's likeness to a horse (100) reflects her own animal impulses and passions and suggests that Charles sees her as an intractable horse that needs to be harnessed.

Charles is actually obsessed with a burning desire to empower and manipulate women. Dominating everything around him, exhibiting the domineering personality attending the typical Byronic hero, Charles turns his iron will upon Cassandra and attempts to test the power of his passion over her. Realizing that Charles is only applying "his business talent to the art of living," (76) Cassandra confronts him face to face, teases him, and shows her unwillingness to give up fully to him. Although she is strongly and passionately attracted to Charles, she does not yield to his Byronic male magnetism. She exerts some spirit to challenge and defy his power, to battle his assaults, and to respond to them with total disregard to his wishes. Charles himself even acknowledges her strength and the tenacity of her will. As he tells his wife, "[Cassandra] is never tempted. What she does, she does because she will. Don't worry yourself, Alice, about her" (98).

Cassandra defends herself against Charles, who thinks that he can impose his will upon her. She is not essentially powerless to avoid him and to resist his impositions. In each of the sexually charged scenes between them, she dares to explore her burgeoning sexuality and to test her power against his by trying to control the responses they elicit in each other. She not only manages to keep him at bay when she chooses and to assess her own experiences, but she also comes to provoke
him into action by deliberately ignoring his wishes about her hairdo and by taking off the ring he has given her. In a rather brilliant display of feminine power, Cassandra even arouses Charles's jealousy by flirting with one of his employees, especially by trying to give away his prized red flower, which represents his passionate desire and yearning for her. Rather than becoming Charles's commodity or fetish, Cassandra makes her own rules and teaches herself how to play the game of living on her own terms. By adamantly refusing to be possessed and commodified and by coming to accept her strong sexuality and her forceful personality, Cassandra assumes sole possession of her budding self and becomes truly herself. Indeed, her individuality and her interior strength are projected as leading to responsible womanhood.

Obviously, during her stay in Rosville, Cassandra is not inhibited by feelings of inadequacy, for she manages to assert her individuality without assailing her womanhood. Although she at one time becomes seriously ill and feels that "After my illness came a sense of change. I had lost that careless security in my strength which I had always possessed, and was troubled with vague doubts, that made me feel I needed help from without" (85), she is seen to regain her health, to shed her fears, to sustain her growth, and to struggle for her self-preservation. After careful deliberation on her life, Cassandra, in fact, regains her composure and becomes an agent of change. She actually emerges as a woman of substance who is not likely to be mastered by any man. Even Cassandra's Rosville school friend Ben Somers, who is also attracted to Cassandra and who would be her lover if his spirit were strong enough, tells Cassandra about her new levels of progress. As a member of a branch of
the Morgeson family which has married into the social aristocracy, Ben comes to perceive Cassandra's growing power and to realize that she is not a woman who lives under the tyranny of the "Angel of the House" stereotype. As he confesses to her:

I saw you first, so impetuous, yet self-contained! Incapable of insincerity, devoid of affection and courageously naturally beautiful. Then, to my amazement, I saw that, unlike most women, you understood your instincts; that you dared to define them, and were impious enough to follow them. You debased my ideal, you confused me, also, for I could never affirm that you were wrong; forcing me to consult abstractions, they gave a verdict in your favor, which almost unsexed you in my estimation. (226)

Cassandra is not merely a representation of women as mere artifacts, as passive recipients rather than active participants in the game of life. She is a woman with feelings and thoughts of her own, a woman whose self-defining actions and firmness of character are a bulwark that stands firm against life's tribulations and trials.

The picture that emerges of Cassandra when she returns to Surrey after the accident in Rosville is that of a woman who has not only matured and endured but who has also emerged from her chrysalis. At home, Cassandra breaks from her prescribed role and establishes her core and identity apart from that decreed by others. In her, we find a woman who is unimpaired or unhampered by misguided and ambivalent sex roles, independent and creative, to the best of her potential. She even confronts her inner "specter" conscience and confesses that she feels neither "remorse [nor] repentance" with respect to her relationship with Charles:

"Come," I called, "and stand before me; we will reason together."
It uncovered, and asked:
"Do you feel remorse and repentance?"
"Neither!"
"Why suffer then?"
"I do not know why."
"You confess ignorance. Can you confess that you are selfish, self-seeking—devilish?"
"Are you my devil?"
No answer.
"Am I cowardly, or a liar?"
It laughed, a faint, sarcastic laugh.
"At all events," I continued, "are not my actions better than my thoughts?"
"Which makes the sinner, and which the saint?"
"Can I decide?"
"Why not?"
"My teachers and myself are so far apart! I have found a counterpart; but, specter, you were born of the union." (131-32)

Cassandra's confrontational dialogue with her "specter" conscience is a central aspect of her emerging self-awareness and self-realization.

Cassandra refuses to go by the book in her assessment of her illicit affair. As she remarks when she confesses to her mother about her feelings for Charles, "There is nothing to curse, mother; our experiences are not foretold by law. We may be righteous by rule, we do not sin that way" (133). Cassandra even perceives intuitively that her alliance with Charles may serve her well in the future. "Wait," she tells her dismayed mother, "What is bad this year may be good the next. You blame yourself, because you believe your ignorance has brought me into danger. Wait, mother" (133). Stoddard makes clear that Cassandra's alliance with Charles is not sinful. In fact, this alliance is an opportunity for Cassandra's growth towards the fulfillment of self-discovery and self-understanding. Instead of being ruined, Cassandra learns from her experience and opposes the image of the self-effacing woman of her milieu. She not only passes beyond the initiation into sexuality and gains in confidence, but she also comes to terms with the particularities of adult female life and chooses her acts in the
larger world. She grapples with adult responsibilities and refurnishes her girlhood
girlhood room in a very elegant manner that conveys her sexual maturity. As she explains, "I
had a comfortable sense of property, when I took possession of my own room" (129).
Cassandra also subverts the code of the ideal woman and begins accompanying her
father on business trips. She "witnessed bargains and contracts, and listened to talk of
shipwrecks, mutinies, insurance cases, perjuries, failures, ruin, and rascalities" (142).
By reconstructing her life and by undergoing experiences which she both seeks and
demands, Cassandra gains entry into the world and furthers her self-development. She
undergoes self-realization and permits herself to think of infinite possibilities and,
therefore, choice.

After the Rosville incident and over the span of many productive years,
Cassandra continues to grow and to reach different phases of adulthood. In fact, her
third journey away from home to visit the family of her future brother-in-law in the
city of Belem establishes a progression and a gradual growth of her character and
brings her to a new stage in her Bildung. In Belem, Cassandra continues to have
control over her life and choices. She meets Desmond Somers and falls in love "as a
mature woman may love . . ." (226). Because she has experienced passion before, she
now feels ready for a relationship with Desmond, and she feels certain that "the fire-
tipped arrows rarely pierce soul and sense, blood and brain" (226). Her love for
Desmond transports her on a magic-carpet ride into realms that she has never thought
to have existed. As she remarks, "I was glad, for I was in love with Desmond. . . .
my soul had built itself a lordly pleasure-house; its dome and towers were firm and
finished, glowing in the light that 'never was on land or sea.' How elate I grew in this atmosphere!" (187). Cassandra and Desmond find love, understanding, and comfort in each other; they are, in fact, linked by a chain that "was forged out of his and [her] substance" (227).

Unlike Charles, Desmond, who is patiently awaiting his family's inheritance, comes to Cassandra as an equal rather than as a superior master. He does not, in any way, attempt to dominate Cassandra or to objectify her existence. Guessing the type of battle that has given Cassandra her permanent scars, Desmond neither condemns her conduct nor passes any judgment on her behavior. Even when Cassandra sends him a letter telling him about Charles, he expresses nothing but love, admiration, and respect for her courage, self-sufficiency, and adventurous spirit. He is both amazed and delighted that "women like [Cassandra], pure, with no vice of blood, sometimes are tempted, struggle, and suffer" (183). In his relationship with Cassandra, Desmond not only reveals his radical thoughts on the role and status for women, but he also exhibits his belief in gender parity. Thus, in order to make himself worthy of Cassandra before they marry, he chooses to subject himself to a rigorous two-year course of abstinence to rid himself of an inherited alcoholism that his family considers inescapable and fatal. In a farewell note, he writes Cassandra, "I am yours, as I have been, since the night I asked you 'How came those scars?' Did you guess that I read your story? I go from you with one idea; I love you, and I must go. Brave woman! You have shamed me to death almost" (227). When he returns, "spare . . . brown . . . and gray," he tells Cassandra that "you see what battles I must have had since I saw
you. It took me so long to break my cursed habits. I was afraid of myself, afraid to come; but I have tried myself to the utmost, and hope I am worthy of you. Will you trust me?" (250). And trust she does, for she starts "murmuring loving words to him, till he drew a breath of life and strength" (251). Cassandra attains a love at once equal and complete.

Although Cassandra and Desmond "comprehend each other without collision" (226), Cassandra comes to struggle against the liberties of Desmond's mother, Mrs. Bellevue Pickersgill Somers. Given power through the money she has inherited from her father, Mrs. Somers tries to wield her dictatorial power or iron-fisted rule over everyone in the three-story Somers mansion, including Cassandra herself. Cassandra, however, is not easily overwhelmed or threatened. Combining defiance with careful self-control, Cassandra not only eludes Mrs. Somers's power, but she also opposes her and leaves her transfixed and mangled in her tracks. When Mrs. Somers preys upon Cassandra and maliciously accuses her of having a liaison with Desmond, Cassandra is armed to defend her name and to redeem her reputation. She, in fact, yields nothing under Mrs. Somers's angry assault, for she is free "from any regard or fear of her opinion" (188). In her midnight encounter with Mrs. Somers, Cassandra exhibits remarkable qualities for a woman of her time and remains uncompromisingly honest about her relationship with Desmond. She preserves her independent self and becomes the strong woman she has always had the potential to be. After one month, she leaves Belem with Desmond's pledge of love and reform and the will to live fully.

Although Cassandra's growing self-possession and her powerful vitality propel
her forward and set her life in motion, her growth is not yet complete. After she returns home from Belem, some unexpected turn of events and calamities clear the way for the last stages of her growth. Significantly, when Cassandra enters her home, she discovers her mother dead, sitting in her favorite chair by the fire. The scene in which Cassandra finds her mother dead comes as a complete surprise, emphasizing its chilling and shocking nature. Death is actually seen as sudden and shockingly physical, having psychological rather than religious implications:

Mother was in her chair by the fire, which was out, for the brands were black, and one had fallen close to her feet. A white flannel shawl covered her shoulders; her chin rested on her breast. "She is ill, and has dropped asleep," I thought, thrusting my hands out, through this terrible silence, to break her slumber, and looked at the clock; it was near seven. A door slammed, somewhere upstairs, so loud it made me jump, but she did not wake. I went toward her, confused, and stumbling against the table, which was between us, but reached her at last. Oh, I knew it! She was dead! People must die, even in their chairs, alone! What difference did it make, how? An empty cup was in her lap, bottom up; I set it carefully on the mantel shelf above her head. Her handkerchief was crumpled in her nerveless hand; I drew it away and thrust it into my bosom. My gloves tightened my hands as I tried to pull them off, and was tugging at them, when a door opened, and Veronica came in.

"She is dead," I said. "I can't get them off." (205-06)

Although Cassandra is profoundly shocked and deeply disoriented, her response is completely unsentimental. In fact, her reaction is psychologically realistic; it represents Stoddard's penetrating understanding of human psychology.

Cassandra's mother's death is both a chilling shock and a catalyst for her discovery of her inner resources and responsibility. Cassandra may have been confused and depressed, but, we are told, that her disorientation dissipates like a thin mist on a sunny morning when she walks to the beach for the first time since her
mother's death. In an epiphany-like episode, the sea itself speaks to Cassandra's soul:

[The pool showed me the motionless shadow of my face again, on which I pondered, till I suddenly became aware of a slow, internal oscillation, which increased till I felt in a strange tumult. I put my hand in the pool and troubled its surface.

"Hail, Cassandra! Hail!"

I sprang up the highest rock on the point, and looked seaward, to catch a glimpse of the flying spirit who had touched me. My soul was brought in poise and quickened with the beauty before me! The wide, shimmering plain of sea--its aerial blue, stretching beyond the limits of my vision in one direction, upbearing transverse, cloud-like islands in another, varied and shadowed by shore and sky--mingled its essence with mine . . . .

"Have then at life!" my senses cried. "We will possess its longing silence, rifle its waiting beauty. We will rise up in its light and warmth, and cry, 'come, for we wait.' Its roar, its beauty, its madness--we will have--all." I turned and walked swiftly homeward, treading the ridges of white sand, the black drifts of seaweed, as if they had been a smooth floor. (214-15)

The power, the sensuousness, and the endlessness of the sea inspire Cassandra with the overwhelming desire to "possess" "all" of life. Cassandra feels exhilarated as if a new life has been granted her. Unlike Edna Pontellier who chooses to die by reaching towards the larger domain of outer space, Cassandra goes home immediately and promises her aunt to "reign, and serve also" (215). Now, she not only replaces her mother's old-fashioned feminine incapacity with the decisive skill in domestic management and supervision, but she also faces such adult trials as her father's bankruptcy and her sister's wedding. It is true that Cassandra does not enjoy the domestic chores associated with her newfound usefulness, but her immersion in domesticity is presented as evidence of her full growth into full womanhood.

As Cassandra's quest nearly completion, she comes to take possession of her inheritance, which is an act of empowerment itself, and to seal her union with
Desmond. Her marriage is not a compromise or an escape; it, therefore, does not threaten physical and psychological annihilation. Besides, the meeting between Cassandra and Desmond is pictured as a harmonious union of two people who love and respect each other's self-sufficiency and independence:

"...Come, Cassandra, my wife! My God, I shall die with happiness." "Desmond, Desmond, do you know how I love you? Feel my heart,—it has throbbed with the weight of you since that night in Belem, when you struck your head under the mantel." (251)

Certainly, Cassandra finds a satisfying love with Desmond, enters marriage on a basis of equality, and comes to feel fulfilled rather than filled. She has furthered her self-development towards self-fulfillment and self-determination. Cassandra has finally come through.

Stoddard has created a power of womanhood not generally found in mid-nineteenth-century American fiction. Cassandra is a superbly non-conformist, passionate, and self-defining protagonist. She manages perfectly well on her own, even though circumstances have definitely conspired against her. Her experiences and myriad trials in her arduous journey of recognition and selfhood release her from bondage to myths about herself and sustain her growth and her recognition of her right to her own mode of being. Cassandra discovers an inner strength with which to survive the entanglements and the injustices of a male-dominated society and learns passion and desolation. She reclaims herself, establishes her own independence, and finds love, solace, and companionship in her marriage to Desmond Somers. She unites herself for ever with the object of her dearest, eternal affection and becomes the mistress of her house. Cassandra achieves an appreciable level of self-realization,
despite the devastating experiences she passes through. She prevails and secures for herself a strong foothold in the world. She tells her tale and proves that there is more than one story in history and more than one voice in the world. Cassandra is in possession of life and of health, and not destitute of happiness. She wins and courageously builds in her story a bridge from past to future so that other women might find their way across.
Notes

1 The Morgesons was re-edited in 1888-89 and then reprinted or reissued in 1901, with a preface by Stoddard, a preface that is actually designed to introduce all of Stoddard's three novels. In 1971, Richard Foster published a new edition of The Morgesons (New York: Johnson), with a critical introduction. Also, in 1984, Lawrence Buell and Sandra A. Zagarell published The Morgesons and Other Writings, Published and Unpublished, by Elizabeth Stoddard (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P), with a critical introduction. Citations from The Morgesons are to Buell's and Zagarell's edition of this novel.

2 In discussing the historical evolution of the Bildungsroman, critics usually acknowledge the inherent maleness of the genre and frequently refer to a few selected works by women, among them, perhaps, Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, or George Eliot's The Mill on the Floss. This is true, for example, of Jerome Buckley's study Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974). Although Buckley devotes one chapter of his study to Eliot's The Mill on the Floss, the remainder of the study deals with novels by male writers about male protagonists, including David Copperfield, Great Expectations, Jude the Obscure, Sons and Lovers, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, among many others.

In Season of Youth, Buckley offers the pattern or the broad outlines of the typical Bildungsroman, the highlights of which are in the male protagonist's leaving the "repressive atmosphere of home" and the innocence to commence his journey through life where his real education starts (17). After painful soul-searching, the male protagonist leaves his adolescence behind and makes a sort of accommodation to the world. He moves through the "pattern of conversion," (40) which is seen in different variations in different novels, and endures a dark night of despair before he finds hope, purpose, and even true identity. Buckley notes that it is usually difficult to end a Bildungsroman with conviction and decision. The Bildungsroman stops, but it can never end, according to Buckley (8). The open-ended nature of the novels precludes any simple sense of finality, of over and done with. The denouement of the Bildungsroman is only provisional.

Although the Bildungsroman is considered in male-centered terms, it is not solely a male affair. To be sure, the concept of the Bildungsroman has expanded first beyond the German prototypes, then beyond historical circumscription, and finally beyond the notion of Bildung as male. As Annis Pratt maintains, in "The New Feminist Criticism," College English 32 (1970-71): 875-87, "If there is a 'myth of the hero' there must also be a 'myth of the heroine,' a female as well as a male Bildungsroman, parallel to each other, perhaps, but by no means identical" (877). In fact, the nineteenth century is replete with the female Bildungsroman, which is correctly designated by Ellen Morgan as a recasting of an older literary type, revived by women writers to meet their particular needs and to break away from the indoctrination of man and society (183). By finding their literary voice in the Bildungsroman, women writers have recorded their own histories and exposed or even

Interestingly, in an article written in 1979 Bonnie Hoover Braendlin cites Morgan's concept of a revision of an old form and adds:

...the feminist bildungsroman delineates woman's self-development toward a viable present and future existence, free from predetermined, male-dominated societal roles, which in the past have yielded a fragmented rather than a satisfactorily integrated personality. (18)


4 As stated and illustrated in note eight of Chapter three, George Boker was one of the Stoddards' most intimate friends. In fact, Elizabeth Stoddard dedicated her first novel The Morgesons to "My Three Friends, the three poets, Richard [Richard Stoddard], Bayard [Bayard Taylor], and George [George Boker]" (qtd. in Matlack, "Literary Career" 223).


6 The term "new woman" was coined in the 1890s in an effort to describe women who were fighting for their own personal freedom and a degree of equality. The "new woman" is the one who hoists the red flag of revolt and fights for her rights. According to Ellen Morgan, the "new woman" is not only a "psyche, but a political being; not only a product and victim of her culture, but also a personal being who transcends it" (183). See Ellen Morgan, "Humanbecoming: Form and Focus in the Neo-Feminist Novel," Images of Women in Fiction, ed. Susan Koppelman Cornillon (Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1972) 183-205.

7 In her poetry, journalism, and fiction, Stoddard uses the image of the sea to describe herself. In the Daily Alta California, she writes:

But to come to the truth and beauty of my surrounding. Here rolls the everlasting sea. On the day of my birth its voice was uplifted; on the day of my death, its song will be the same. The sandy soil of the village graveyard hides generations of my race. The old slate stones level, with their mounds, and covered with moss, the upright marble slabs with their names freshly cut have neither age nor date to the deaf and sightless sea. But unpitying, as it is, I am drawn to it by a
resistless fascination. Ever in motion, yet within impassible barriers, it seems a type of the soul on earth, fretted by and chained to the body. If it be true that we are in conformity with the configuration of the country and climate, in which we are born, I arrive at the conclusion that I am full of dents; that my disposition is a "nor-wester," that my intellect is misty, and that I am a queer cove generally. (Oct. 24, 1855: 2).
CHAPTER V

TWO MEN: A QUEST FOR SELF AND IDENTITY

When you open your life to the living, all
things come spilling in on you.
And you're flowing like a river, the Changer
and the Changed. . . . Filling up and spilling
over, it's an endless waterfall.
Chris Williamson "Waterfall"

In The Morgesons, Elizabeth Stoddard reshaped or gave new dimension to the
literary conventions that the culture offered her and depicted a facet of womanhood
that the 1862 reading public could not embrace. Readers in general did not respond
well to Cassandra Morgeson because she was a nonconforming female hero; Cassandra
confused them, just as she confused Ben Somers. Although Stoddard received little
reward for The Morgesons, she was unwilling to compromise her writing by
presenting only the then acceptable view of a woman's life. She may have
experienced frustration in her literary career, but she never doubted her creative
powers or allowed boundaries to be set for her. In a fundamental sense, she retained
her self-confidence, maintained her presence or literary visibility in the public forum,
and continued to focus her literary energies on writing honest pieces of fiction. In
fact, in 1865, she made another bid for recognition as a novelist and published her
second novel, Two Men. 1 With this novel, Stoddard not only fashioned a nineteenth-
century edifice in the tradition of Nathaniel Hawthorne's monumental fiction, but she
also created a narrative in the quest tradition of the Bildungsroman. What emerged is a veritable and veracious segment of the great life-drama, presenting men and women as they are, sentiments as they are felt, and deeds as they are done.²

In Two Men, which is told in standard third-person narrative form, Stoddard recounts the youth and young womanhood of a sensitive protagonist who goes through the process of developing an identity and a self. She tells the story of Philippa Luce from childhood to adulthood and depicts her struggle for self-realization and her search for self-knowledge. Philippa is a spirited and self-sustaining female hero who lives out her life struggling to make it on her own in a hostile world without the help of and in spite of the other people in the novel. Groping her way towards maturity, Philippa not only refuses to accept the passivity and dependency so characteristic of the thinking of women of her milieu, but she also seeks strength and renewal from within herself. Her capacity for survival enables her to act upon her own initiative and to fight back and defend her own sense of importance. Although her road to self-realization is not smooth, she never plunges into despair. She proceeds further in her intellectual and emotional growth and comes to learn about love, equality, and humanity. She serves her apprenticeship, achieves self-development and self-actualization, and unites herself with the man she comes to love and respect. Her union with Jason makes possible a marriage of equality that comes to circumvent the strictures of a hierarchal society. Philippa not only asserts her selfhood, but she also comes of age. She survives and emerges triumphant and superior.

Two Men attracted the attention of many reviewers who made a conscientious
effort to do it justice. The response of the reviewers was generally favorable and affirmative, if not as forceful as with *The Morgesons*. After reading *Two Men*, William Dean Howells not only gave the novel a lengthy and commendatory review, but he also emphasized its comparison with Hawthorne. Howells wrote:

> It is a very curious book, for two reasons: the analysis of character which the taste of this age demands is dramatic, and the most subjective purpose is achieved by the most objective processes. The author seldom vouchsafes a word of comment or explanation on anything that her people do or say; and yet, from their brief speeches and dramatic action, you have the same knowledge of motive which you acquire from the philosophization of some such subjective romance as *The Scarlet Letter*. We think this admirable, because it wisely satisfies the analytic tendency of modern feeling, and yet escapes the motionlessness of a study. The book is also curious because, with many improbabilities and incongruities, it leaves at last an impression of reality, and of propriety within certain conditions. . . . we never met such invariably bright, bad people . . ., but we must nevertheless acknowledge the truth of the characters to themselves, to each other, and to the atmosphere in which we find them. It is at times an atmosphere in which only eldritch and unearthly things could breathe.4 (537)

In plot and in the effective delineation of character, *Two Men* is one of the most original books written by an American woman. In this narrative, the characters are not only individually and strongly marked, but they are also contrasted to each other in the various episodes, with very striking effects. It is clear that Philippa is constructed as an individual who is not only real but who is also real unto herself. She is self-directed, individualistic, and assertive. She thinks, feels, talks, and acts like a real woman, and as such apparently endeared herself to a reader as cautious of public opinion as Howells.

Another reviewer who praised *Two Men* for its expressive originality, compelling power, and absorbing interest is George Ripley. As in his comments on
The Morgeson's, Ripley analyzed Stoddard's apparent intent, her method, and her
dramatic technique with care and skill. Assuming that Stoddard had no prototype in
her line of composition, he commented on the brilliant success of Two Men:

No weak womanly sentiment impairs the effect of the keen, merciless
dissection of passion and motives which awaken an almost morbid
curiosity in the reader. . . . The march of events, or rather of inward
experiences, advances in grim spectral procession, leaving us at the
close to admire the analytic skill of the author, her bold, vigorous
handling of the mysteries of passion, and her gift of sharp incisive
expression. . . . Her aim has been to clothe her conceptions in the form
and coloring of truth, to depict with fidelity the images of her mind, to
reproduce the scenes, or rather the forms of passion, that her fancy has
created, instead of beguiling the soul of the reader by suggestions of
enchanting excellence or seductive grace.5

Of course, Stoddard is not merely, as Ripley implies, a keen observer of the externals
of humanity. Beyond any doubt, she not only evinces a sharp insight into the inward
workings of human nature, but she also manifests a familiar acquaintance with the
motives and impulses of the human heart. She, in fact, analyzes the passions, motives,
and impulses that make up the individuality and vitality of her strongly marked
characters. Her remarkable power is a function of deep insight rather than of surface
observation.

A main source of some of the reviewers' disappointment in Two Men was its
apparently daring morality. Some of the first reviews indicted and condemned the
novel on moral grounds. After affirming that Two Men was probably "one of the
most remarkable novels that has appeared on this side of the Atlantic for some time,"
the editor of The Round Table attacked Stoddard's feminine sensibility:

There remains one point to which we might not allude so pointedly
were not the author a lady. We refer to the tone of the book as regards
morality. To be sure, we have no right to expect a sermon in a novel any more than we look to our friends for a homily upon the cardinal virtues in a casual conversation; yet, when questions of morality are introduced, we have a right to claim better treatment than they receive in *Two Men*. Aside from the quiet ridicule cast upon Mrs. Rogers for her devotion to church matters, and the milksop characteristics attributed to the only clergyman who figures in the work, we wonder that Parke is allowed to ruin and indirectly kill a young girl without the slightest word of honest disapprobation, either by the author or by the characters of her creation. On the contrary, he is rather held up for approbation because he owns up to his crime and grants the dead body of his victim a resting-place beside his mother and other members of the Parke family. We had reason to expect something better than this from so gifted a writer—and a lady, besides.\(^6\) (148)

Obviously, Stoddard's contemporaries regarded her treatment of the affair between Parke and the ex-slave Charlotte Lang as immoral because Stoddard did not heed to the sentimental pattern of sermonizing about her characters' flaws and mistakes and because she was not an explicit enforcer of moral values. What her contemporaries, expecting such sermons, failed to see is that *Two Men* does not warrant certain actions to be right or wrong. Rather, Stoddard herself suggests that Parke's transgression is fated by his human nature; his fall is the same as Adam's:

"Behind [his eyes] lay a world, concerning which Milton invoked the heavenly muse to sing,—'of man's first disobedience'" (158). Also, speaking of Charlotte, the narrator wonders,

Did the angels of Pity and Patience guard that bed? Or waited a demon there, to behold the spectacle of dead chastity in a lovely shrine? Who will summon either to pass judgment upon a drama in which they were neither actors nor spectators! (163)

Certainly, Stoddard not only refuses to be didactic and to judge the lovers, but she also wants the reader to suspend judgment too. After all, as Stoddard suggests, one
cannot know the moral value of an action with which one is not intimately involved.

For Stoddard, moral judgments are problematically open to question or doubt.

Therefore, what matters is not what Charlotte and Parke have done, but its human complexities and intricacies, its apocalyptic apprehension of the real.

Unlike The Morgesons, Two Men is a much sparer, more compact novel, with less happening between the lines. The plot is simpler and more straightforward, as less of it depends on the tacit flow of feelings among the characters. While The Morgesons gains its beauty and charm from Stoddard's impetuous intensity of feeling and from her tendency to take an introspective plunge into the innermost recesses of her characters, Two Men remains a more exterior novel, presenting its characters from the outside. This is not to say, however, that the characters we meet in Two Men are not essentially complex, engaging people and that Stoddard does not admit us into the chambers of their psyche. In fact, the heart of the book lies in its robust, compelling characters who come before the reader not only to act out their eventful lives but also to expose the inward workings of their restless and fiery natures. Certainly, Stoddard evinces a deep insight into the motives of human conduct, making the nicest distinctions and shades of character with a keen, firm touch. Her fiction is not only colored by pictures of the externals of humanity and social life, but it is also impregnated with the wealth of its revelations of interior life.

Lacking the subjectivity and intensity of The Morgesons, Two Men is nevertheless a mature work that charts and traces the growth and development of its central female character, Philippa Luce. Philippa as a questioning, questing female
hero is depicted with a feminine consciousness throughout by Stoddard. In fact, Stoddard follows Philippa through the different stages or phases of her life and depicts graphically her anger, her vulnerability, her pride and self-absorption, her disillusionment, her strength, her capacity for survival and growth, her humanity, and her discovery of an equal love. Philippa's story is one of apprenticeship, of a coming to development and growth of self. In fact, her Bildung and awakening are set against the backdrop of two foils and images of womanhood, the cold and abusive Sarah, whose existence lacks love, friendship, and warmth, and the voluptuous Charlotte, who has no scruples whatsoever about acknowledging the power of passion and taking a white lover without any reservations. Shouldering the weights of repression and passion, Philippa struggles from the imprisonment of her childhood towards an almost unthinkable goal of mature freedom. Once she breaks the destructive cycle she has been imprisoned in, and once she overcomes her obsessive, dutiful attachment to her cousin Parke, she assumes control over her experiences that leads her closer to self-determination and self-affirmation. In a moment of insight, Philippa discovers the folly of seeking "a particular object to live for" (297). Her change of heart and her transformation take the form of a new interest in other people, and specifically in Jason, her guardian. After seeing herself and Jason in a different light, she unites herself with Jason with no fear of one exploiting the other. Philippa faces the future not only with romantic glamor but also with integrity of vision, a bright vision of continuance and progress.

The small world of Two Men envelops Philippa and delineates her female
development and her story of enclosure and escape. Philippa's tale unfolds in the
opening pages of the novel. Newly arrived from South America with her irresponsible
father Osmond Luce, the ten-year-old Philippa is left in Crest to stay with her father's
cousin Sarah Parke, who lives in the Parke household with her estranged husband
Jason Auster and her only son Parke Auster. Philippa must part from her father, who
is travelling alone to the South region in order to pursue his hedonistic life. This
separation is dictated by Osmond, whose indifference towards his daughter is made
clear when he confesses to Jason that Philippa is an "obstacle" to his way of life (37).
With respect to her father, Philippa is nothing more than an excess piece of "baggage"
(29). Although Osmond asks Jason to become Philippa's guardian and although he
signs over his share of the Parke estate to Philippa and appoints Jason its manager, his
action does not herald a whole new way of life for Philippa. Philippa is much less
subject than object, acted upon and even denied the right to speak or assert her will.
Needless to say, Osmond dismisses or grossly misjudges Philippa's capacity for
feeling. Obviously, his ignorance about the rich emotional life of his only child
discredits him as a paternal figure and highlights the injustice of his having absolute
control over Philippa and her future. Abandoned, if not orphaned, Philippa agonizes
over the indignity of being treated as negligible, and it is clear enough, that she
represses her own share of pain, madness, and rage behind a subdued façade.

Philippa is a vulnerable, powerless, and innocent person victimized by those in
authority over her. As a child growing up in the Parke household, she is subjected to
the physical and emotional abuse of Sarah, who wrathfully agrees to rear her. Sarah,
still angry at being thwarted in her apparent passion for her cousin Osmond and even angrier over the knowledge that her son Parke will have to share the family inheritance with his cousin Philippa, takes an immediate dislike to Philippa, but decides that having her "under her eye as a hostage" would be a means of keeping Osmond from "cut[ting] and thrust[ing] so liberally, with his plans and wishes" (35). While Sarah spoils her son Parke, she manifests the qualities of vanity, greed, jealousy, and vengefulness towards Philippa. She ruthlessly torments Philippa and subjects her "to a system as rigid as that of the penitentiary, with one exception—liberty to associate with Parke, and share his pleasures as he saw fit" (44). Lacking in obvious power, but rich in intelligence, force of will and determination, Philippa has mental powers to compensate for her physical and social limitations. Although her life at the Parke home is punctuated by a number of confrontations between herself and Sarah, Philippa is not on her way to insanity, partly because she can articulate and actively resent the limitations of her condition. In fact, she not only refuses to accept her emotionally and physically impoverished existence as necessity, but she also rejects living by proxy (Sarah's way). She even resists Sarah's evil impositions and wicked authority and exerts her will in her own behalf. Her "persistent will" and her audacious display of "frankness" (44) enable her to vent freely her scorn and dislike of Sarah, to struggle for her self-preservation, and to grow in autonomy and self-control.

With all her privations and servitude, Philippa does not sink into an ocean of stagnancy, into a hallucinatory inner world that opens into death. She has the strength and the fortitude to withstand disappointment and even despair. At times, she may be
seen bitter and vulnerable, but she is, by no means, naturally passive, for she does not vegetate in a vicious circle of inertia. Year after year, she manages to exercise her power over her religious practices, to retain her identity as a Roman Catholic, to reveal her fiery spirit, and to be her own rescuer. In essence, she is a "whirlpool," charged with fire, daggers, and spikes, as Sarah contends (136). However, although Philippa persists in her assertions despite all oppositions and although she sheds her old skins as she grows, striving never again to be encased in fetters, she begins to find refuge in her cousin Parke and to depend on his understanding presence. As a lonely and emotionally starved child, Philippa even imagines herself hopelessly in love with Parke. Actually, from the day she takes up residence in the Parke home, she falls in love with Parke, but her love is distorted or swayed by an exalted sense of duty to him. Philippa feels herself dependent on Parke's good will, dependent on his existence for her own happiness. After all, Parke's "good humor, his facility to discover means of enjoyment . . . were delightful" (45). Later, however, as the narrative and Philippa's sense of herself evolve, Philippa comes to realize the absurdity of belonging to another than herself. At one point in the narrative, she even offers her father a reasonable explanation for her seemingly unreasonable devotion to and love for her cousin. She tells him, "You left me here a child—a child loves the beautiful. Was there anything lovely in Sarah or Jason? Parke was lovely, and I turned to him. . . . Though I do not have any proof of his goodness, I am faithless as to his faults" (231).

Much as The Morgensons evokes certain aspects of Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, Two Men echoes much of Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights. Subtly, Two Men
employs the generational parallels of *Wuthering Heights*, with Philippa and Parke repeating the pattern established by Sarah and Osmond. Philippa's love for her cousin Parke mirrors Sarah's earlier love for her cousin Osmond. However, although Stoddard emphasizes the parallel between the two generations, she also adds a difference to it. Unlike Sarah, a slave to her embittered self when Osmond leaves her, a subsequently passionless marriage partner to Jason and eventually a cold, loveless hysteric, Philippa gradually outgrows her dutiful love for Parke and discovers that Parke is only part of her dream, not her whole dream. Later, Philippa even finds love in Jason and discovers a passion that cannot betray her because she can control the extent of her involvement with Jason. She, in fact, feels alive for the first time since her discovery of Jason's love for her and her love for him. Philippa not only rebuilds and restores her life, but she also gives birth to a new self, becoming both mother and father to the new woman emerging from her chrysalis.

Through her development and growth, Philippa continues to preserve her self, to shed her fears and her sense of being a nobody, and to assert her individuality. Clearly, her enrollment at a boarding school when Parke goes away to college stimulates her growth of character and represents the open door to independence and freedom. Besides gaining knowledge at school, Philippa breaks from the bonds of childhood and becomes more certain and more assertive. At nineteen, she returns to the Parke household strengthened rather than dissipated. Being aware of her own richly endowed life, Philippa returns to face the world on her own terms and to exercise as much control as she wishes. When Sarah, who still holds her grudge,
accuses Philippa of "carelessness" and "extravagance" and calls her a "cockatrice" (53). Philippa stands up for her rights and takes up the challenge, rises above her constrictions and restrictions, and asserts her power and authority over Sarah and her demon of rage and jealousy. It is true that she falls deathly ill and burns with anger and resentment when confronted with the memories of her unhappy upbringing, but she manages to fight her fit of fever and to awaken from her dying delirium with a mandate to herself to preserve her core as an independent person. Womanlike, Philippa is intent upon improving her lot and enriching her life. Now, she not only believes strongly in herself and has "faith in self-defence" (53), but she can also hold claim to her inheritance, which gives her a position of security. To be sure, in her passage from adolescence to maturity, Philippa breaks past the limits imposed upon her from within and without and emerges from the crucible ready to live her life and to further her growth of character.

Although Philippa's displays of fortitude and power as she grows into adulthood come to manifest her strength, her capacity for growth, and her growing sense of self-determination, she is not yet free from her slavish association with Parke, who is characteristically unaware of or oblivious to her feelings. Philippa must overcome her fixed attachment to Parke, who is surrounded with the glow of her own romantic illusions, before she can finally grow up and reach transcendent selfhood. Unbeknownst to herself, Philippa is rapt in a dense web of mystification and deluding fantasies and is caught up in the net of her own romantic illusions. As she herself tells us, her relationship with Parke develops through her perfect willingness to do
whatever he asks of her. In one of her lofty speeches, she even declares that she
hopes to offer Parke "the care and watchfulness of slow years, without reward—the
patience to endure all weakness, indulgence, selfishness—the bond which begins with a
white veil, and ends in a white shroud!" (94). Clearly, Philippa is deeply disillusioned
by her morbid fancies about love and is dominated by inhibitive emotions of self-
sacrifice and self-immolation. Fortunately, her disillusionment and her lack of insight
do not prevail as the ultimate reality of her life. Interestingly, it takes a man like
Jason to wake Philippa up to the meaning of love, to her womanhood, and to her right
to her own mode of being. When Jason helps inaugurate Philippa into a mode of self-
discovery and freedom, she gradually comes to shed the scales from her eyes, to
outgrow her puerile dream of devoting her life to another, to release herself from
bondage to myths about herself and Parke, and to rule out the life of martyrdom and
unselfishness supposedly required of a wife.

In her obsessive and absorbing relationship with Parke, Philippa is only partly
responsible for her own distress. To be sure, Parke bears as much responsibility as
she does. A descendant of the Byronic hero, Parke is no angel. Like Charles
Morgeson, he is domineering, wilful, selfish, impulsive, and fickle. In a way, he takes
after his uncle Osmond. In fact, his "self-gratification" and his "capacity for a terrible
abandonment to the passion" (46) confirm his kinship to Osmond. Despotic and self-
centered, Parke reveals his possessiveness, selfishness, and superiority at the very
beginning of the novel. From his childhood, he is happiest when his demands are met
and his wishes are fulfilled. We are told that when he first meets Philippa, he uses his
socially superior status as male and master to force her into submission. Proclaiming that the house in which Philippa is going to live is his and that Philippa "must play" by his rules (34), he gloatingly sings, "Philippa, Ippa, Ippa, Philippa . . . Ippa, Ippa, I must nip her" (33). Parke's desire to subdue Philippa and to keep her under control is clearly stated. For the most part, his extreme vanity, his dictating authority, and his exploitative behavior are living testimony to his brutality and to his victimization of others.

Following the star of his own will, Parke is a sensual young romantic in constant pursuit of passional adventure. Since he regards Philippa's devotion to him as natural and since he has no romantic interest in her, he is first attracted to Philippa's school friend, Theresa Bond, whose open vitality and warm sensuality are likened to that of a "new brand [which] is sometimes wanted to kindle up the embers of a smouldering fire" (74). Though Parke is clearly infatuated with Theresa, who resembles Cassandra of The Morgesons, he is intimidated by her beauty, sexuality, and self-possession. Having grown up with Sarah and Philippa complying with all his needs and desires, Parke does not possess the courage to commit himself to a romantic relationship that is threatening to his masculine sexuality and to his despotic personality. It is evident that Theresa, who is not afraid to confess her attraction and passion for a man, poses a threat to Parke's strong male ego. After all, she not only refuses to be bullied and dominated, but she also chooses not to cultivate patient service to Parke. Although Theresa is sure that Parke is attracted to her, she is uncertain about his sincerity and his constancy. She senses his hesitation and his
reserve towards her and is affected by it:

[T]here was such a mixture of impetuosity and coolness, so much abandon at one moment, so much hard reserve at another, in his manner, towards her—such moods of clinging, appealing tenderness and of trying, imperious demands, that her self-possession was completely overthrown. (106-07)

Recognizing Parke's egocentric compulsion to possess women, Theresa releases herself from him and leaves Crest, never to return. Immediately after her departure, Parke "carries out a purpose, long postponed of breaking a filly in harness" (110). Unable to dominate Theresa, he dominates the filly instead.

Of course, Parke's strained relationship with Theresa plays a dramatic role in Philippa's development. Through the various stages of Theresa's and Parke's unfolding relationship, Philippa feels anger, fear, and panic. Actually, she is shown mazed in her thinking and uneasy or fretful in her behavior. Feeling disadvantaged and excluded, Philippa strives to accommodate herself to Parke and to weave a web that will bind him to her. In her own daring way, she even confronts Theresa, telling her that she herself is the only woman who can care for Parke adequately in the long run. In her loving deference to Parke, Philippa does not reflect the forthrightness and independence of judgment of her intelligence. In her efforts to repress a good part of her sexuality and to cling to Parke, who has no interest in her, she continues to negate or efface her self and to collaborate in her own destruction. Although the perceptive Theresa, who represents Stoddard's debunking view of the cross of femininity, brings forth important revelations to Philippa, pointing out that her lofty purpose will not do Parke any good if he should ever get tired of it, Philippa persists in her feeling for
Parke, aspiring to play the role of a patient, self-abnegating angel: "If our lot is cast with another's, we must bear all the crosses" (133). Stoddard suggests that self-fulfillment and self-realization will begin for Philippa only when she learns to shed the encrustation of stereotypical roles. Indeed, still locked into her own cocoon of stereotypical roles, Philippa still has a long and arduous journey before she achieves her potential and realizes that a woman who lives for the esteem of others gets nothing, while the one who lives so as to merit her own esteem gets everything.

Stoddard renders Philippa a female hero who tries to find her way through a tortuous maze, while her learning and her growth process take place against overwhelming obstacles. The trials of Bildung are essential for Philippa's total growth and her cultivation of the self. While groping for a basic core and stable concept of self, Philippa relinquishes one stage of development to embark upon another. In a fundamental sense, her belated discovery of Parke's passionate involvement with the mulatto Charlotte brings her to a new horizon of her development. Although Philippa experiences frustration, explodes in retaliation and shows her fury to Parke, and even confronts Charlotte and accuses her of overstepping her limits, pointing out that she is nothing more than an "Insensible, heartless, beastly African" (186), she comes to realize that passion is not only difficult or impossible to control, but it cannot be manufactured at will. Her experience with Charlotte brings her into close proximity with a new reality, a reality that is stripped of illusions and self-denying myths. As Philippa progresses, she begins to cast aside her fictitious, composite self and to discover what is true and real for her. She begins to recreate a self and to find an
identity that will enable her to act upon her new life.

Parke's liaison with the mulatto Charlotte constitutes one of the most interesting and sensational vignettes in *Two Men*. In her treatment of this miscegenetic relationship, Stoddard not only foregrounds the racial element, but she also underscores the element of sexuality and passion. Following his loss of Theresa, Parke, the selfish and spoiled aristocrat, is attracted by Charlotte's irresistibly sensuous, physical beauty and feels he must possess it. Charlotte, whose "negro blood" (111), gender, and class determine her place in society, has no social place that would invite public opinion to protect her from Parke's lust and exploitation. Actually, her race and lowly social status place her in a submissive position in relation to Parke. Even Charlotte herself is grateful to Parke when he invites her and her sister Clarice to a cotillion party he has organized. In her gratitude for Parke's attention, Charlotte seems content to let him play the dominant role in the relationship. At one point, she says, "I act according to his wishes. He governs me" (186). And governs he does, till he learns that she is pregnant with his child. Although Parke considers the prospect of marrying Charlotte, for as he tells his flabbergasted mother, "What [Charlotte] is, mother, I have made her; and as her cup of disgrace is full, so is mine, and I shall drink it" (190), he comes to desert her when his mother falls fatally ill as a result of his scandalous relationship. Deserted and pregnant, Charlotte, who embodies double vulnerability through race and gender, falls ill and dies while giving birth to her illegitimate, stillborn child. When she dies, Parke announces that he will see to her burial, but that her sister and her mother "would be buried for good with him... on
the day of the funeral" (215). With Charlotte dead, all Parke's feelings for her die: 
"As dead as this prostrate, powerless creature, were the feelings which she had created in his heart" (213).

Stoddard's inclusion of a miscegenation episode in *Two Men* is little short of revolutionary. Although Stoddard was not the first writer to deal with miscegenation in fiction, the delicate subject of interracial love was still considered taboo in 1865. Perhaps, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Herman Melville's *Typee* are among the most well-known narratives fictional accounts involving miscegenation in the nineteenth century. Stoddard's modest contribution to the literary treatment of miscegenation shows again the persistently destructive and dehumanizing legacy of slavery. Matlack even credits Stoddard with having "created Negro characters free of the usual stereotypes" and with having "presented an episode of miscegenation in a straightforward, unbiased fashion for perhaps the first time in American literature" ("Literary Career" 381). Indeed, Charlotte Lang, like many of William Faulkner's negroes in Yoknapatawpha, arrests the motion of the reader with her intensity of emotion and her capacity for love and humanity. Charlotte has always had for Parke "the breath of love; not a false, selfish, cruel love, but the love for life, till death; sweet, kind, tender love; forgetting all, meaning all—but distrust, disgust, satiety" (164).

Given Stoddard's philosophy and vision that life always carries the possibility of change and even fulfillment, it is not surprising to see that the last unfolding events of *Two Men* come to promote and further the development and growth of Philippa and
to affirm her capacity for survival, her strength, and her enduring power. In the last stages of her development, Philippa comes to extricate herself from the self-abnegating female role she has ensnared herself in, to safeguard her individuality, to drift into life, and to grow into full humanity. In one of the more remarkable scenes, among many, Philippa experiences a new awareness. While Sarah is dying and while Philippa and Parke are contemplating life and its intricate patterns, Philippa's consciousness of the darker side of human nature begins to stir within her. She comes to realize that the appalling thing that lies "behind the screen of every-day life, countenance, custom, clothes" is, in essence, "us" (200). Her revelation about the architecture of life and the human soul, which makes her life seem older and richer, represents her expansion as an individual and her transcendence of life's social and religious givens. Significantly, Philippa not only probes deeply into the impenetrable veil of life, but she also begins to look with her own eyes; to see and apprehend the deeper currents of life. She awakens and gains insight into the world and herself.

Not surprisingly, as Philippa flourishes, she comes to see herself capable of autonomy and integrity. After Sarah's death, she assumes responsibility for the Parke house, experiences a release from her idolatrous love of Parke, and finds true personal freedom. When her father, who returns to Crest after ten years' absence, invites her to accompany him to South America, she refuses. Her freedom to choose her own path is the acceptance of mature responsibility. Besides, Philippa now realizes and understands her deep attachment to her home in Crest. As she tells her guardian Jason:
I don't know how much my soul could gather round anything foreign to Crest. When I say Crest, I mean our own surroundings, you know; lately my vision narrows to these walls, our acres, each rock and tree, the sea before the house, the sky over it. Nothing else can contain me.

Later in the novel, when Parke tells Philippa that he intends to go with her father to South America, she grieves, but no longer feels compelled to play providence to him. Following Parke's departure, she realizes, though, in a fleeting moment of insight, that even if she were with Parke in South America, he would not be the Parke she had envisioned as her husband. As she muses:

If, at this moment, she was with Parke, she felt there would be a sediment in her satisfaction, because her plans would be thwarted. Away from Crest, he could not be to her what she had believed he would be.

From that point on, Philippa's metamorphosis takes the form of a new interest in other people, and especially in Jason. She begins to listen to, to hear, Jason's throbbing emotions of love and desire. Jason, who is the most amiable man in the novel, comes to fall in love with his ward Philippa, but he quells the tempo and energy of his love for many years and "suffers nobly" (131). Actually, Jason has always had a special kind of love for Philippa. When Philippa is deposited in Crest, almost alone he treats her with affection and loving care and, upon sensing her uneasiness and pain, reassures her that he "came here to stay once too" (28). Also, as her guardian, he does not exercise his absolute power over her. Instead, he tends to her affairs and manages her money very well, bringing about a steady flow of profit. Although Jason remains true to his principals throughout his careful, yet loving relationship with Philippa, Philippa apparently grows to be the object of his "host of
roaring, crawling, cruel emotions, that rent him asunder" (132). Trapped in a loveless marriage with the sexually repressed Sarah and denied love and affection, Jason finds himself drawn to the nineteen-year-old Philippa, who awakens his dormant erotic feelings and revitalizes his instincts. Jason, caged eagle that he seems, is able to act out his passionate drive towards freedom to express his budding love for Philippa only after his wife's death and his son's departure to South America. He professes his love for Philippa and proposes marriage, but she refuses "to marry a man much older than herself, with whom she has lived as a relative" (274).

Philippa could not, in a sense, see Jason as a man in and of himself because of the social disguises—guardian/ward—blinding her, but after those disguises are slowly shed, she begins to see him even beyond the medium of the flesh. The beginning of her transformation, therefore, is her first moment of wondering about Jason's inner life. For the first time, she wonders about the inner workings of Jason:

He did not walk beside her, as she had expected, but remained by the brook, gazing into its little brown pools, and peeling a willow wand. When she reached the wall she stopped and looked back, as she had done once before when he seemed to forget her! How tall he looked against the background of the sky! She wondered if that was the way he passed so much of his time when in the woods. Perhaps he was poetical; that might be his musing secret, and he had never found anybody to share it with. He was a strange man. Living to live apart from human sympathy so many years, why had he at last loved and sought her? Tears surprised her—an involuntary tribute paid to the honor and generosity of his nature, which she could not suppress. (277-78)

Philippa notices Jason as though she had never seen him before. She is suddenly overwhelmed by the revelation of his abiding and redemptive love for her. Her tears, evidence of burgeoning feelings, show that her musing about Jason has released a
long-dormant ability to commune not only with the noble Jason but also with herself. It becomes evident that Philippa welds a wholeness she has lacked thus far.

Philippa's transformation is cemented when she nurses Jason through a long and life-threatening fever after his tragic hunting accident. As Philippa nurses Jason back to health, she not only becomes aware of the love she bears for him, but she also learns the importance of compassion, which adds glory and glamor to her life. In fact, Philippa begins to feel alive for the first time in her life, and her emotional and imaginative energies blossom:

As his illness continued, her feelings changed; their laws warred with the law of her will. Their development was sanctioned by his inability to triumph over them, either from abstraction, blindness, or inclination. In spite of her being shut in that darkened room so many hours, her eyes grew bright, and the fine gold of her hair seemed to gain luster. (288)

Through her careful nurturing of Jason, Philippa perpetually reconstructs herself and emerges changed, revitalized, and humanized. She achieves a change of consciousness and a redefinition of values. In a profound sense, when Jason decides to travel West after his recovery, Philippa, who now loves Jason but does not know whether he will return, is even shown determined "to live as if all she was ever to possess could be contained in the limits of each day. Too much time had been wasted in expectation and preparation for events which had never taken place . . ." (297). As a psychologically and financially independent woman, she is also ready to accept the life of spinsterhood. She, in fact, thinks of spinsters who own property as "cheerful, hard-headed women, with few amusements and a good deal of business" (297). Clearly, Philippa turns to herself for personal solace and livelihood. Out of the ashes of the
traditional woman emerges the new woman who is, in effect, woman as a fully realized human being.

Living independently and fully, Philippa survives without compromising herself and finds her powers expanded and her capacities extended. She effectively fulfills herself and declares her independence. Having achieved her womanhood, Philippa is ready to accept Jason when he returns and renews his love for her. Stoddard, who endorses Philippa's and Jason's union because it is based on love and respect, not on Philippa's need for a man, depicts their potentially happy union in a beautifully compelling metaphor. She writes:

[Jason's] arm was still in a sling. Before he comprehended what she was doing, she took the sling from his neck, put it round her own, and slipped his arm through it again.
"My burden," she said, "that I love."
He enclosed her with his other arm.
"Jason, my protection, that I love better."
"My wife," he answered. (300)

Philippa unites herself with Jason and draws her power from equity and love. Her marriage is not a marriage of entrapment; it is not characterised by blighted hopes, stunted lives, and a misery that is often unremitting. Unmistakably, Philippa prevails and forges a lasting, worthwhile union that is established by love and mutual commitment.

In Two Men, Stoddard creates a nontraditional story of a woman's life and a text in which a woman is not an invisible outsider but the informing presence. Philippa, who is the center of interest in the novel, is shown successfully developing, learning, and growing in the small world of Crest. Through her stages of Bildung, she
not only faces the trials of her life with courage and endurance and struggles against
the particular and unique mistreatment meted out by despotic authority figures, but she
also manages to construct or fashion her own self and to create a new identity, a new
vision of the self. As the narrative unfolds, Philippa acquires a philosophy of life and
grounds herself in a new understanding of her being and of her position in the world.
Despite the incredible odds against her, she surfaces from her submerged existence and
gains the power to grow and to speak, and with it the power to endure. She takes
charge of herself and no longer defines herself in terms of self-sacrifice and self-
abnegation. She dissociates herself from her dutiful love for Parke and discovers that
in this mad, incoherent world of disintegrating and broken families, only the woman
who can cling to her selfhood will survive. Philippa finally grows up and achieves
mature love. She finds solace, companionship, and happiness in her union with Jason.
Indeed, she gets a man whose commitment to equal rights and whose respect for the
independence of others make him the perfect partner in an egalitarian marriage.
Philippa accomplishes what numerous others aspire to without a fairy godmother or a
pumpkin coach. She emerges as consciously female and as a beacon of hope in the
darkness of nineteenth-century feminine life.
Notes

1Two Men was re-edited in 1888-89 and then issued with a preface by Edmund Clarence Stedman. It was also reprinted in 1901. All subsequent citations refer to Elizabeth Stoddard, Two Men (Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates and Co., 1901).

2In Two Men, the ideal is not a pertinent force. As one of the novel's two epigraphs (from Emerson) says: "Let us treat the men and women well: treat them as if they were real: perhaps they are."

3Noteworthy is the unpublishable condemnatory review of Two Men by Henry James. James's review, which has survived in a manuscript that has a number of deletions and substitutions, forms a striking contrast to Howells's complimentary review of Two Men. James found Two Men intolerable. In a long paragraph that failed to see print, he evinced blind rage at this novel and assailed it for the "violence" of its style, its disorderliness, and its absence of facts. At one time in the review, he wrote:

\[Two Men\] was a long tedious record of incoherent dialogue between persons irresponsible in their sayings and doings even to the verge of insanity. Of narrative, of exposition, of statement, there was not a page in the book. . . . For the most part, the story was made up of disjointed, pointless repartee between individuals concerning whom the author had not vouchsafed us the smallest authentic information. (270)

Although James is entitled to his own views, one cannot help but recognize the contradictions in his discussion of Two Men. For instance, no one can reconcile James's view that the novel is unnatural with his claim that there is too much "natural" dialogue. Still more, the review, for the most part, distorts the specifics of the novel. Anyone could see by simply glancing at Two Men that James's observations of the novel are far from the mark. Evidently, Charles Eliot Norton refused to publish James's review of Two Men in the North American Review because he saw its irrationality and its unjustifiable severity and hostility. For a full citation and discussion of James's review, see James Kraft, "An Unpublished Review by Henry James," Studies in Bibliography, 20 (1967): 267-73.


6See Rev. of Two Men, by Elizabeth Stoddard, The Round Table 11 Nov. 1865: 148.

7Stoddard deals with Parke's and Charlotte's passionate affair indirectly and
obliquely, through suggestive metaphors and rich images. Parke's piano playing after one of his encounters with Charlotte captures the sensuality of their relationship:

[Parke] played, at first, a loud, triumphant march, full of reiterated notes, and then a waltz, which opened with a silvery trickle, deepened into a wild, rushing flow—a chaos of tumultuous, broken, whirling foam, and ended in a vague, solemn, unvarying swell. (157)

Also, Charlotte's dreams capture the intimate relationship she and Parke had shared:

Half stifled in her exquisite hair, what dreams came to her? She heard again the baying of dogs along the woody road, the rustling of footsteps among the leaves, the murmur of a sweet, muffled voice. The gray dusk crept round her, and the silver mist, and the breath of love. . . (163-64).

8Stoddard also wrote one interesting short story around the theme of miscegenation. Her "Eros and Anteros" in the New York Leader revolves around an illicit affair between the protagonist King and the Cuban quadroon, Garcia. King, who is the embodiment of selfishness and possessiveness, is attracted to Garcia on purely physical grounds. For him, Garcia is "represented by an animal—a leopard, say; a creature of pure instincts, and no answerable for what she is, and what she does, than an animal is" (3). Once again, just as in Two Men, Stoddard links sexual domination to racial identity. For the script of the story, see Elizabeth Stoddard, "Eros and Anteros," New York Leader 22 Feb. 1862: 2-3.

9Matlack briefly surveys a collection of nineteenth-century works that include episodes of miscegenation. For an overview of this survey, see Matlack, "Literary Career," 383-93.
TEMPLE HOUSE: FORGING A SENSE OF SELF

Women are continually taking larger place in the action of the story. . . . They are no longer content simply to be: They do.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics*

Elizabeth Stoddard's third and last novel, *Temple House*, begun in 1866 and finished in 1867, can be said to be the culmination of her novelistic career. In this novel, Stoddard expresses female ambition and growth and knits up the story strands of three poignant and self-possessed women, Roxalana Gates, Temple (Tempe) Gates, and Virginia Brande, who not only possess strikingly different personalities but who are also motivated by widely disparate desires and needs. As in *The Morgesons* and in *Two Men*, Stoddard continues to bring a distinctive female experience to her fiction, to demonstrate her vision of female possibility and significance, to show women developing successfully in the world at large, and to affirm the power of female development and fulfillment. Characteristically, her descent into the dark landscapes of the soul and her depiction of the outer and inner life of her multifaceted female characters, evident in the two previous novels, are substantially emphasized in *Temple House*. Here, by balancing fictional showing with authorial telling and by tempering subjectivity with objectivity, acting with observation, Stoddard comes to portray the human complexity of her female characters, to project their inner sense of
self, and to depict with exactitude and precision their Bildung and developmental growth. The inner directedness of the female characters and their diverse experiences and explorations mark their quest for self-realization and bring them to a sense of integrated selfhood, of maturity and harmony.

Unlike The Morsesons and Two Men, Temple House neither captured much critical attention nor drew much public appeal at its time of publication. In fact, the critical responses and the public reception accorded Temple House were extremely scanty and less than enthusiastic. In 1868, the New York Tribune, in the person of George Ripley, was one of only two journals to devote full attention to Temple House. In his largely favorable review, Ripley, once more as in his early reviews of Stoddard's two previous novels, highlighted her remarkable originality and her individuality. He said of Stoddard that she "accepts no authority, treads in the footsteps of no other, follows only her own nature, and is always herself" (6). It is clear, Ripley went on to observe, that Stoddard writes with a "brave sincerity" that commands respect and an "intense realism" that animates her fiction with magical vigor and vividness (6). Although Ripley found the plot of Temple House too simple or sparse in incident to create curiosity or arouse suspense and although he faulted the ending of the novel for its abruptness and inconclusiveness, he, without any reservations, praised Stoddard for the "mental integrity with which she sticks to her text" (6). Towards the conclusion of his review, Ripley wrote:

But allowing Mrs. Stoddard the free use of her materials, and accepting the coarseness, wrongheadedness, and almost brutality, which she takes a fantastic pleasure in portraying, she is to be commended for the mental integrity with which she sticks to her text. She never seeks to
disguise the human animals that form her menagerie. No flimsy veneering is made to cover up their disgusting features. Her characters are plain, outspoken people, . . . never swerving a hair's breadth from their path through any scruples of taste, morals, or social conventionality. (6)

Certainly, Stoddard gives us characters as they really are, as the whole world is for that matter, with a mixture of good and evil, hopes and fears, selfishness and generosity. In particular, her female characters are alive, self-sustained, self-determining, and practical, accepting the throbbing passion of the heart as a significant part of their lives. Unquestionably, these characters do have the strength to survive the violence of maturation, to struggle for selfhood, to make significant choices, and to define themselves individually. In them, we recognize the true features of woman as free as she should be, as she may be even now.

Temple House deserves special recognition as probably the one and only novel by Stoddard to house and present a gallery of lively and strong women who become not only the center of interest in the novel but also the nexus of the novel's released life-forces and dynamic energy. In this novel, Stoddard creates three unusual women who are not only individually different but who also possess a full range of human potential: Roxalana Gates, an independent woman of mythic proportions in her own right, is the life-giving force, magna mater, shaman of the novel, upon whom all the other characters come to depend; Tempe Gates, the daughter of Roxalana who provides the young voice of the novel and represents the daring face of the liberated woman, a free young woman who does just what she wants; and Virginia Brande, the passionate young woman who manages to endure the loneliness and the emptiness of
her family's decentered world and to define her own course of life insofar as possible. Temple House embodies all three of these women and traces their development as they progress towards serenity, fulfillment, and freedom. Women, the novel suggests, can gradually assert their presence, claim their individuality, and achieve development and fulfillment. Their capacity for survival and their power reside in their freedom of mind, in their undying energy, and in their retaliatory powers that enable them to restore themselves and to exist as self-realized women. Indeed, Stoddard's portraits of Roxalana, Tempe, and Virginia are indicative of the compelling force of the female power and its potential to find a voice of its own.

In Temple House, Roxalana is shown as a plain, self-possessed woman who is richly private in her own individuality. She is a depiction of the eternal feminine as earthy, maternal, domestic, natural, sensual, brilliant, loving, and demanding. Throughout the novel, she displays touches of the martyr, angel, saint, matron, independent, and even wilful woman. Abandoned by her selfish, dissolute husband George Gates, who does not hesitate to leave her and their daughter Tempe, Roxalana does not court insanity or dwell on the memory of her brief, ill-fated marriage. Instead, she faces the loss and rejection she has suffered from her husband with patient fortitude and courage, discovers an inner-dwelling life force with which to survive her turmoil, and decides to stay with her brother-in-law, Captain Argus Gates, who has put the sea behind him and now lives all alone in his ancient, ancestral mansion, Temple House, "the broken and depreciated estate of the last member of a 'first family'" (8).

Once Roxalana settles into Temple House, she "[grows] to the place as moss
grows to the stone. Its space and substantiality suited her silence-loving soul" (23).

She, in fact, comes to signify and represent both the tangible presence and the intangible essence of the house. To be sure, as time wears on, Roxalana proves a strong-willed personality who soon dominates Temple House and imposes with all her strength a pattern of the world she wants. We are told that she immediately begins to feel comfortable with the freedom of her own life, to run the household with austerity and economic planning, to fulfil her motherly obligations, and to create a beneficent aura that envelops Temple House and renders it warm and golden. Also, she fuses with Argus's life and shares with him a quiet, non-sexual life of richly intuitional harmony from which even Tempe derives nourishment. Nurturing and nursing, mending and creating, Roxalana not only creates a family harmony based on love, equality, and respect, but she also wins for herself a room of her own, indeed, a house of her own.

In Temple House, Roxalana forges a thoughtful and meaningful life for herself and grows to be the healer, the builder, and the vital strength. Although her relationship with Argus is devoid of passion, it is fulfilling and enriching to both. Over the years, these two characters develop an effective mode of living and form a meaningful and harmonious existence. Argus himself takes a liking to Roxalana, whose spiritual fertility, solidity, stability, and common sense he profoundly respects and values. From time to time, he comes to depend on Roxalana's sustaining presence in the house, for she "herself, always sedate, always at ease, keeping good faith with the veritable, silent regarding the unsubstantial and visionary, came singularly up to
his requirements" (24). At one point, he even tells Roxalana, "To your life and character I owe an ease which mother, sister, wife could not give me" (190).

The devotion between Roxalana and Argus is so deep as to be unspeakable. Although not much transpires between them, they do have a very fine instinctive understanding of each other. In fact, their words or brief conversations are meaningful acts that serve as catalysts for their realization of how important they are to each other. At one time, Stoddard observes after their brief conversation:

The inspiration of words comes oddly and unexpectedly, especially with those who do not study their feelings. It has little to do with chance, and the environment of circumstance is nothing to it. Words so spoken may reveal, decide, and make important that which has hitherto been unknown; sentiment may be originated and relations established by the speakers who remain ignorant till utterance has passed their lips. Little George asleep, the accidental appearance of Roxalana in the spot where Argus happened to be, the few words that passed between them, brought about the opinion with Argus that no temptation could ever separate him from Roxalana, and fixed one with her that life without Argus would be worse to endure than the pangs of hated death. (179-80)

A regenerating, bold and freethinking spirit, Roxalana becomes not only the "central brooding heart" (119) and the voice of Temple House but also its well-grounded "anchor" (249) and its pillar of support. Having grown very deep roots at Temple House, Roxalana, however, does not remain within the family fold and the confines of the house. In fact, she slowly starts to connect with the people of Kent and to earn their love and respect. She comes to bond with her daughter's friend, Virginia Brande, who quickly grows fond of Roxalana and finds in her the loving mother and the mentor she has never had, and to foresee correctly her eventual union with Argus: "I love them as one," she muses as she espies them one day talking.
together long before they acknowledge their feelings for each other (139-40). Later, Roxalana even draws the tormented Virginia out of her stiff formality and her family's clutches, appeals to her emotional state, and tells her that love has nothing to do with principle or reason. As Roxalana tells Virginia:

> If love was not a separate power, impregnable to conscience, human nature would be a feebly sustained thing. It should exist for itself, and by itself, and then, through it, we poor creatures may be exalted in spite of vice and crime. (221-22)

It is through her encounter with Roxalana that Virginia learns that principle or reason in the abstract does not always coincide with the deepest principles and laws of her own being. Virginia, of course, comes to know her own heart, achieves freedom to break from her fetters and her slavish position in her father's house, and is fired to acknowledge her love for Argus.

Given Roxalana's fortitude and self-possession, her benevolence and generosity of spirit, and her rich inwardness and latent power, it is no wonder that she is looked upon not only as "a great soul, living largely in little things" (231) but also as the "soul of hospitality" (228). When Sebastian Ford, a young Spaniard saved by Argus and his faithful mate Mat as the sole survivor of a ship wrecked near Kent by the violence of a tremendous sea-storm, is invited to take up residence at Temple House, Roxalana accepts him with an open heart, considers him an integral part of the Gates' household, and cements her bond of friendship with him. Even more significantly, she nurses Sebastian through his illness, brings him back into the currents of life after his close brush with death, and instills in his wounded soul a hope for a better tomorrow. Needless to say, Sebastian, just like Argus, thrives on the golden aura created by
Roxalana and nourishes upon her redemptive powers and her poignant existence as a full-fledged woman. He himself acknowledges her powers of sustenance and her deep insight. At one time in the narrative, he tells Roxalana, "it was your calm, cheerful philosophy . . . that gave the bloom to my life again, which more than the waves of Kent bay washed off" (250). Through her mode of sustaining and reanimating Sebastian, Roxalana comes to enliven Temple House and to create a life endowed with harmony and peacefulness. As the narrator tells the reader:

No episodes marked the long days of the following summer at Temple House. The inner self of its inmates was wrapped in the necessary and wholesome security which comes from the reciprocal surrender and interchange of the habits of our outward life. (122)

Although the keynote of Roxalana's character is the vital impulse to protect, to lift up, build, and restore, Roxalana comes to experience a crisis in her life and to enter a "mental eclipse" (244) following the untimely death of her grandson Georgey. When little Georgey dies after his second birthday, Roxalana, who has lovingly devoted her life to the upbringing and well-being of this child, sees life crumble over her and feels buried beneath an emptiness, an abysmal void. She feels nothing; she expects nothing; she desires nothing; and this insensibility, which is worse than pain, attacks her body as well as her heart and mind. While Roxalana lives in this state of emotional detachment, denial, and numbness, it is disturbingly clear that the basic law of life seems suddenly crippled and the continuance of the hope of Temple House threatened. Indeed, in Roxalana's paralysis of spirit, Temple House falls into a ruinous state, and Argus, Sebastian, and Tempe are shown not only walled in but also having a thirst for spiritual guidance. Significantly, Argus feels deprived of "the prop of his
obvious life" (260), and Sebastian is left shivering with dread about the spiritual
growth of his life. Even Tempe, who is, as her mother proclaims honestly and
uprightly, "deficient in what is called natural affection" (166), takes the brunt of her
mother’s emotional breakdown and begins to yearn for her loving and soothing
presence. For a little while, the shadow of Temple House seems to weigh heavily on
everyone in the house and even to darken the pages of Temple House.

An enigmatically and overwhelmingly powerful woman, Roxalana is, of course,
able to recover her optimism and her vibrant vitality and strength. To be sure, she has
the will power and the brute strength to spring forth from all encumbrances, to veer
from despair to elevated joyousness, and to become more herself. In a remarkable
scene, Roxalana experiences a surge of renewal and recovers her old known life
through self-reflection. One day, when she is looking out of the window upon Argus,
Sebastian, and Tempe, the three together in a strange tableau of loneliness on the lawn
of Temple House, she begins to awaken to herself and to her unique position in the
microcosmic world of Temple House and to recognize her relations as an individual to
the world within and about her. She suddenly perceives a change, an opening up to
simple joys; she realizes the cost of her retreat into the self. For the first time in the
novel, Roxalana feels not only a rush of tears singeing her eyes but also the gush of
energy of being part and parcel of a vital life force. Feeling a rush of new life, she
keeps her eyes "wide open upon the scene before the window,—half thinking out her
struggle, half allowing it to work out by its own law. . . . Which should she choose?
Take up life, and live resolutely, with freedom? Or should she fear and despise it,
keeping her heart at the gates of loss and annihilation?" (254). Stirred by her newly-emerging need to shed her feelings of nothingness, Roxalana naturally musters her courage and chooses to come out of her eclipse and to create her life anew. She chooses life over death, growth over stagnation, and she brings, as a matter of course, some happiness and radiance back to Temple House. The transforming effects of Roxalana's conversion usher into the small world of Temple House an invigorating sense of relief and liberation. The dark shadow of Temple House is finally exorcised, and a swell of passional energy engulfs all the inhabitants of the house.

If Roxalana is a representative of the Great Mother, an unending repository of values and love and a reservoir of energy striving to realize itself, her daughter Tempe is an audacious embodiment of the worldly and materialistic woman who has the power and the vitality to defy conventional morality, to renounce the dead forms of traditional social values, and to follow the natural laws of her own instinctive nature. Tempe is really quite attractive in her exuberant assertiveness, in her exploration and exploitation of the world, in her curiously honest expression of her needs, and in her sense of the significance and drama of her life. From her first appearance, she is described as a wild little child or imp, fiery, vivacious, capricious, and unintentionally cruel. Perhaps marked by her father's own defiant spirit, she sullenly refuses to do anything except what she pleases and always follows through with her plans even when she knows from the beginning that nothing will come of them.

Living the life of a "tomboy" (37), or better still a tomgirl, Tempe likes to do daring things and is not afraid of anything. She constantly slips out of the gate of
Temple House, burrows her way through the neighborhood, violates the bounds of decorum, and undertakes brutish adventures. When she verges on adolescence, she gains in rebellious energy and seems to be more peevish and tyrannical. At fifteen, she becomes increasingly unmindful of her mother's discipline and begins to complain about her lack of money and about her "petticoats of duck, made from the fragments of worn sails" (23). Rather than accepting her "shabby, mean life" (38) that is as drab and gray as the rustic garb she wears, Tempe is determined to find a way of perpetuating independence and of extricating herself from her impoverished existence. Her desire is to detach herself from the stifling environment and to establish a life of luxury, the same kind of fashionable life that her friend Virginia lives.

Unable to accommodate herself to the dreariness of her life at Temple House, Tempe desires a life abounding in riches even in the face of limited choices and her own circumscribed life. Stoddard makes it clear that the narcissistic and worldly-minded Tempe, unlike her mother who is a bottomless source of sensate and emotional warmth, is passionately in love with material wealth, sensuous experiences, and mundane pleasures and is ready to forge ahead and enjoy the wide world, by any manner of means, if need be. Frustrated with her life and her physical meagerness to the point of indignant rage and vampiric in her greed for power and money, Tempe does not hesitate to make the decision to marry John Drake, the scion of a nouveau riche manufacturing family, who is infatuated with her, although she feels nothing for him and although public opinion deems her too young to marry. The mercenary Tempe does not delay going into a wealthy, lucrative marriage because she sees in this
good match an opportunity to enjoy the material comforts or financial stability she has not had while growing up at Temple House. For Tempe, getting married to one of the most affluent men in Kent is not only an excellent bargain, but it is also a legitimate way to acquire wealth and ease quickly and without any hassle. Tempe even amuses us by directly acknowledging the power of social position and wealth to influence a match. With characteristic bluntness, she tells her mother, "I hate [John]; he makes me sick; but I like his presents, and will take all he chooses to give" (49). The reality and the power of status and wealth, the novel implies, can significantly overshadow the power of emotion and love. A marriage in which money is the only factor may not be a blessing, but it is by no means a curse. If a man can marry for that dazzling but evanescent gift, a beautiful face and form, a woman can also choose to marry for position and money.

Once Tempe marries John, all the things she has ever wanted to do and buy become possible. All her demands are granted and all her economic needs are met. Most importantly, however, her identity and her powers of self-determination are not taken away from her. Tempe may be financially dependent on her husband, but she manages to remain emotionally and psychologically independent. Even her husband John realizes that "in that misty pleasure-garden, which one can enter but once to search for the enchanted fruit, he was alone" (51). And, indeed, John was alone, for Tempe does not stand beside him as the comrade of his soul. Tempe cannot define herself in relation to John and his family, for she knows nothing about them and exhibits little desire to learn anything. Never docile, never submissive, she also does
not allow herself to become whatever character John and his family have created or structured for her. Self-defined, Tempe, in fact, retains her identity, her sense of self, and her unity of character. Even more strongly, she retains her maiden name and asserts that she would never live with her in-laws, who are angry and haughty about their son's marrying below his class. With a mind of her own, Tempe is able to achieve what she wants and to get her money figuratively in the form of a husband. She is true to her own self, enjoys life in her own way, and has her desires gratified. Tempe arrives at a new social status and feels herself a new person.

Tragically, however, Tempe's sojourn in the earthly paradise of her marriage lasts only a few weeks. Tempe is widowed on her wedding journey, but not before she has become pregnant. Not surprisingly, when Tempe learns of her husband's fatal injury in a train crash, she comes to experience helplessness more because of her circumstances than because of grief. Later, at John's funeral, she does not exhibit any trace of inward emotion or shed any tears, an indication of how little John and her marriage mean to her. But that is not all. Back in Temple House, Tempe is as petulant and wilful as ever. Although she is poor once again, for John did not leave a will, and although she chafes at her in-laws who speak to her and of her "as a pronoun" (72), she returns to life like the phoenix reborn out of the ashes of immolation. Since the impulse to celebrate her existence still runs through her and illuminates her presence, Tempe embarks on a more active life and will not girdle her own energies. What is most striking, however, is that she refuses to accept the responsibility of child rearing and abandons her son Georgey to her mother's care.
Tempe's action ought not strike us as unnatural, though we know it to be wrong. Not content with stereotypical roles, Tempe, like Edna Pontellier, sees no privilege in playing the role of the mother-woman, and she, therefore, refuses to do what she cannot bring herself to do. It is not until the climactic moment of her son's premature death that Tempe softens a little and achieves knowledge of her heart and knowledge of love. Her capacity for strong affection is also awakened by sympathy for her mother, who finds it extremely hard to cushion the tragic blow of her grandson's death. Only at this level does Tempe begin to feel the stirring of human affiliation. From that time on, Tempe becomes more sensitive to others and more interested in pleasing them.

Although Tempe somewhat softens and begins to treat others with generosity, she does not become a willing doormat for all and sundry, a self-effacing, spineless convenience who does not have enough courage to live her own life fully. In fact, Tempe continues to assert her control over her life and choices, and, in her attempt at individual self-fulfillment, she begins to indulge herself in female pursuits. Stoddard tells us that Tempe now almost eighteen not only begins to flirt with the wealthy and handsome Sebastian, who feels himself drawn to her natural dispositions and wild impulses, but that she also vows, to her uncle's alarm, that Sebastian "shall love me" (258). In the interim, however, Tempe has not done with the world. She decisively fulfills her potentiality to answer to the world with whole-hearted, self-venturing vigor. She, we notice, soon goes on to cast coquettish glances at Virginia's father, Cyrus Brande, who is extremely successful in Kent, as a financial genius, and who is willing
to indulge Tempe "as no wife had ever been indulged" (327). Brande's attraction to Tempe, who is younger than his own daughter Virginia, seems to be based on her freedom from any conventional constrictions; as he tells her, "I knew you would say all those petulant things, but I like them" (327-28). As it is, Tempe is, as one of the neighbors notes, "smooth as pie-crust, sluggish as an eel in the mud, but sensible as death--she knows what she is about" (218). Indeed, Tempe "knows what she is about," even though Stoddard ends the novel without resolving the question of Tempe's future mate. Obviously, what seems most important to Stoddard is not Tempe's mate in his flesh and blood but Tempe's mind that has range and stretch, an unconstricted consciousness that can make choices.

*Temple House* develops yet another singular and powerful woman character. Virginia Brande is a vigorous female hero who is intelligent, open, and daring. Older and wiser than Tempe, she is from first to last an immensely likeable woman who is identified with candor, strength, and overt passion. Despite her complete dedication to her dictatorial and hypocritical father, Cyrus Brande, she is neither overshadowed nor borne down by him. She does her daughterly duty, but not with the passivity of a self-effacing sentimental female hero. Like Clarissa Harlowe before her, Virginia has a heroic will, a transcendent self, and enough courage to help her maintain her power of the self, weather all sorts of trials, and make her own place in society. She is a new womanly woman who has the intelligence, courage, patience, energy, and dedication to transcend her daily, limited life, to struggle for her self-preservation, and to exercise her right to choose the man whom she really admires and loves. As
Virginia grows and develops and as she seeks her own individuality, she liberates herself from the inhibiting hold of her vicious family, breaks the wheel of repetition she finds in her own life pattern, sorts out her manifold feelings, and establishes a continuity of life with her dream love, Argus Gates. With her newfound confidence and optimism, Virginia asserts her individuality and freedom and forges a happy union in the midst of a society that is engulfed in the rawest of the era's stereotypes and prejudices.

Living with her ever-quarrelsome parents, a hypocritical father and a violently insane mother, and growing up in their ever-vigilant presence, Virginia, a woman glowing and budding with youth and beauty, meets oppression, suffocation, madness, and coldness and receives a ready-made text, a definition of a role that she is expected to conform to. Like a "caged bird" (148), she comes to feel trapped by her rigid, officious, and exploiting parents and by her father's ruthless demand that she care day and night for her deranged mother. Sure enough, the tie between Virginia and her parents is especially taut. Austere, pious, and authoritarian, Cyrus Brande is revealed as a man of "Janus faces, an able, proud, acute, resolute, miserable man" who serves a creed "powerful enough to shape his actions, but not mighty enough to control a single sensation" (134). Strong in his hypocrisy and the artificiality of his mask that "faced the world" (33), Mr. Brande regulates his life and his household with strict rules of domestic organization and morality. A towering bully, he demands absolute allegiance and obedience from his daughter and heaps upon his wife, Rhoda, a heap of religious and social duties that ultimately drive her to hypochondria and madness. Of course,
the years of submission to her husband's tyranny take their toll on Rhoda, who becomes "indolent, whining, uneasy, and endeavored by drugs and stimulants to deaden herself against the torments of her position" (34). However, here, one might note, that Rhoda, though a victim, is not a saint herself. Although she resents her husband's tyranny, she does not hesitate to tyrannize her neighbors and to hold them in contempt. Also, she abuses her authority over her only daughter and, once, with bad intent, sews the dress of Virginia to the floor when Virginia collapses on the floor from exhaustion. Certainly, the physical and emotional life Virginia has experienced under stifling constraints is not difficult to infer.

Of course, the oppressive tension in the Brande family, vividly pictured, assaults the very core of Virginia's being, but it does not destroy it. With all her privations and fetters, Virginia's steely center does not collapse. Brought up under her father's iron domination and heavily encumbered by her bedridden mother, Virginia comes to demonstrate the traditionally female selflessness, but without the crippling dependencies, self-suppression, and self-abnegation that usually accompany it. Although she is tied up by her relation to her parents and is doubly imprisoned, her response to her father's constant, all-encompassing, and all-consuming demands avoids martyrdom, one of the traps that Stoddard most despised. The narrator says of Virginia:

There was nothing sweet, sensuous, lovely, about her; nothing pure, peaceful, holy, in her atmosphere. Duty with her was a constitutional idea, to be performed because placed in her hands; and once there, she was incited to its most honest and able performance. The subjugating contest which most women undergo when they perceive the necessity of martyrdom,—that crucifixion of personality, that mysterious hypocrisy
which dictates the habit of self-denial,—was not possible to her; the powers of happiness and pleasure were in readiness for their natural spring when the compression forced upon should be removed. (127)

Virginia bears the responsibility of providing for her mother, but finds nothing glorifying or pleasing in her dutiful but tormented service to her mentally ill mother. Frustrated and angry, she even begins to regard her mother as the real enemy and oppressor and to kill that part of herself that acquiesces to her mother. Youthfully optimistic, Virginia does not despair, but opts to shatter the long-standing habits of servitude and to pursue a new life. Gropingly, she is shown moving outward towards a purposeful construction of her life and is seen detaching herself from the oppressive milieu around her, a family that is vain, false, and contemptible. Out of the smithy of her own experiences, Virginia is able to forge an identity based on love, an identity that will further her path towards self-realization.

The quality that distinguishes Virginia from the self-effacing sentimental female heroes Stoddard scoffed at is her ability to draw the line and even to confront the world with the Promethean way of fiery rebellion. We cannot think of Virginia as we do some nineteenth-century female heroes, whose pain and self-abnegation become the all-absorbing experiences of their lives. After all, Virginia is never depicted as passive or timorous. Besides, she has enough strength, honesty, and self-knowledge to prevent her destruction or annihilation at her parent's hands. Despite her duty to her father, she tries to maintain her self-command. She sometimes even stands up to her father and to his tyrannical impositions of debilitating roles and unreasonable expectations on her. As her mother's behavior becomes increasingly erratic, Virginia
does not repress her anger and develop a self-destructive personality, but directs her justified rebellion against her father, who wants to honor her mother's unreasonable demand that they fire Chloe, Virginia's Indian maid and confidante. She clashes with her father and expresses her feelings openly to him:

"Father," said Virginia at last, in a low, steady voice, "do you not wish mother dead? I do. Death makes life sacred and beautiful, and her life at present is horrible."

For the second time that day, Mr. Brande lost his self-command. Decorum refused to support him. He struck the table with his clenched hand, rose, leaned over it, and stirred into her eyes, still radiant, but swimming in tears.

"When people talk so," he said, "they have a narrow escape if the character of assassin is not given them. You belie my teaching, and my example."

"I trust so," she answered, stung into irreverence. "If I followed your example what thoughts might not I indulge in, what dreams inspire me, from what source my wishes, my dreams arise?" (132)

Virginia sees through her father's pretensions. Her reference to his masked dual nature makes him fall in a faint, but she has shown her superiority and power and the limits of her endurance and tolerance. Shortly after this, Mr. Brande commits his wife to an asylum, relieving Virginia of her greatest physical and psychological burden.

Unjustly imprisoned in the Brande Forge, which is no home or comforting haven, Virginia does not despair or take refuge in self-pity. She often sneaks out of the house and takes refuge in Temple House from her demanding father and unhinged mother. She even comes to prefer Temple House to the luxury of her own surroundings at home because "freedom [is] there" (99). Temple House fascinates Virginia because the building that wears a discouraged aspect has a personality, a positive spirit. In fact, when Virginia first sets her eyes on the decrepit, yet lively
building, she feels the spirit of the house flowing into her, and her own spirit,
strengthened and refreshed, flows out again towards the house and begins to adopt the
warm coloration of its surroundings like a chameleon. However, not only does
Virginia feel the vital and radiant energy of the house vibrate through her, but she also
comes to find love, solace, and companionship through her diverse relationships with
the self-possessed people of the house. She learns much from Argus and her playmate
Tempe and finds in Roxalana, the Sibylline character who cares for the house and
everyone in it, a mentor who helps her keep in touch with her own selfhood. The
narrator says:

The charm that drew Virginia to Temple House no one comprehended; year by year it deepened, and became a part, or rather the whole, of an interior life, aside from her home and parents. She received a double education, one contrasting widely with the other. The sensible, unworlthy sincerity of Roxalana; the conduct of Argus, which absolutely denied the influence of opinion, and yet was so calm, orderly, and cheerful without it; his indifference to money; his idleness through which he was led to note with critical exactness those matters usually escaping the attention of men; his moods, urbane, candid, jeering, bitter; the wildness of Temple; her freedom from all control, her loneliness,—all made up a different world. (33)

Needless to say, it is in Temple House that Virginia comes to reclaim herself, to fulfill her basic needs for love and autonomy, and to realize her position in the universe as a human being.

In her empathy with the people of Temple House, Virginia awakens not only to her own individuality but also to the beauty of her own sexuality. She begins to feel a strong sexual attraction towards Argus, with whom she passionately falls in love.
Whenever she sees Argus, she is washed with wave after wave of wild emotions and
sexual energy. In a remarkable passage that recalls the strong sexual attraction between Cassandra and Charles in *The Morgesons*, Stoddard, early in the novel, demonstrates Virginia's sexual impulses and her blooming attraction to Argus, who, in his own turn, comes to see more clearly that Virginia is no longer the quiet youngster who has for years visited Temple House. At the Drakes' party after Tempe and John's wedding, she writes:

Virginia, tall and stately as a lily, swaying like one as she yielded to the pressure of the crowd, drifted into the center of a noisy, familiar group, and found herself brushing against some person taller than herself, who was also surrounded by talkers. Half-turning, her eyes followed the outlines of a dark figure, whose handsome, well-gloved hand was thrust behind him, and whose handsome, well-booted foot was crushing her flounces. An extraordinary push caused by the waiters and their trays made them face each other with an apology. It was Argus, and Virginia blushed at her own surprise to see him a gentleman, in ordinary evening costume. His cool smile flashed round his mouth, although he, too, felt a vague, pleased surprise at her aspect, she looked so perfectly a woman of the world. (57-58)

Recognizing how well the other looks, Virginia and Argus recognize for the first time their strong attraction for each other. In fact, the heat of the crowded room, the close human contact between them, and the ravishing, heart-thrilling moment that passes between them suggest a kind of a Lawrentian sexual fervency and desire.

We easily see why Virginia would fall in love with Argus, even though he has resisted her love at some stage in his life. He is witty and charming, intelligent and kind, sincere and courteous. Retired from the sea and widowed, he not only takes his sister-in-law Roxalana and her young daughter to live with him at Temple House when they are abandoned by his irresponsible and profligate brother, but he also rescues a complete stranger named Sebastian from a shipwreck and makes a solemn
bond with this romantic character. Though, in the course of the novel, Argus attempts to dismiss love and passion from his life and to voyage into a cold, rationalized world, he soon realizes the power of human emotions that surges beneath the surface of that rationalized world and becomes sensitive to emotions of all kinds. A "lofty iceberg" (252), Argus apparently begins to melt down. In fact, his relationship with Roxalana and Sebastian, Stoddard seems to be saying, is the driving force in his personal growth and emotional development. As a good case in point, saving Sebastian's life becomes the catalyst for Argus's moment of awakening to human emotions. Argus's life, previously devoid of passion and based solely on "narrow, sensuous facts" (13), is decisively qualified and renewed so that he before long becomes responsive enough to love and deserve Virginia. Argus himself declares:

I thought there was nothing better for me than the life you found me in, and was passively grateful for it; I cumbered the ground for no one, allowing none to approach me with service, and, consequently, burdening none with obligation. Sebastian, it passed away the night I sprained my shoulder on the White Flat, and laid you under an eternal obligation. There must have been witches abroad that night. (306-07)

Unleashed from his self-imposed solitude, Argus can no longer resist his love for Virginia. His heart, which once only moved "physically" (170), begins to throb with passion and desire, and he immediately writes a note to Virginia declaring his love for her. "My flames may not burn as yours, so prettily, so lambent--that you know; still I am on fire, and fire under ice is terrible to the one burned between them" (263).

Given Argus's independent spirit and individuality, it is not surprising that he directly deflects Virginia's passion for some time. He resists her love not because he
is not in love with her, as may be thought, but because he comes to see her love as a "glittering net" (261) threatening his personal sense of freedom. In a typical moment, he dispassionately develops a line of reasoning:

He set aside her beauty, sweetness, and power—for he was adamant—the instincts which made him a man, and shut his eyes upon that selfishness which might celebrate her as the companion and friend of his lonely age, and pondered over one characteristic,--that which made him remarkable--his secretive, impassive individuality,—whether he had better live on it, as his substance, or share it with Virginia, to her advantage and his happiness. (261)

Asking himself the crucial questions concerned with his inner-directed life, and in looking for answers, Argus allows for a consciousness of choice. Unhesitatingly, he chooses to break through conventions that guided his early years and decides to marry Virginia and to share his individuality with her. More than any of the other heroes in Stoddard's fiction, Argus must first struggle to help release Virginia from her cramped, little world at the Brande Forge. He must also help free her from her father's hideous plans to marry her off to Mr. Carfield, who is obsessed with a burning desire to empower Virginia and to force her into an incompatible marriage because he sees her as part of a business deal that he has struck with her father.

In her struggle for survival and growth, Virginia has enough strength and vital spirit to fend off her parent's assaults and to assert her self, but it is more difficult for her to escape from the marriage-trap that her father and Mr. Carfield have set. However, having come to value her growth and her inner development, Virginia makes a solemn pact with herself not to allow herself to become personally mutilated or deflected from her search for wholeness. Although she panics when her father
pledges her to Mr. Carfield, she manages to retain her power and self-control and to elude Mr. Carfield's seductive powers. In fact, rarely has a fictional female hero before her shown such toughness and true grit in the midst of peril. Surely, Virginia is a tough, active woman who can overcome insurmountable pressures, oppressive machinations, and menacing assaults. Determined to exercise the prerogative of choice, Virginia adamantly refuses to be possessed or commodified. We are told that when Mr. Carfield forcefully enters her bedroom at midnight and threatens to rape her, she is not essentially powerless to resist his evil impositions. She defies Mr. Carfield, brands his contemptible behavior, for she repudiates folly in any shape or form, and finally dismisses him from her room, but not before calling him "tiresome" and "brutal" (275). With remarkable fortitude, Virginia wards off Mr. Carfield's raw carnality, his materialistic desire to possess her, and his demonic animality. Indeed, Mr. Carfield resembles, to a great extent, the worst lecher and seducer in every sentimental novel of the nineteenth century.

Although Virginia shows agency in her life and is admirable in most of her endeavors, she is seriously shaken when all of Kent hears the rumors of Mr. Carfield's midnight visit to her room. Sensitive to the difficulty she would create for Argus by marrying him now, she sends word that they must wait until her reputation is cleared. Virginia is, of course, armed to defend her name and to redeem her reputation, but, struggling for her self, she comes to be assailed and intimidated by both her father and Mr. Carfield, in whose presence and male domination, she feels dazed and condemned to death or to a death-in-life existence. With no one or nothing to sustain her at that
terrible moment, Virginia comes to experience a dire foreboding of her own extinction as an autonomous being. Her momentous despair, however, leaves no repercussion on her life. In an attempt to repay his obligation to Argus and to consolidate his friendship with him, Sebastian, who has come to be strongly drawn to Virginia, makes his dramatic entrance to assist Virginia in her gloomiest moments. Significantly, as soon as Sebastian bursts into the room, Virginia sheds her fear and begins to recover her self-possession and to claim independence. As Carfield is writing at Sebastian's dictation a specific refutation of the slandering rumor affecting Virginia's honor, he is shocked to see her determination and self-command: "He crossed the room, and came face to face with Virginia, and it startled him to see in her face an expression as determined and as fatal as Sebastian's" (331). It is true that Virginia's resolve to win her freedom is not single-handedly brought to pass, but one cannot help but wonder how strong must a woman be at this crucial time in order to assert her individuality without any support from anyone? What is important though is that Virginia has not been duped. It is important that her father does not forbid the marriage to Argus and that she is not obliged to obey anyone but herself. Disencumbered and vindicated, Virginia is free to marry Argus, who has nothing but respect and love for her character and her marked individuality. All at once, an aura of "new happiness" (314) hangs over Temple House with an unmistakable presence.

*Temple House* forbids a reductionist view of women and rejects patriarchal concepts of female passivity and submissiveness. In this novel, Stoddard creates three individually different women who manifest strong personalities and active
characteristics instead of traditional feminine traits, and, for each of these women, she plots a different, exciting story. In Roxalana, she creates a woman who is emblematic of the feminine life-force that endures and creates. Roxalana is portrayed as working, creating, of living in relationships with other women and men, of being alive, self-determining, growing, making significant choices, questioning and finding viable answers and solutions, of being, in other words, a whole human being. If Roxalana comes to stand for the natural and eternal woman, her daughter Tempe represents an unconventional portrait of sinister mercantilism. A feisty ingenue, Tempe is self-centered, luxury-living, high-spirited, and energetic. From the very beginning, she romps from adventure to adventure, challenges the precepts upon which the male world is constructed, and tries to shape her destiny in the way she wants. In constructing her third woman, Stoddard also creates an especially tough, vibrant, and loving woman. An unfettered soul, Virginia struggles against her parent's injustice and liberties, maintains her right to be and to think as her imagination and experience determined, endorses autonomous womanhood, and unites herself with the man she loves. With remarkable intensity, solidity, and openness, all of these women, though they are different in their background, in their inventiveness, and in their capacity for endurance and survival, come to assert their presence throughout the novel and to absorb the reader from the start. As pathmakers, these women will live together in Temple House, each separate, and each pleasing the others with the difference. With these women abiding together in the ancient house, Temple House not only endures, but it also prevails.
Notes


2Temple House was re-edited in 1888-89 and reprinted in 1901. All subsequent citations refer to Elizabeth Stoddard, Temple House (Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates and Co., 1901).


4George Ripley was not the only reviewer who found the plot and the ending of Temple House flawed, uncontrolled, and incongruous. In fact, Temple House was particularly subject to negative assessments on grounds of its distorted style and its hodgepodge plot. In 1868, an anonymous reviewer for the Nation condemned Temple House and declared that "we may as well secure the reader of the story from a possible disappointment by informing him that Temple House is a story that has no end. Properly enough, too, for it has no plot, and should have no catastrophe--no ultimate result to which various actions tend" (qtd. in Matlack, "Literary Career" 442). It is noteworthy that one problem nineteenth-century reviewers have had with works of fiction is that they have assumed that such a thing as a totality of the work exists for us to analyze. For Jacques Derrida, we are mistaken to assume that literary works have a central presence, even a center. Rather, attention to the play of signification in texts is extremely useful in helping us perceive how there is more to a text than its plot or ending. A text can be processed in radically different ways, depending on how much weight individual readers assign to specific themes, images, or even phrases. On these points, see Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978). Also see Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977).

5As Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have noted in The Madwoman in the Attic (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), a female heritage of insanity permeates the fiction of women writers in the nineteenth century. In the fiction of the nineteenth century that they have examined, Gilbert and Gubar found "fantasies in which maddened doubles functioned as asocial surrogates for docile selves, metaphors of physical discomfort manifested in frozen landscapes and fiery interiors" (xi). Also, in A Literature of Their Own (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977), Elaine Showalter, surveying the literature of the Victorian period, observes there was the belief "that women were more susceptible to insanity, and twice as likely as fathers to transmit it to their children, especially to their daughters" (166n). So prevalent is the view that deviancy in women denoted madness that an entire study of women and madness has been
made by Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (New York: Doubleday, 1972). In her book, Chesler examines the problematic area of mother-daughter relationships, where failure in this area is connected to the absence of maternal love, which Chesler connects with deprivation and madness.

In *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977), Elaine Showalter raises the question of the "family home . . . as a prison-house" in fiction, from which women could escape, in the sensationalist novels of the nineteenth century, only by "sinister" means (168).

The friendship between Argus and Sebastian is remarkable as an example of what critics have come to call "male bonding." This relationship recalls in many ways the concept of "the pure marriage of males," (211) which Leslie Fiedler identified throughout the American canon. That the relationship between Argus and Sebastian is homoerotically suggestive is indicated by a number of richly suggestive scenes between them. The possibility of homosexuality is even hinted at in the name of Sebastian himself. After all, Sebastian's name recalls the tormented Saint Sebastian with his homosexual beauty. For more information on male bonding that rests on a mutual recognition of independent identities, see Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, rev. ed. (New York: A Scarborough Book, 1982).
CHAPTER VII

SELECTED SHORT FICTION: LIVING PORTRAITS OF

SELF-ACTUALIZING WOMEN

The life of woman rolls forth like a stream from the fountain, or it spreads out into tranquility like a placid or stagnant lake. In the latter case, the individual grows old among the characters with whom she was born . . . moves in the same circle . . . influences the same class of persons by which she was originally surrounded. The woman of mark and adventure, on the contrary, resembles, in the course of her life, the river whose mid-current and discharge into the ocean are widely removed from each other . . . ; violent changes of time, of place, and of circumstances hurry her forward from one scene to another, and her adventures will usually be found only connected with each other because they have happened to the same individual.

Walter Scott

Elizabeth Stoddard's three novels were preceded and followed by many years of productivity in short fiction. Stoddard published over sixty pieces of short fiction in prominent New York newspapers and magazines between 1859 and 1895.¹ Tangled romances, vivid portraits of New England villages, chronicles of marriages and marital relationships, tributes to self-assertive women, all are handled with stylistic clarity, subtle wit, and unusual grace, and all are elaborately suggestive, radiating numerous
meanings, psychological and cultural. Needless to say, Stoddard was a short story writer of considerable skill, one for whom the story was a natural form of expression. In spite of her reputation as a novelist, she gained considerable recognition for a few stories she published in leading periodicals, including Harper's, Appleton's, and The Aldine. "The Prescription" (1864), "The Visit" (1872), and "The Swanstream Match" (1878), to name only a few, are important stories of exceptional merit that are typical of Stoddard's best works. These selected stories are a good sample, for they are cleverly conceived and ingeniously tailored. Dominated by the same subjects explored in the novels, they show Stoddard's unmistakable ability and passion for telling a tale and give her work continuity and strength. In essence, they not only establish Stoddard as a short story writer of great sympathy and talent, but they also complement her novels and give additional range to her fictional world. What they show are the never-ceasing efforts and development of a gifted writer working towards her essential methods and themes. In fact, the reader familiar with these stories, as well as many others of similar quality, will perhaps arrive at additional insights and new sources of appreciation. To be sure, a good number of Stoddard's short stories rank alongside those of America's most revered writers of short fiction, such as Mark Twain, Henry James, and Edith Wharton.

"The Prescription," "The Swanstream Match," and "The Visit" are typically Stoddardian stories because they probe female psychology and development and record distinctive and poignant female experiences. In all three stories, Stoddard, as usual, depicts individual women characters who come to rely on themselves as sources of
strength and to forge thoughtful and meaningful lives for themselves. She graphically portrays the plight and the struggle of three high-spirited and strong-willed women, Caroline Fuller, Constance Seymour, and Anne Capel, who come to endure their emotional and physical crises, to learn to develop rather than to hide the powerful personalities within them, to break through the molds of standard relationships for women, to establish their own identities, and to form new and regenerative relationships in which to grow and to emerge lucidly into life as powerful and self-actualized women. In Caroline, Stoddard creates a woman who awakens to her own individuality and to a new perception of reality and who discovers that she alone has power over herself. Although Caroline is shown squeezed into the stereotype of the oppressed wife, she comes to gain the power and the strength to oppose her husband Gérard and then to be reunited with him on a basis of human equality. In delineating the character of Constance, Stoddard represents a woman who discovers the folly of repressing her natural desires and of believing that "life has holier ends than happiness" (341). Constance awakens to her physical self and to her new found womanliness and merges with her husband Angus, body and soul. Stoddard also draws for the reader the remarkably energetic Anne, who struggles to make the best of her difficult and eventful life. Anne is strong enough to resist the power of an evil human nature, to defend herself against George and his exploitative behavior, and to assert her individuality. As with the women characters in Stoddard's novels, Caroline, Constance, and Anne are lively, unreserved, and self-assertive. Characteristically, all three have the courage and the clear vision of self-understanding to reach a higher
plane of self-determination, to seize their own lives, and to live them freely, bravely, and passionately.

"The Prescription," which Stoddard published in Harper's in 1864, shows the sure touch of a first-rate writer of short fiction. It is the striking story of a woman's metamorphosis by self-understanding and her recreating herself--Athena-like--out of her own intellect and will. Caroline, wife of Gérard Fuller, is evidently suffering from severe nervousness and melancholic feelings of disquiet and ease, and Dr. Brown is shrewd enough to observe the signs of Gérard's possessiveness and mistreatment of her. Subject to her husband's tyrannical oppression and to his rigorous patriarchy, Caroline is under steady pressure and nervous strain. She not only endures repression and restriction, but she is also threatened with spiritual death. She is, in fact, incapacitated and confined within the home; it is her prison, her insane asylum, even her tomb. Clearly, Caroline reigns not as queen but as that self-sacrificing, subservient, selfless creature that Virginia Woolf called the "Angel of the House." Her strained marriage mainly leads her not only to distrust her own judgment but also to direct all her actions and desires to please Gérard, thus subordinating her own interests to the interests of another. Typically, Caroline fits the image of the oppressed wife whose emotions patiently wait to blossom until they are bidden to do so and until such emotions are sanctioned by her strict husband. Of course, the harsh realities of Caroline's life and her non-companionate marriage render her vulnerable and retard the development of any possibility within her to rise above her banal, everyday life and to react against the stifling existing conditions of her unhappy
Gerard is clearly a domineering husband who wants to have absolute control over his wife. His attitude towards Caroline is consistent with the patriarchal role that he has assumed and exploited. In everything he does, he shows his obviously patriarchal stance. Actually, his deadening influence blights the lives of those around him, and his actions are not what we would call loving. Because Gerard is predisposed to possession, he fails to see Caroline's single-mindedness, regarding her instead as a chattel that is rightfully his and as a pliant young thing that has absolutely no mind and feelings at all. In his authoritative role as husband, Gerard believes that, Pygmalion-like, he can fit Caroline to the mold of the codes and values of generations of patriarchal rule. He not only grooms Caroline in dress, behavior, and taste, but he also determines what new furniture may be bought for the house without consulting her. Motivated by the traditional male role, he also scoffs openly at Caroline's drawings and is both fearful and contemptuous of her imaginative and artistic powers, largely because he fails to understand them or the view of the world they lead her to. Still more, in his attempt to impose his will upon Caroline, he once takes the gilt-buttoned jacket she is wearing, and in a gesture of warning, defiance, and destruction, tears it to rags, blurring out in the process that only "fast women" (794) wear such gaudy jackets. Beyond any doubt, Gerard is a bullying husband who attempts to guide his wife's actions, to rob her of her identity, and to divest her of her femininity and authentic existence. His brutish and querulous behavior and his hideous actions, as noted, are all too apparent for one to dismiss them lightly.
Although Caroline is completely ravished by the power of Gérard and feels the stultifying conventionality and restrictions of male supremacy and ideology and although her horrid marriage is linked with conflict, confusion, and evasion, she does not remain a pawn in Gérard's plans, but manages with the help of Dr. Brown to escape the power and authority of her husband and the throes of her struggle. When Dr. Brown realizes that Caroline's spiritual imprisonment may threaten to leave her permanently crippled and isolated from life, he selects a seaside town for Caroline to visit, knowing that Gérard is too busy to accompany her. Dr. Brown gives Caroline a sealed prescription which she is to open when she reaches the town, "where there is no railroad, no telegraph wires, no barrack hotel, and no Gothic meeting-house" (794). The prescription turns out to be beautiful; it says "Comprehend yourself, then you will be able to comprehend others; to do this is necessary in your case" (797). Using Dr. Brown's prescription as her guide, Caroline discovers that she can take control of her life by understanding her own feelings and asserting their value. The prescription nudges the consciousness of Caroline and, ultimately, becomes the instrument of her development, her awakening, her assertion, her autonomy.

During her stay in the little town of Marlow, Caroline finds herself revived by the town's isolation and by the kindness of her hosts, and she sees in the sea "a magic mirror" in which "some strange mystery would be revealed to me" (797). Alone with the sea, a symbol of freedom, beauty, and mystery, she, in fact, comes to perceive her own nature, to learn about herself, and to gain self-knowledge and confidence. Her experience is the same as a past one which her host, Mr. Bowman, an old sea captain,
relates to her: "I looked into the sea, and the sea looked into me, and I learned what it is to live" (797). Caroline begins to recover her identity, her sense of herself, and grows to an independent maturity, to an autonomous selfhood. She enacts the rebellion of the oppressed and refuses to answer any letters from Gérard. As a pastime, she begins a diary, in which she muses about her marriage and the sea, and she rejoices in "how delightful it is to be able to express one's thoughts freely" (799). Her diary is a metonymy of her new self; it not only constitutes a subtext that reveals her innermost feelings, but it is also an assertion of her right to her own thoughts, which Gérard has always tried to usurp. The diary serves a psychotherapeutic function, for as Caroline narrates her self, she also constructs it anew. By unleashing her pent-up emotions and by unveiling her reflective and self-interpretative thoughts, Caroline discovers herself, comes to grips with her life, and finds that she alone is capable of molding the world to her satisfaction.

Caroline's transformation is not magical, temporary, and external, like Cinderella's, but internal and thorough. When Gérard arrives as though to regain possession of Caroline, she defiantly challenges him as an equal and unflinchingly stands up to his selfish demands and intrusions for the first time. She no longer submits to Gérard with a demure childish compliance, for now, as she proclaims, she is ready to "fight . . . and conquer" (800). Stoddard leaves no doubt that Caroline is tired with carrying the baggage of the stereotypical image and age-old role of the compliant wife that has kept her in thrall for eight months. As Caroline's imprisoned self comes forth, she significantly increases her freedom of choice and action, liberates
herself from her own fear of Gérard, tells him, "I can't love you in your way" (800), and, thus, puts him at as far a distance from herself as she can. At first, Gérard bristles and erupts in anger at his wife's non-compliance, but as he watches her from a distance for a few days, he learns to know and to see her in a new way and perspective. In fact, newly receptive to the possibilities of a new life with Caroline, he is capable by the close of the tale of regarding Caroline with admiration and respect for her growing feminine consciousness and her affirmation of character. When Caroline notices in watching Gérard silently that "he was not the man I had known as my husband" (800), she is able to reconcile herself to him without renouncing her new powers of self-determination. Immensely changed and transformed, Caroline and Gérard lovingly make a union with each other and attain marital bliss in the midst of their erstwhile troublesome marriage. Their marriage, once inextricably bound up in the world of conventional experience and an unequal relationship in which Gérard has had the ascendancy, a world that Stoddard herself regarded with suspicion, is now shaped by an egalitarian, wholesome relationship that is rich with promise and filled with joy.

Of course, Caroline's revivifying reunion with Gérard does not affect her sense of herself as a woman. After all, Caroline goes back to Gérard and accepts him not because she has to, but voluntarily, because she loves him and respects his transformation of character. Besides, she has been able to free herself from all subjection to her husband, and she is now free to decide and act for herself. Her success demonstrates that a woman can govern herself, and her freedom is confirmed
at the end of the story by the self-confessed humiliation of her husband and by his subsequent abdication of patriarchal authority. Gérard moves very quickly from quoting Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*—"She is my good, my chattels, she is my house, / My household stuff, my field, my barn, / My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything" (800)—to acknowledging, "It is not you who are foolish, Caroline, it is I" (800). It is clear that Gérard repents of his ways, appeals to Caroline for forgiveness for his earlier blindness, and, when she consents to give it, lovingly unites himself with her. Caroline and Gérard come to rewrite the social text of the nineteenth century and base their marriage on a principle of equality, in which both partners have equal power over each other, equal softness and equal sense. Their new, tranquil relationship celebrates the delights of equality, mutual capability, intellectual sharing, and reciprocal care. Significantly, "The Prescription" leaves us with the image of marital fulfillment, freedom, and harmony and with a vision of woman fulfilled within marriage.

Like "The Prescription," "The Swanstream Match," which Stoddard published in *Appleton's Journal* in 1878, is a particular tale about a married woman who discovers herself and achieves, as a result, peace and happiness in her marriage. In fact, in many pieces of her short fiction, Stoddard depicts married women and deals with their marital relationships. She generally focuses on the development of the female's identity after marriage and shows that marriage is compatible with legitimate self-assertion and valid self-development. Stoddard does not attack marriage as an institution, for when marriages fail, it is people who fail, not the institution of
marriage itself. What she decries is women who believe themselves to be marginal and inadequate, gaining fulfillment merely by serving the "superior" male. Women, Stoddard shows, can be taken advantage of and manipulated, but only if they are foolish and blind enough to let it happen. In marriage, Stoddard suggests, women can realize their womanhood and attain fulfillment and satisfaction once they delve deeply into themselves and seek self-knowledge, which is, first and foremost, the key to their freedom. For the most part, Stoddard's female protagonists are endowed with strength and self-knowledge to turn inward and assess their potential, to give themselves the power they deserve, to assert their selfhood, and to see the world anew and take true account of their lives in it. In fact, throughout her fiction, Stoddard has insisted that the freedom to be oneself, to pursue one's lives, to have one's place, unfettered by ugliness or meanness, is one of life's highest values.

"The Swanstream Match" is a major achievement in the Stoddard canon. In this story, Stoddard chronicles the life of Constance Seymour and depicts her awakening to herself and her growth of character. In Constance, she creates a beautiful young woman who is trying to recover from a previous engagement with a man who proved unfaithful to her. After the death of her suitor, Robert Bond, Constance has been tremendously changed not by grief at his death but by the loss of her faith in herself. Suddenly filled with trivia, she wonders whether she will ever be able to take counsel from her own heart, to fall back on her inner directedness, and to believe strongly in herself. In telling Elsa, a distant cousin, about her romance with Bond, Constance asks, "How can one rely upon me if I cannot upon myself?" and
asserts that when she fell in love with Bond, "For him I forgot self; for his happiness I made myself as he demanded I should be" (339). The lasting effect of his deathbed confession of unfaithfulness is that "I shall never believe in myself again" (339-40). Constance's frustration and sense of injustice and her own thoughts of her sense of emptiness, displacement, and loss reemphasize for the reader the burden she bears--to awaken from her sense of nothingness, to win all influence over herself, and to find personal integrity not in the dictates of external authority, but in the ever-pulsating impulses of the heart.

Locked into herself, Constance is tormented by the realization that she has escaped the pain of Bond's betrayal and her humiliation and desolation by retreating behind a dull, grave camouflage. She has not only shunned any show of intense passion or thought, but she has also bought survival at the price of never fully existing. She, in fact, feels herself confined to a prison cell and enfolded in a blank despair. To be sure, her shattering experience has not only forced her to reject her own inner life, but it has also left her dispossessed of meanings and goals and of her own identity and power. Thus, it is in no way surprising that when her cousin Angus, a widower and the owner of Swanstream, the biggest plantation in the area, asks her to marry him because they "were good friends and because his children needed a mother, his house a mistress, himself a companion" (340), she is quick to accept, seeing that Angus is a suitable mate and that his proposal of marriage is "reasonable and judicious" (340). It is true that Constance worries that her marriage to Angus will be mainly for others' sake rather than her own, but she does not revolt against Angus's
sterile proposal, which undoubtedly assails her womanhood and mocks her woman's heart and which would reduce her to a wife who is tantamount to a "housekeeper" (340). Though Angus has looks, charms, and wealth and is not incapable of passion and though Constance may well love him, their marriage is altogether too passionless and too freighted with conventional usages or the rigidities of convention. Clearly, their marriage, depicted as a depressing, "stern affair" (340), is based on their friendship and mutual understanding and on reason and practicality, and the entire family is having misgivings because, as Constance's sister-in-law says, the couple has overlooked "the supreme thing—love" (339).

Given the dialectic of her nature—the conflict between engagement with life and retreat from it—Constance, however, continues to waver between the dictates of a stricter reason and the impulses of love and romance. The first aspect of herself which she must come to understand and value, Stoddard shows, is her heart and emotions, including her sexual passion and desires. Constance represents all women who must struggle towards an integrated, mature, and independent identity by coming to terms with their own emotional development and blossoming sexuality. After marrying Angus, Constance tries to ignore the deepest wells of her emotional life and to convince herself that "there are many things in life besides love," and, consequently, she "was living in a dream, beholding herself as a spectator of herself" (341). Unable, in fact, to arrest her emotional development, Constance finds herself awakened to life and to her own sexuality. She gradually begins to metamorphose into the passionate woman she was all along expected to become and to yearn for Angus, but she is not
sure that he wants to love her.

She tried to convince herself that things were about as they should be; and that life at Swanstream was agreeable and useful. But if she was so comfortable, why did she in the watches of the night start from her sleep to find her face wet with tears? Perhaps it was from fear of those negro thieves; why else should she be so restless? They only took melons and the chickens. (344)

Constance is clearly caught in the horror of her own private dialectic. Her attempt to rationalize away her need for emotional and sexual intimacy can only cause her trouble because it is an attempt to deny her true nature. In fact, her nightmares are signs of the self-imposed isolation she has created by repressing or burying her natural desires and her instinctual needs. Constance must confront and accept her newly awakened self that has become an important part of her before she achieves final growth in the story.

Significantly, Constance's married life is at once appealing and distasteful. Easygoing as it may be, devoted to light entertainment and the maintenance of the pleasant order of things as it may be, it is also devoid of passion and hedged about with restraints. That Constance and Angus are caught in a net of open conflict is indicated by the tensions that develop in their relationship after their betrothal. Constance, caught up in the meshes of her own needs and fears, begins to curb or withhold her burgeoning passion for Angus, for fear it will be met with indifference. Angus, although sexually unsatisfied and longing for intimacy with Constance, is actually too proud to confess his love for Constance. The barrier between Constance and Angus remains undefined until Angus's friend, Captain Drummond, suggests that Constance will make a good mother and Angus explodes, "she has never given me an
atom of her love, faith, or esteem" (345). It is only when Angus and Constance begin to close the gap of misunderstanding that has separated them from each other that they begin to recognize their attraction for each other, to make tentative moves towards each other, and to gratify their longings for each other. In fact, the sexual and emotional tensions between them are both broken by the crisis of the story's denouement, a crisis that forces both characters to profess their mutual adoration. At a family picnic, Constance and Angus come to realize that they love each other when she rescues one of Angus's children from quicksand, injuring her own hand, and when he saves her life by pulling her leaky boat to shore. The escape of Constance and Angus from the quicksand is both a catalyst for and a symbolic representation of their release from emotional repression and an overwhelming pride and of their giving birth to a new way of life. Inspired and fully alive at last, Constance and Angus, now suffused with heartfelt delight, make an impassioned speech in which at once they avow their undying love for each other.

In "The Swanstream Match," Stoddard does not regard marriage as a hindrance to the development of all that is best in the individual. What she regrets is only the human tendency to self-deception. In fact, her voice merges with Drummond's at the very end of the tale when he says, "I'll stay another day to celebrate the Swanstream match; but what a pity to be half drowned to bring it about!" (347). Attempting to resist the imperatives of one's nature, Stoddard shows, brings not the inner peace that moralists proclaim comes with the renunciation of self but, instead, all the bitterness of frustration. Furthermore, she believes, that, all efforts to the contrary notwithstanding, the
repressed desires will ultimately come out anyway, perhaps with a directness that is dangerously overpowering. To know oneself requires confronting and accepting all one's nature or multiple natures, all parts of elemental self, and the totality of life. We must accept, Stoddard shows, all of life, both instinct and intellect, body and spirit, and the past and the present.

Another appealing story that Stoddard published in Harper's in 1872 is "The Visit." In this story, Stoddard charts the life of a capable woman who is strong enough to understand and resist the power of an evil human nature. The narrator and protagonist of this story, Anne Capel is dissatisfied and bored with her life a year after she has returned home from boarding school. Anne is acutely aware of the disconnected strands in her life and thoughts. Her inner and outer life, she realizes, lie dormant; they are a "desert, a waste, a solitude" (860). She repeatedly and unexpectedly experiences the painful moments of being suspended in ultimate darkness. Although she has the "inestimable privilege of health, youth, and the enjoyment of solid worldly comforts," her sense of the "power and solace of nature" and her "insight into the individualities of others" (860) have not been awakened yet. Anne, in fact, has "no philosophy in heaven or earth to dream of" (860-61). It is important to note here, though, that although Anne feels hemmed in, cramped, and unexpressed in her unfulfilled life, she is determined to detach herself from the stifling environment around her and to pursue her own course in life. She not only refuses to settle for living any less than a complete person, but she also yearns to forge ahead and venture into or plough through life. To be sure, her need to validate her own self
and her refusal to remain in her constrictive life make a bold social statement.

Anne is a living refutation of passivity. Seeking escape from her life that has come to a standstill, she unhesitatingly accepts the invitation to visit her old school friend, Olive Vernon, who has recently married Dr. Denbigh and who tells her, "Life shapes itself; we don't shape it" (860). During her sojourn in the Denbigh's abode, Anne comes to prove her own abilities and to exhibit a degree of freedom uncharacteristic for a nineteenth-century American woman. Confronted with threat and danger, she is able to draw her powers from within herself, to see through sham, to recognize and resist the malevolent dark side of human nature, and to fashion her life in the manner she wants. What Anne sees of diabolical human nature in George Denbigh, the doctor's brother and another visitor at the Denbigh's residence, does not leave her confined, obedient, and submissive, but helps her reach a higher degree of understanding and self-determination. As she confronts George, who has all the earmarks of an evil rake, she is shown challenging his threat and danger and safeguarding her individuality. Somehow, her self-growth does not grind to a halt, but keeps on evolving, leading her to a self-assertive, independent position.

A Byronic character, George is dark and sinister; he is also an embodiment of selfishness and possessiveness. When he first sees Anne, he almost immediately begins to treat her as a plaything, a virginal possession. His sinister looks reveal his own Byronic broodings and his tyranny, and his declaration of love for Anne is an example of his possessiveness and materialism and of his loving despotism. George himself tells Anne,
"You are not the only beautiful woman I have known," commencing again his monologue. I believe he thought I talked back. "I worship beauty; it consumes me, but it shall feed me too. Need I come a beggar to you? Am I to be played with? Perhaps my misfortune [his limp] makes you despise me. . . . I despise a blemish too; curse it! But why not an obvious one, as well as one hidden? We are all deformed secretly. Even your perfect self will not deny this." (864)

Anne is horrified by George's fiendish madness and his ferocious self, but she is strong enough to know that she must "escape his dark influence" (864). As she tells George, "To be in any bondage to you would prove a moral death" (864). Anne's immediate and vigorous rejection of George shows not only her newly developed power of self-determination that has never been required of her in the supportive atmosphere of her family's house but also her unwillingness to be immersed in the blackness of George's dark spirit and to be immured in a dank valley of slavish love. Anne reflects, "And this was love! As he presented it, how mean!" (864).

Although Anne is clearly preyed upon by George, she manages to vent her scorn and dislike of him freely. She refuses to knuckle under to his demands and emerges from her crisis as a strong, self-reliant woman. In fact, her growing sense of self-determination helps her to plunge into life with passionate vitality. The dullness she has previously experienced in her life begins to dissipate like a rising mist on an early sunny morning. More significantly, Anne finds romance, solace, and companionship in the person of Captain Wilson, a widower who is staying with his little daughter Alice at the Denbigh's house. Wilson becomes the object of her first-felt throbblings of desire, and, when he confesses his love and passion for her on a moonlight ride, she yields to her dream of love. Her ecstasy immediately transforms
her world. The landscape and her surroundings appear suddenly to glow under the surface. For the first time in her life, Anne feels fully alive and is satisfied to drift with the days towards some definite haven of the future.

However, Anne's road to the future that lies ahead of her is not smooth. When George learns of Anne's involvement with Wilson, he is miffed and infuriated. Since he could not have Anne, he cannot tolerate the idea of her being with anyone else. Therefore, in an attempt to lash out at Anne and to slander her reputation, he, on more than one occasion at night, steps through the window into her room and then slips out again, climbing down the piazza. Realizing that George is trying to wreak havoc in her life and to thwart her love, Anne is determined to fight and defeat him. She does not succumb to silence and do-nothingism, but becomes an initiator of her own influence. In a fit of anger, she confronts George, brands his contemptible behavior, and forces him to confess before Wilson that his midnight visits have been nothing but a ruse. Also, as Anne struggles towards self-realization, she chooses to dissociate herself from Wilson, whom she finds in a jealous rage. Offended by Wilson's self-righteous lack of trust and his judging her without a hearing, she reflects that his "manly confidence did not chime with my mood" (867). Enlightened about the macrocosmic world and human nature, Anne goes back home a sadder but wiser woman, and she congratulates herself upon the changes taking place in herself. She even seems prepared to deal with Wilson on a new basis when he comes to visit her later. Perceiving that Wilson is less arrogant and sensing that he is apologetic and repentant, she is ready to patch things up with him, and the two come together with
redoubled passion. By choosing her own path, Anne prevails and asserts her presence and individuality. Indeed, her strength and fortitude and her capacity for survival are basic qualities which make her character admirable and memorable.

Stoddard's short stories constitute an impressive body of short fiction. "The Prescription," "The Swanstream Match," and "The Visit" are three of her richest, most satisfying stories, perhaps because she gives herself to them so completely. She is present in every feeling, setting, mood, and incident. "The Prescription" is a good story that affirms recovery and spirited independence. As the reader comes to recognize, Caroline is a strong young woman who is invested with strength and substance. She first challenges the established authority and oppression of her husband and then chooses to reunite herself with him when he comes to acknowledge her existence not as that of "helpmeet," but as that of a woman of autonomy. Also, in "The Swanstream Match," Stoddard presents a woman who at first almost weds herself to death through her inability to seek mature womanhood. However, having become fully aware of the folly inherent in her attempt to resist gratifying her authentic needs, Constance awakens from her self-imposed living death, gives way to the impulses of love and romance that are throbbing in her generously, discovers a passionate love with Angus, and forges an eternal commitment with him. "The Visit" is another important story that shows Stoddard's genius for capturing the life of a brave, high-minded woman who does not practice submission, but assumes control over her life. In Anne, we see the creation of a truly evolving female character who has an independent power to learn more of the world, to shape her own course, and to force
her separate sovereign way. Over and over again, Stoddard peoples her fiction with women who are for the most part strong, or able to attain to strength. She depicts women of persisting power and assertion who come to awareness of who they are, accept themselves as entities, develop their powers to the fullest, and cultivate their individuality. On the whole, her women characters come to endorse female autonomy and to testify to the enduring power and strength of the female.
Notes

1It is important to note that Stoddard's pieces of short fiction include autobiographical sketches that recount in first person form what appear to be Stoddard's own experiences in New England and New York City. Some of these sketches are: "My Twa [sic] Dogs," Independent 20 July 1893: 970-71, and "My June Jaunt," Independent 21 July 1892: 18 August 1892; 25 August 1892: 1008; 1146-1147; 1182-1183. For a complete bibliography of Stoddard's short stories, see James Matlack; "Literary Career" 625-31.


4In "Lemorne Versus Huell," Stoddard shows that women can be co-conspirators in their own victimization and destruction. Margaret Huell's oppression is not simply male-engendered; rather, her life is ruined because she herself is unable to take control of it and because she incorporates the ideology of her oppression into her sense of identity. When she complains, "I was not allowed to give myself--I was taken" (280), the fault is as much hers as it is her husband's, Edward Uxbridge. Uxbridge has asked Margaret, "Speak of yourself," and her only answer is "speak you" (279). Margaret is victimized because she disregards her own individuality and consents to be blind.


   It should be noted that Stoddard published in Harper's in 1868 another story entitled "The Visit." Even though both stories share the same title, they are different in subject matter.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

From the end spring new beginnings.
Pliny the Elder, Historia Naturalis

Elizabeth Stoddard is a curious phenomenon among American women writers in the second half of the nineteenth century. Beyond any doubt, she is a groundbreaker in the realm of fiction. She not only eludes and transgresses the traditional strategies of the sentimental genre, but she also transcends them and comes up with counter strategies that enable her to portray her vision of life and her conception of feminine freedom. Stoddard's treatment of plot devices and characterization are not in tune with the literary spirit and the prevailing paradigms of her age. In her fiction, she sets out to explore the dark underside of the psyche, to penetrate the depths of human nature, and to give an account of reality as it is humanely experienced. She authentically and poignantly presents the woman's Bildung or growth, her awakening, and her self-redefinition. She does not attempt to hide her woman's spirit and personality behind a tinsel façade of conventional charms. In fact, she is one of the first women writers to debunk most of the Victorian myths and to provide us with a window to a new women's lives. Her female heroes are not architects of the cult of domesticity. They actually dare defy convention and brazenly reach and strain for what they desire. They go on a quest of self-discovery, search for
the meanings of the inner self, explore their own individuality, and discover the hidden embers in their hearts. In the course of their Bildung, they experience a rite of passage--from innocence or ignorance to knowledge, from inability to ability to cope with the circumstances of their lives. The quest of the female protagonists is not for reconciliation with society, but for inner harmony and discovery of values that transcend the discord of society. Essentially, the female protagonists find personal peace through reflection and self-examination.

Stoddard is far ahead of her time. She, in fact, prefigures many later American women writers, including Kate Chopin, Willa Cather, and Edith Wharton. Her lively and insightful contributions to American fiction, although forgotten or ignored in much twentieth-century discourse, are central to the development of a uniquely American literary voice. To be sure, Stoddard's voice is not a weak or invisible literary voice. Certainly, she speaks in a voice that is grounded in the real and the observable.

Articulating the private lives of women, her fiction both records and transcends the struggle of what Marge Piercy has called "Unlearning to not speak" (38). The women characters who occupy a central position in her fiction are not reluctant to mature; they grow up rather than grow down to their roles. They do not try to build their own walls or to hide behind the walls of a fantasy childhood world. They choose instead to trust themselves and to seek their own identity, and they learn to proceed outward rather than to retreat inward, recreating their world through the power of their faith in the self. As they gain self-awareness and as they begin to see themselves as subjects rather than objects, they cease being victims; as they learn to accept the rational and
the irrational, they help free the world they live in from the patriarchal straitjacket in which women especially have felt powerless. The magic and creative power of the self can alone enable the individual to transform the world.

Stoddard's strength lies in the creation of fully-developed characters of great psychological depth and emotional intensity. She once stated that her main interest as a writer was in depicting human existence in its subtle, complex, true meaning, stripped of the veil with which ethical and conventional standards have draped it. She, therefore, does not rely on disruptive melodramatic plot devices, on stock characters, and on formulaic rhetoric. Instead, she revises or rewrites this standard material into variations on the theme of woman in search of herself. Cassandra, Philippa, Roxalana, Tempe, Virginia, Caroline, Constance, Anne, all are skillfully drawn portraits that create complex women characters who understand their instincts, define them, and follow them. These strong-willed, self-assertive, hearty, sexual, and autonomous women do not acquiesce to conventions of woman's identity and social role. They are expansionist rather than reductionist in temperament, and their potential for development is filled with possibilities. They shatter the boundaries of the ideal woman and the restraints placed upon them by the prevailing ethos of white, genteel womanhood, set sail without a compass to guide them upon the stormy sea of society, launch themselves upon the world, and fulfill their freedom and independence. Moreover, they come to establish a relationship of equals with the men they love and later marry, even though choosing not to marry does become a viable option for them, as it has always been for men. Marriage is not viewed as a trap and a temptation, for
it is evident that men come to regard women as persons with needs and rights of their own, not as a chattel. To marry, then, is not to forego a love of space and to give up vistas of freedom and one's flair for independence. Obviously, Stoddard calls for social change through her ideas on marriage as a union of equals, of a woman and a man who complement each other.

No discussion of Stoddard's three novels can ignore the unique contribution she has made to the female Bildungsroman through her examination of female roles. Stoddard has produced her novels in the tradition of the Bildungsroman in which women strive against the debilitating nineteenth-century social and religious conventions and come to awareness through self-discovery and self-analysis. In fact, her commitment to the expansion of consciousness tempts one to call her three novels an example of George Lukács's theory of the novel: "the adventure of interiority; the story of the soul that goes to find itself, that seeks adventures in order to be proved and tested by them, and, by proving itself, to find its own essence" (89). Of course, Stoddard's female heroes, like Cassandra, Philippa, and Virginia, act out their lives in female roles proffered them by society, roles they consciously or unconsciously assume, until through painful growth, or through the rejection of certain roles, they come to awareness of who they are. These women fall back on their own resources, reconstruct their own lives, and achieve as full and healthy a womanhood as anyone can imagine.

Stoddard's power to engross or absorb the reader is tremendously powerful. Oblique, metaphoric associational patterns are basic characteristics of her writing.
Surely, her writing is not transparent but something to be decoded and reconstructed through the reader's collaborative efforts. There is always the sense of a more powerful, silent subtext, sometimes erotic, sometimes hostile. In this rendering of a multileveled, richly metaphoric atmosphere, the reader is not only forced to follow the flow of associations and to read between the lines, but he is also called upon to fill in spaces and silences by means of a creative and synthesizing reading of the text. The forceful and explosive images that Stoddard inscribes in her novels and plants in her reader's head are ones of occult psychological forces. In fact, everything she wrote seems crisp, pointed, bright, and bold. It is clear that Stoddard practices primarily what Virginia Woolf has called "shapely" sentences. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf remarks that "a book is not made of sentences laid end to end, but of sentences built, if an image helps, into arcades or domes" (83). Stoddard has fashioned her sentences consciously in order that they may descend to the depths and investigate the crannies of her women's consciousness. Her prose style enables her to deal with the psychic, personal, emotional, inner details of life in a way that is neither didactic nor authoritarian.

Like other nineteenth-century American women writers who seem to be erased from the history of American literature and consigned to oblivion, Stoddard unfortunately appears only as a footnote, an aside, in the narrative of American literature. She should be brought back into the mainstream, for she not only belongs to the better-known middle-class "woman's fiction" of her day, but she also makes significant contributions to the field of literature. What makes her fiction assume
monumental proportions is that it evolves from a feminine internalization of the
dominant sentimental standards into a feminist search for autonomy. In an era when
women's literature was expected to present a feminine ideal, Stoddard depicts women
of substance who spurn conventions and who focus at length and in depth on their
own needs and development. Significantly, her female heroes prove the truth of
Ernest Earnest's perceptive observation that the fictional portraits of the American
woman of the nineteenth century "were vastly more lively, able, full-blooded and
interesting human beings than we have been led to suppose" (270). Stoddard is
valuable as an individual writer and also as part of a larger female tradition. Her
fiction lives not only because it presents interesting views of women's changing roles
but also because it taps into human experience. Such fiction transforms life into art,
and through that creative act it teaches us, arouses us, pleases us, nourishes us—all of
us, male and female. Before long, the recognition that Stoddard has always deserved
will come, and the compelling body of fiction she left us will attain its well-deserved
niche in the canon of American literature. Stoddard will finally come of age.
Notes

1For Stoddard's aesthetic vision and her philosophy, see Chapter three of this dissertation in its entirety.

2Elaine Showalter's 1975 observation about male bias remains disturbingly clear today:

   It is still astounding to read the annual PMLA bibliographies and discover the discrepancies between the critical energies lavished on male writers of very modest attainments and the underdevelopment of research on scores of women novelists, dramatists, and poets, whose books are unobtainable, whose lives have never been written, whose letters are uncollected, and whose works have been studied casually, if ever. (442)

Works Cited


200


Epstein, Barbara Leslie. *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and


---. "Literary Folk as they Came and Went with Ourselves." *Saturday Evening Post* 2, 30 June 1900. 1126-27, 1222-23.


---. *The Morgesons and Other Writings, Published and Unpublished, by Elizabeth*


Rev. of Two Men, by Elizabeth Stoddard. The Round Table 11 Nov. 1865: 148.


