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Ernestine Rose

Women's Rights and the Wrongs of Marriage in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America *by Françoise Basch*

INTRODUCTION

In the nineteenth century the oppression of women appeared starkly in the marriage relation: wedding bells rang in major inequalities between bride and bridegroom and sternly prescribed different gender roles. In spite of the reform of married women's property laws beginning in mid-century, the act of marriage, both legal and religious, sanctioned a rigidly patriarchal relationship. Throughout the century, the official discourse on women, denigrating the relatively autonomous 'spinster' and exalting the powerless wife and mother, imposed an inverted image of reality.

Imbedded in the 'reform' discourse of ante bellum America, strictures on marriage appeared in such disparate trends as temperance, anti-slavery, spiritualism, and utopianism. Their arguments followed two main diverging lines, one directed against the repression of sex and of the individual,

the other against the subjection of women. This essay focuses on the critique of marriage, expressed and conceptualized by the early American women's rights movement, in the context of wide ranging political, intellectual, and religious ferment.

The women's rights advocates, from their very origins, had addressed the slavery of wifehood, making it the paradigm of female oppression, and the battlecry of emancipation. Indeed the battle for the improved legal and social status of married women broadened into the fight for political rights, so that marriage appeared as a metaphor for the complexities of both the public and private spheres.

The women's rights movement undertook a major onslaught on marriage, but similar ideas and aspirations circulated freely among the reformers, especially the Spiritualists and the Utopian socialists. Since these two groups made the critique of marriage central to their philosophy, and began officially at approximately the same time (1848), and in the same area (New York State), they deserve a brief mention in this study.

From the 1840s, Spiritualism in ante bellum America expressed a longing for individual freedom against hierarchies of all kinds, and a denial of sin and damnation. In a period of acute social anxiety, the belief in the communication with the spirits of the dead served to assuage the terrors of death and of final separation. Within this context, some spiritualists rebelled against the constraints of marriage and a minority even rallied to the cry of 'free love', a term which implied a variety of positions, ranging from support for divorce, to bolder and more imaginative forms of sexual union, and which included the emancipation of women.

Utopian communities were inspired by Enlightenment rationalism and belief in progress, as well as by the millenarian philosophy of the Revivalist movement which spread in the eastern United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. These alternative societies evolved models of total chastity (Shakers), rigid systems of 'complex marriage' (Oneida), or of complete individual freedom (Modern Times). In one form or another, marriage was questioned, and the oppression of women recognized. At the same time, these pioneers strove to transform the conjugal cell, the 'isolated home,' incorporating it into a larger community. In this pursuit of a freer and more equal marriage relationship, Spiritualists and Utopians shared some of the aspirations of the women's rights movement.

Two main preoccupations run through this paper. One concerns the discourse on marriage in the women's rights movement, its ideological origins, impact and coherence. The other examines the scope and depth of the feminist attacks on marriage. Were they launched as reforms to repair defective institutions? Or did their proponents, either deliberately or unconsciously, set out to totally subvert the dominant order and patriarchal values?

Most feminist historians have downplayed the issue of marriage in the women's rights movement and have seen the suffragists' attitude as reformist and basically domestically oriented, or, as Nancy Cott put it, 'at one with esteem for home and the family.'¹ Blanche Glasman Hersh interprets nineteenth-century feminist ideology as 'the basic acceptance of marriage and the family as central social institutions.'² Ellen DuBois shifts the discussion; to her the real boldness of the movement lay in the passage from the traditionally 'feminine' private sphere to the public arena, previously exclusively male.³ In the pages that follow, I wish to qualify these perspectives. To be sure, marriage and the family were not the only targets of the new suffragist movement, and the private domain still held most women in its thrall. But we should not understate the militants' growing ambivalence about the notion of 'Woman's sphere'. While transcending 'public' and 'private' they saw them as intimately connected.⁴ In order to shed more light on these questions and suggest a revaluation, I propose taking a closer look at the underpinnings of the suffragist critique, their strategies, their emotional and ideological discourse.

Ante bellum America was teeming with crusades, causes, reforms and philanthropical schemes. Among them, the Temperance and the Anti slavery movements played a crucial role in the history of American women. The two main ideological inspirations at work in this reform effervescence were the evangelical movement, kindled by religious Revivals, and the philosophy of the Rights of Man. Within this bipolar framework, women claimed the right to define both their specific sphere of action and their political and social emancipation. In the mid nineteenth century the institutions of marriage and the family were undergoing a major shift and the Women's Rights critique fed into an already powerful stream. Views differ as to the effects of these upheavals on the family and on the status of women. Some hold that, as industrial capitalism pushed production out of the home in the first half of the century, the fabric of the family loosened and its members, including women, became more independent of and less subservient to the patriarchal authority. Others argue that industrialization increased the subjection of women. Whatever the reasons, there were substantial changes in American marriage and family law in the nineteenth century, affecting both the relationship of husband and wife and of the married couple with the outside world. One manifestation of these shifting attitudes was the modification of the marital *property system which started in the 1830s. This process of reform⁵ originated not only with partisans of women's rights and reform eccentrics, but with practical minded mainstream politicians, eager to eradicate the legal and financial absurdities surviving from the past.⁶

The women's rights leaders presented a fairly homogeneous ethnic, class, religious and national identity. As daughters of farmers, sea captains, or merchants, of Universalist, Congregational, or Presbyterian clergymen, they shared a predominantly white, American, middle class

and Protestant background. Only Ernestine Rose's Polish Jewish origins set her apart from the others.⁷ Mainstream American, the women's rights movement did not include cranks or marginal personalities. (Mary Gove Nichols' and Victoria Woodhull's connections with the Movement were episodic.)⁸ They conceived their objective, the emancipation of women, within the dominant nineteenth century cultural intellectual framework, the ideals of the American Revolution and the ethics of evangelicalism. Although they could not vote and remained outside parties, their strategies and tactics followed normal American methods of political agitation. In this respect the women's rights group moved within the same power network as the establishment it attacked and, like Her Majesty's opposition, aimed mostly at reforming it.

OPPRESSION

Marriage, a subject of public discussion and struggle, appeared for many suffragists as a private preoccupation and anxiety. 'I am so well aware that society stands over a heaving volcano . . . that I am afraid to speak or think on the subject [of reforming marriage]', wrote Lydia Maria Child.⁹ For Elizabeth Cady Stanton, too, the urgency and scope of the marriage question seemed self evident.¹⁰ 'How this marriage question grows on me. It lies at the very foundation of all progress,' she wrote to Susan B. Anthony in June 1860.¹¹ In women's rights speeches woman's oppression, built into 'man made' marriage, was a recurring theme. Explicitly more interested in reform than in disruption, women's rights activists claimed not to attack marriage in and of itself but, 'man made marriage which makes man master, woman slave,'¹² 'I hate and repudiate that phrase, and the promiscuous relations that it seems to indicate . . .' Stanton declared, against the accusation that she supported 'easy divorce.'¹³ But the passionate tone and emotional metaphors of much of her writing on marriage create a different impression. Stanton's speech before the tenth National Women's Convention on May 10 and 11 1860 is a case in point. An experienced orator, familiar with rhetorical effects, she painted a terrifying fresco of marriage and the family: in this hell on earth, man sacrificed his victims on pagan altars, his wife 'the mother of the race' and his innocent children. In our time, said Stanton, the family, 'this great conservator of national virtue and strength, had become the scene of "debauchery and violence."'¹⁴ ' . . . The marriage relation is nought but a Pandora's box of woes unutterable.'¹⁵ The male brute's degenerate children, the tortured wife dying in India on her husband's funeral pyre, or more slowly in America from unwanted pregnancies, those were the actors of this modern tragedy.

Stanton was reinforced in her convictions by the poignant interest the marriage question, unlike that of suffrage, aroused among women.¹⁶ 'How the women flock to me with their sorrows . . .'¹⁷ she remarked when they

packed the halls where she spoke, making an indirect comment on how most women failed to relate political equality with personal oppression.

The emotionally explosive symbol of the slave summarized best the subjection of women, and the parallel haunted these feminists, many of whom had discovered their own oppression through anti-slavery struggle.

Woman is a slave, Stanton, Henry Blackwell, and Lucy Stone repeated, hardly different from southern Negroes;¹⁸ like them, she lost her name and must take on that of her owner; like them, she was sold to the highest bidder; like them she lost all her rights with marriage. Her dependence was in some ways worse, for she suffered 'the triple bondage of man, priest and law . . .'¹⁹ When only male ex-slaves were later given the right to vote with the Fifteenth Amendment, this reinforced male domination. Whatever the color, whatever the class, women lost everything through gender; and men gained everything their class allowed them. In 1859, well before the polemics on the Fifteenth Amendment, Stanton humorously remarked that this was not a good time to be a Negro or a woman. And, when she imagined Peter asking her where she wanted to sit in paradise, she would answer, 'Anywhere so I am neither a Negro nor a woman. Confer on me, good angel, the glory of white manhood, so that henceforth, sitting or standing, sitting up or lying down, I may enjoy the most unlimited freedom.'²⁰

Among all the accusations against marriage, the most significant and devastating was the wife's deprivation of her social identity. 'From the cradle to the grave she is another's . . . let us first obtain ourselves. Give us ourselves and all that belongs to us will follow', Ernestine Rose demanded.²¹ Losing her own name, for her oppressor's, another similarity with the slave, was seen as the sharpest symbol of the loss of not only identity but social and legal existence. Without a name the woman and the slave were only chattels. 'Ask your coloured brethren if there is nothing in a name. Why are the slaves nameless until they take that of their masters'? Simply because they have no independent existence.'²²

Rose and Stanton did not merely describe the different aspects of women's oppression, but analysed the patriarchal order responsible for this state of things. 'It must strike every careful thinker that an immense difference lies in the fact that man has made the laws . . . ' said Stanton.²³ Their acute consciousness of the political privileges of one gender group led them to consider women's political participation as a priority.

In order to demonstrate married women's specific oppression (single women were legally almost autonomous), partisans of the Cause referred to esoteric law treatises and used Latin quotations in their impassioned speeches.²⁴ Briefly, this is how they depicted women's status in the middle of the 19th century: the law makes the woman *femme covert sub potestate viri* or, in the terse eloquent phrase of the British lawyer, Blackstone, ' . . . the husband and wife are one, and that one is the husband . . . ' Married woman's total alienation – 'she is nameless, purseless, childless' –

was relentlessly analyzed and denounced.²⁵ Because of her legal non-existence, she could not sue or be sued, own any property, whether earned or brought into marriage, or have any rights in her children. Widows did not fare any better and the dead husband's property went to the children. Marriage, a system of 'legalized robbery', stripped all women, whether rich or poor.

Suffragist speakers displayed astonishing rhetorical skills in their brief against the condition of married women. Ernestine Rose, who looked at the condition of widows as exemplifying women's oppression, commented on their pathetic status with biting irony and an abundance of sordid details.

. . . the law kindly allows her her own wearing apparel, her own ornaments . . . one bed with appurtenances for the same, a stove, a Bible, family pictures . . . and also spinning wheels and weaving looms, one table, six chairs, ten cups and saucers, one tea pot . . . (much laughter). But the law does not inform us whether they are to be tea or table spoons; . . . The law allows the widow something more. She is allowed one cow, all sheep to the number of ten, with the fleeces . . . two swine and the pork therefrom.²⁶

Such a satirical inventory no doubt provided some comic relief but aimed primarily at arousing righteous indignation against cruel and absurd laws. At the same convention, Lucy Stone evoked the same theme in angry tones when she described the agony of a woman sequestered for three years by her husband. In view of all the 'bitter, bitter suffering of thousands of your sisters', prematurely white hair and lined faces, it would be more appropriate, Lucy Stone said, to speak of A Woman's Wrongs rather than of A Woman's Rights Movement. Not everybody in the audience sympathized, and the speeches seemed to have received a mixed response. 'Hiss-s-s! Bow-ow-ow! Men, women and bloomers! Pantalooned mob as aforesaid: Oh! dry up!'²⁷

Often activists also questioned the contemporary ideal of the scene of marriage, the Home. 'Sheerest humbug',²⁸ said one woman who denounced it as another verbal masquerade designed to gloss over the domestic and social aspects of woman's slavery. 'The last stronghold of woman's degradation . . . is the sacred enclosure of the Home', declared Stanton.²⁹ The suffragists discussed domestic slavery in terms suited to different milieux. They insisted on the overt degradation and brutality among the poorer classes and ridiculed the glorification of the middle class wife and mother. Stanton called the housewife 'the satellite of the dinner-pot; the presiding genius of the bath tub; . . . the gay butterfly of fashion; the femme covert of the law . . .'³⁰ She, like other suffragists, protested vehemently against the waste of energy and talent resulting from the stultifying life of the 'fairy of the Home', made worse by the 'spaniel wife'

mentality and the deplorable repression widespread among women.³¹ Stanton herself chafed against the confinement and drudgery of her own life. Ambivalent as she was about public life and conventions, she nonetheless expressed her **distress at being homebound**.³² And, by contrast, **her husband's independence aroused her obvious resentment**. 'As I contrast his freedom with my bondage, I feel that because of the false position of women, I have been compelled to hold all my noblest aspirations in abeyance in order to be a wife, a mother, a cook, a household drudge.'³³ Stanton's husband implied that her hostile feelings about married life included the procreative function. 'You must not frighten her half to death, by telling her constantly what a "horrid affair" it is. You must remind her of the royal courage of Victoria . . . ' he warned her, referring to a friend.³⁴

In Stanton's analysis, the slavery of women's domestic life was bitterly enhanced by the accepted code of hypocritical male courtesies to women. Nothing more ridiculous and inappropriate, she wrote humorously, than 'this walking to dinner two by two as did the animals in Noah's ark . . . ' If men wanted to help, let them share the chores, ' . . . help us get dinner, pick and prepare vegetables, . . . crack ice, etc. . . . '³⁵ **The discourse of chivalry struck her as a mere masquerade.**

* **The legal and domestic subjection of women in marriage which the feminists so passionately denounced proceeded mainly from what Stanton called 'the Husband's right of property in the wife . . . '**³⁶ **But the phrase included an explosive element, the husband's right of property to his wife's body and the control of procreation.**³⁷ The subject of sexual slavery, which did surface in women's rights meetings, was discussed more openly in female temperance circles. The temperance movement focused on the horror of poverty-stricken families victimized by the sinful intemperance of improvident husbands, or the worse horror of degenerate offspring conceived by alcoholic parents. Stanton had joined the movement in the early 1850s and became president of the New York section in 1852.³⁸ In her temperance speeches, she stigmatized the sexual and reproductive consequences of alcoholism more than the 'vice' itself, and she constantly **exhorted woman to fulfil both duties to herself and to mankind by denying her husband access to her body.**³⁹ * **Woman militants generally denounced the husband's right in the property in the wife's body both as an outrage that inflicted unwanted offspring on the wives⁴⁰ and as a system of 'legalized prostitution'⁴¹ which deeply offended woman's purity as well as the dictates of romantic love.**

Though rarely expressed directly, the woman's claim to control her body, under the slogan 'voluntary motherhood', became a suffragist demand, less loud than the insistence on the vote but no less imperative and quite clear by the 1870s.⁴² Before the emergence of moral reform in the 1870s, feminists could see no other way of dealing with man's 'gross animal nature' than trying to resist sexual advances or living separately. In

the 1850s and 1860s the women who approached the problem expressed such a distaste for man's physical nature, 'drunk with wine and passion', that the possibility of asking men to control their sexual urge seemed remote.⁴³

RESISTANCE: PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE

The discourse of protest against marriage originated in middle-class educated circles, among women unusually active in contemporary social movements, and in a context of unusual male comprehension and sympathy. They were certainly not representative of the rank and file of the women's rights movement, and much less of women in general. Yet their introduction of new symbols into accepted rituals, breaking away from the dominant discourse, was a significant step in the formulation of emancipation.

In a culture dominated by the domestic ideal, only a few voiced hostile comments on the married condition. The experience of those women's rights advocates known to have made a personal protest in their own lives is significant. Both Lucy Stone and Abby Kelley, engaged to be married to men they appreciated and loved, waited several years before finally taking the fateful step. Kelley's hesitations originated in her realistic fear of having to terminate her political activities after marriage. Public opinion, she feared, would impose on her the wife's traditional role, and, happy to get rid of a cumbersome abolitionist, push her into the home: '... they would say that I was *under obligation to take care of your public constitution and nurse you* ...' Conservative opinion had already interfered in her life and accused her of neglecting her mother.⁴⁴ When Abby Kelley, aged thirty-five, and Stephen Foster finally married, in 1845, it was in the simple Quaker style, 'priestless, cakeless, wineless', declaring 'their purposes to perform faithfully all the relative duties of husband and wife.'⁴⁵ Lucy Stone was thirty-seven when she married and her ambivalence sounded more like terror, with its attendant symptoms of panic and depression. Like Abby Kelley, an anti-slavery and suffragist militant, she understandably feared having to renounce her political activities. But the nature of her feelings appeared more complex and painful. She loathed the idea of losing the single woman's independence. 'I have planned and executed without counsel and without control. I have shared thought, and feeling and life with myself alone.'⁴⁶ A deep-seated anxiety coloured by sexual overtones, 'deep revulsion of feeling', increased her malaise. Henry Blackwell's 'feminism' made Stone's resistance appear more paradoxical. For not only had he decided to wait for her almost as long as Jacob for Rachel, fourteen years at least, but he promised her complete freedom as a wife. 'You are your own mistress and will always remain so.' Moreover, he legally guaranteed her her own property and earnings, and the exclusive right to decide 'where and how often you shall become a mother'. They

married on May 1, 1855 and instead of the marriage service they read the famous 'protest', in which Blackwell disavowed his privileges as a husband. He was thus fulfilling his earlier promise: 'I wish, as a husband, to renounce all the privileges which the law confers upon me, which are not strictly *mutual* . . . '

Like Olympia Brown and other suffragists, Lucy Stone decided to keep her own name, asking people to call her 'Mrs. Lucy Stone' and signing legal documents, 'Lucy Stone, wife of Henry Blackwell'.⁴⁷ But this was no easy step, encountered much resistance and branded one for life in the eyes of friends and foes. Many years later, when she chose to belong to the more traditional American Woman Suffrage Association rather than to the National, somebody would periodically bring up her former stand against the slavery of married women and contrast it with her present conformity.⁴⁸ Claiming her own name for a woman, and in some cases, her first name, was an affirmation of her identity and represented an important symbolic protest, enhanced by the analogy with slavery. 'When a slave escapes from a Southern plantation, he at once takes a name as the first step in liberty – the first assertion in individual identity. **A woman's dignity is equally involved in a life-long name, to mark her individuality**', Stanton wrote.⁴⁹ She herself was extremely sensitive on the use or omission of her first name.⁵⁰ Little did she expect that, to Anthony's consternation, her own daughter would introduce herself the day after her wedding in 1878 as 'Mrs. Eugene Lawrence', thus taking on not only one new male surname but also a male Christian name.⁵¹ The rebellion against traditional marriage also took the form of changing the marriage service, either by rewriting it or by omitting the word 'obey'.⁵²

Apart from these individual escapes, **militant women voiced their criticism of marriage in organized political action. The two public campaigns directly related to the status of the wife demanded 'property rights for women' and the liberalization of divorce. The first aimed at securing married women their property, whether inherited or acquired.** The campaign started in 1836, twelve years before Seneca Falls, with Ernestine Rose and Paulina Wright as the main fighters. After two defeats in 1836 and 1840, and eight more years of strenuous but more collective efforts, **the first Married Women's Property Act was voted on April 1848 in New York State. It gave wives control over the property they owned at the time of their marriage. But they had to wait until 1860 for the Earnings Act and the Act on Rights and Liabilities of Husband and Wife to grant them financial and legal autonomy, as well as equal rights over their children.**⁵³

The campaign for the liberalization of divorce involved a more radical stand, based as it was on the questioning of key principles of the dominant marriage ideology. **Deeply opposed to the intrusion of religion into public and private life, the supporters of divorce in the mid-19th century (coming from suffragist, spiritualist and utopian socialist circles) viewed marriage as a contract that could be dissolved, and not as a religious life-binding**

commitment. Unlike spiritualists and utopians, whose ideas centered on the rejection of dogma and hierarchy, such questioning of authority played little part in the concerns of the woman's rights movement and challenged deep-seated cultural habits. Only a few leaders – Stanton, Rose, Anthony, and Stone – spoke out clearly for divorce reform. Stanton's concern with this question persisted long after the main agitation in the 1860s.⁵⁴ The McFarland case, for instance, in which a man convicted of murder was granted custody of his child, confirmed her determination to put all her energy towards 'the entire revision of the laws of New York on marriage and divorce . . .'.⁵⁵ Even if, on the other hand, the more subtle task of teaching 'women her duties to herself in the home . . .' also appeared urgent.⁵⁶

The imperious necessity of divorce dawned on Stanton during her temperance days in the 1850s.⁵⁷ Early on, she declared her intention to struggle towards making drunkenness grounds for divorce, thus linking the two battles, temperance and women's rights. In a six point program, she drew up a drastic plan of ostracizing drunks, particularly within the family. 'Let no woman remain in relation of wife with the confirmed drunkard. Let no drunk be the father of her children, etc.'⁵⁸ **The evil of male drunkenness, rum-maddened husbands and fathers', 'brutal drunkards',** exacerbated by women's helplessness, haunted Stanton and others. Strategically, the theme of male intemperance, whether outlined as a social disease, or evidence of the male's evil nature, served as powerful ammunition for divorce reform among liberals and traditionalists as well. And the image of the woman brutalized by her drunk husband, a powerful paradigm of the female predicament, served several purposes: a call to rescue victimized females and to save such middle class values as the ethic of work, self control, abstinence, family; it justified middle class women in reprimanding the men in the lower classes; elicited the support of poor women; and generally aroused female militancy.

Beyond the responsibility of individual men, Stanton, as well as Rose and Stone, held that the church's indiscriminate opposition to divorce was responsible for the social disaster of **the drunken husband which ruined families, brutalized wives, and produced degenerate children.** 'Their God sanctions violence, oppression, and wine-bibbing, and winks at gross moral delinquencies . . .' ranted Stanton somewhat confusedly.⁵⁹ **Opposition to religion and to the church was woven into suffragist ideology and practice.** Early on, the Garrisonian abolitionists had denounced the nefarious effects of clerical authority on women; and the conflict remained an issue for the women's movement until the Civil War. Stanton recounts dramatically how Garrison, 'in a few bold strokes of the hammer of his truth . . .' had freed her from 'spiritual bondage'.⁶⁰

The issue of divorce came up in full force at the 1860 National Woman's Rights Convention, where, encouraged by the impending discussion of a new bill, Stanton decided to raise the question and to present ten

resolutions to support it. In terms of success the issue appeared premature. The same year the New York Legislature repealed the bill in an atmosphere of hatred and anger, and, torn apart, the Woman's Rights convention rejected Stanton's resolutions.⁶¹ In fact, Stanton's decision to broach the problem at a Woman's Convention was only approved by her closest supporters, and aroused considerable and unexpected hostility. Even Lucy Stone proved extremely ambivalent, first uttering doubts as to the appropriateness of the subject for a woman's meeting, then, later, just before the event, expressing guarded encouragement, and finally joining the anti-divorce camp at the convention.⁶² The divorce partisans had not expected such fierce opposition, but after the fact, Stanton reflected '... we have thrown our bombshell into the center of woman's degradation and of course we have raised a rumpus.'⁶³

The debate on divorce at the 1860 Convention revealed the ideological poles within feminism. On the conservative side, the Reverend Antoinette Brown made an eloquent plea against divorce based on arguments such as the nature of the indissoluble marriage tie, and woman's duty to sacrifice herself and accomplish a moral and religious mission.⁶⁴ 'I must seek first to regenerate him, the nearest and dearest to me . . .' Her model of true womanhood conformed to tradition. In addition, the opponents of divorce denied the inadequacy of marriage and, even in this suffragist stronghold, ignored the oppression of woman. For when Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison and others argued at the 1860 Convention that this topic should not be discussed at a women's gathering, because marriage concerned men and women equally, they denied the fundamental principle of the feminist analysis, the inequality between the conditions of the sexes.⁶⁵ 'Marriage has ever been a one sided matter resting most unequally between the sexes. By it man gains all – woman loses all; . . . By law . . . woman has never been thought of other than a piece of property . . . She must accept marriage as man proffers it or not at all, . . .' Anthony wrote.⁶⁶

Stanton and Rose were not at a loss for arguments to debunk the so-called holiness of marriage. The stark tragic facts, mismatched partners, strife within families, martyrdom of wives, wretchedness and despair everywhere proved the depressingly human character of the institution.⁶⁷ Besides, Rose argued, because the main objective of marriage consisted in '... the happiness of the parties . . . concerned and secondly the welfare of society . . .' why consider it as eternal, why not dissolve it in cases of incompatibility, brutality, drunkenness, etc?⁶⁸ Both Rose and Stanton insisted on the necessity of divorce as opposed to separation, which maintained the divorce taboo and prevented the spouses from remarrying. The right to remarry affirmed the potential right of individuals to happiness in this world.

Not only did the opponents of divorce consider any attempt at reforming marriage as the open door to sin, a Pandora's box of vice and immorality,

not only did the convention reject the pro divorce resolutions, but the press added insult to defeat by accusing the suffragists of propagating free love. 'I began to feel as if I had inadvertently taken out the underpinning from the social system', said Stanton.⁶⁹ Indeed, public opinion responded to the demand for divorce as if it were a bomb intended to blow up society at large, blurring in their indignation the complex ideological fabric of the pro divorce discourse, with its three main strands: the romantic longing for 'a union of soul to soul', the demand for equality in marriage, and a global if implicit attack against male power, biologically based and culturally constructed.

FREE LOVE

The accusation of free love was hurled against any attempt at marriage reform, whether articulated by woman's rights advocates or by any other Reformer. 'Free love was casually associated both with Woman's Rights and with socialism,' Mari Jo Buhle writes.⁷⁰ Free Lovers did generally support woman's emancipation in ante bellum America. Woman reformers did not escape this thinly-veiled accusation of promiscuousness and immorality which regularly came up in the press.⁷¹ The women's rights movement responded negatively to these accusations and partisans of free love were rare among them. Even a bold critic of marriage like Ernestine Rose did not approve of free love. She viewed divorce not only as an escape for women from bad marriage, from 'legalized prostitution', but as a means of avoiding the 'crimes and immoralities' of free love, a sensible *via media* between woman's slavery and a frightening outlaw territory.⁷² In no way did she condone or aspire to total freedom in personal and sexual relationships. But in spite of her relatively clear position, Rose did not escape the stigma of free love. At the 'Free Convention of the Friends of Human Progress' in Rutland, Vermont, in 1858, a picturesque gathering of reformers, her name was associated with that of a certain Julia Branch. In fiery oratory, Branch had irrevocably condemned the institution of marriage and the family, which she decried as particularly destructive among the poorer classes, and defended the right of 'women to choose the father of their children'.⁷³ Rose supported a different resolution, drafted by Stephen Foster, which defended 'exclusive conjugal love based on perfect equality between one man and one woman . . . the only true home . . . the isolated home . . .' and explicitly dissociated herself from Branch's anarchic and free love overtones.⁷⁴ Still the *New York Times* reports referred to both women as free lovers. And Rose never quite lost that stigma.⁷⁵ Beyond Rose's personal reputation and her interest in Utopian socialist communities, the accusation of free love clearly aimed at discrediting the woman's rights and the reform movements.

The fear of free love, as myth and reality, in suffragist circles, was illustrated by two incidents involving the anarchist free lover, Stephen

Pearl Andrews. At the 1853 Woman's Convention in New York, he introduced himself to suffragist Clarina I. H. Nichols as the founder of 'Modern Times' (a free love community on Long Island) and asked permission to discuss his ideas 'with the leading advocates of the movement with a view to co-operation.'⁷⁶ Nichols, 'shocked out of all courteous circumlocution . . .', rejected his ideas out of hand, and she did not feel any better disposed towards him when he developed his views further.⁷⁷ Andrews attended another convention in 1858: According to a *New York Times* report, his attempt at launching a discussion on 'the right (of woman) to change and experiment' was not taken up, drowned in Anthony's and Rose's strategically vague remarks.⁷⁸ Clearly, free love had no place in the public image of a movement in search of mass support and legal change.

While not suited to the needs and tolerance of the rank and file, free love as a paradigm of freedom represented a tempting intellectual challenge to an unconventional personality like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one who 'reached beyond the accepted beliefs of her contemporaries to investigate daring, often heretical ideas . . .'⁷⁹ In an undated letter where she drew up a list of the current accusatory terms catalyzing fear and hostility, she included the phrase 'Free love', together with 'woman infidel', 'strong-minded woman', 'blue stocking', etc.⁸⁰ But in a speech given in 1869 in New York City, she dealt openly and at some length with the subject.⁸¹ Like all free lovers and some feminists, she protested against the interference of religion and law in private life, stating with quasi anarchist optimism that laws were unnecessary except for bad people. Thus she seemed to support unequivocally total freedom in relationships outside any constraint or model. Choosing a partner for life, for example, was part of this new found freedom, she explained paradoxically. But Stanton ventured further into subtler areas of psychology and dwelt on the possibility of mutual oppression, 'through the right of ownership over the other'.⁸² This vehement attack against the possessiveness and dependence, which structured most monogamous relationships in or outside marriage, seemed to carry a personal echo, and beyond the parameters of reform and struggle, pointed to the necessity of redefining human relationships towards more individual freedom.

The substance of Stanton's message as well as the metaphors she used indicate that she fully realized the hazards of such a voyage into the unknown. 'Think twice' she said to those who decided to embark on the ship of freedom, for this was only a first step. 'The next better thing is wisdom.' Her obvious excitement at novelty and risk-taking suggests her vision of feminism as a sweeping revolutionary force.⁸³ Quoting the well known spiritualist, Andrew Jackson Davis, she humorously warned against the snares of fad diets and non-conformity: 'If anybody began with bran bread, he was sure to end up with infidelity'.⁸⁴ No one could calculate or predict the consequences of the woman's struggle. But one thing was

certain: equality for women would 'revolutionize' the family and spread further. For, in a society in which man, according to John Stuart Mill, was not prepared to live with an equal in private or in political life, real female equality could only be achieved at the price of a revolution. (Stanton, of course, rarely indulged such apocalyptic vision in public speaking, for neither the discourse on sexual freedom nor the call for revolutionary upheaval suited her audience at large.⁸⁵)

The Woodhull episode further illustrates the woman's rights leaders' attitude towards free love. During the brief but significant idyll between the Suffragists and Victoria Woodhull, it became increasingly clear that the former would not and could not endorse extreme views on marriage or free love. The suffragists worked with Woodhull as long as she was useful to the Cause, notwithstanding her notorious reputation, her stand on sexual freedom, and her radicalism. They used her insight into the Constitution and her aura of fascinating newcomer on the suffrage scene. But before long, her controversial views and way of life, which fed the righteous wrath of the other suffragist camp, The American Woman's Suffrage Association, rang the death knell of their association. And largely under Susan B. Anthony's strong arm and sense of strategy, Woodhull was put aside. Not unexpectedly, Stanton was the only suffragist to continue for a time to support and defend Woodhull.

IDEOLOGY

We need at this stage to tease out the ideological strands that run through the discourse of the suffragist critique of marriage and define its intellectual heritage. Structured around two main trends, the feminists' thinking on the subject pointed on the one hand to the philosophy of the 'natural rights of man', derived from the principles of the American Revolution and the eighteenth century Enlightenment tradition. On the other, it drew its inspiration from the evangelical creed which preached the conversion of sinners and salvation, and posited the moral superiority and the redeeming mission of the 'mothers of the race'.⁸⁶

Ernestine Rose, the most articulate advocate of the natural rights theory, equated the three concepts, 'natural', 'human', and 'man' as found in the American Declaration of Independence. Nothing therefore, she and Paulina Wright Davis argued, could justify excluding women from the principles 'that all men are created free and equal . . .'.⁸⁷ Women, 'one half of the people of this Republic', had arbitrarily been stripped of their natural rights and, like the slaves, had to be freed from crushing tyranny.⁸⁸

Rose added a distinctly European grist to the rationalist mill. Born in a Jewish ghetto, in Russian-dominated Poland, she had experienced political and racial oppression. The struggle for the emancipation of women represented for her one episode of the warfare against 'the despotism of kings and the bigotry of priests'.⁸⁹ Unique in the suffragist movement, her

anticlericalism and revolutionary rhetoric came out in full force at the Worcester Convention of October 1851. In her spoken reply to the letter of congratulations written by Jeanne Deroin and Pauline Roland to their American sisters,⁹⁰ she lamented the new French rulers' betrayal of the principles of 'liberté, égalité, fraternité'.⁹¹

Rose loathed and abhorred the church as the main instrument of women's oppression. Countering Antoinette Brown at the 1852 convention, she refuted both her attempts at legitimating woman's emancipation through the Bible and the principle of authority itself.⁹² The oppressed, she argued, have to fight for their freedom, not wait for the oppressor to grant it. 'When the inhabitants of Boston converted their harbour into a teapot rather than submit to unjust taxes, they did not go to the Bible for their authority . . .'⁹³ A self styled 'infidel', Rose's anticlericalism and to some extent her foreign origin, had not only aroused fierce hostility at many of her public appearances but isolated her within a still largely Christian woman's movement. 'Mrs. Rose is not appreciated, nor can be by this age . . .' wrote Anthony, who, for all her sympathy and admiration, failed to understand Rose's bitterness.⁹⁴

It followed logically from the 'natural rights' idea that both men and women belonged to one human nature. 'Humanity recognizes no sex; mind recognizes no sex; virtue and vice, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, life and death recognize no sex.' stated Rose.⁹⁵ Rose consistently and Stanton sometimes viewed the difference between the sexes as an artificial construct designed to justify selfish male interests. To prove her point, Rose quoted a statement from Roebuck, an English MP, cynically explaining his opposition to women's political activity by his need for the 'perfect, soothing, gentle peace' at home, indispensable to him after a day 'sullied by politics'.⁹⁶ Men had invented an idea of woman's nature designed to serve their own ends, said Stanton. 'What is man's idea of womanliness? It is to have a manner which pleases him – quiet, deferential, submissive, approaching him as a subject does a master.'⁹⁷

The rationalist approach to women's rights implied definite strategies and priorities in the struggle. Even though Stanton sometimes expressed doubts and was tempted to deal with the 'social' first (meaning domestic and personal), the movement's consensus placed top priority on the demand for the vote. Faithful to the liberal democratic tradition, they trusted political institutions and believed that the vote for women would change and improve the private as well as the public sphere.⁹⁸ 'The ballot box is the focus of all other rights . . .' Rose wrote.⁹⁹ The more far sighted militants did not see the quest for political rights as an end in itself but as the thrust which would burst open the prison of the home and revolutionize marriage, if not abolish it.

The idea of woman's innate superiority competed and intermixed with the human rights view of men and women. According to Mary Ryan the idea of the superior and specific nature of woman began to evolve in the

1840s, as many women joined in the romantic and Victorian worship of exquisitely sensitive and morally exceptional womanhood.¹⁰⁰ The domestic novels stressed the difference between the sexes in terms of complementarity, but the militant women's discourse asserted female superiority in more aggressive terms. Within this cult of true womanhood many questions were asked: did these differences between the sexes originate from biology or culture, were they permanent or temporary?¹⁰¹ Answers varied of course. Harriot Hunt maintained that, whatever the differences between the sexes, it would be absurd to exacerbate them by inculcating boys and girls with different habits.¹⁰² You should no more teach them differently than feed them differently. Rose demanded equality between the sexes, with or without difference,¹⁰³ whereas Antoinette Brown used her belief in the physical and mental difference between the sexes to argue that men were constitutionally unable to represent women. So whether in doubt or in certainty about the problem, they all concurred in the demand for equality.

Over the years Stanton expressed contradictory opinions on the subject. Much of her analysis went to show that society, i.e. men, had a vested interest in constructing a model of female-specific nature that would justify their hegemony. She leaned therefore towards a cultural model of gender difference. But more often, she explicitly and implicitly set off women's perfection against the abysmal inferiority of the male race, thus suggesting an innate difference between the sexes. Masculine nature seemed to be the target of her assault on the male animal appetites that inevitably aroused female revulsion: '... her whole soul revolting at such gross association! Her flesh shivering at the contamination of that embrace!'¹⁰⁴

In the sweeping accusations combining moral censure and physical distaste, she included men of her own class, equally given to intemperance, equally afflicted with a repulsive appearance, betraying their animal nature.¹⁰⁵ In May 1852, she wrote:

I have no desire to sit in council with vulgar, rum-drinking, wine-bibbing, tobacco-chewing men, with thick-lipped voluptuaries, gourmands and licentiate . . . who resort to fist-cuffing, drinking and duelling . . . to state nice questions of honor and statesmanship.¹⁰⁶

Her obsession with men's grossness, expressed in the tone and the metaphors, such as drunken brutes and thick-lipped louts, suggested strong overtones of physical violence and rape. When she wrote 'Woman's degradation is man's idea of his sexual rights', she showed her ability to distance herself from her emotional outburst.¹⁰⁷ But whether emotional or analytical, her message stated the moral and physical incompatibility between the sexes. Totally undesirable, the apes should definitely be removed to their own planet.¹⁰⁸

The theme of innate or acquired male brutality persisted through several

decades in the women's rights movement. Elizabeth Pleck convincingly argues that Stanton and Anthony's preoccupation with crimes against women began in the 1850s with their activity in the Temperance Movement at the same time as Stanton's attempt to make cruelty and 'habitual drunkenness' grounds for divorce. It increased in the 1860s as Stanton and Anthony became involved in some famous criminal cases on behalf of female victims. Even though in the 1870s the fight against violence to women merged with that of social purity, for Stanton and Anthony the victimization of women, routinely associated with slavery, remained closely connected with inequality in the family and the abuses of marriage.¹⁰⁹ The 'conservative feminists', Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell, held similar views and railed against the 'hydra-headed monster' of intemperance and male licentiousness.¹¹⁰ Both radical and conservative feminists advocated extreme punishment for wife beaters and rapists.

Outside women's circles, Robert Dale Owen expressed a similar tension between masculine baseness and female purity in his remarks on divorce. The overtones of marital rape are clear in his contrast between the 'pure, gentle, blameless Christian wife' and the 'bloated wretch', the 'Caliban' and in the equation of masculinity with animality: 'The bedchamber is his; the bed is the beast's own lair.'¹¹¹ In a recent article on the exchange of ideas between two feminist writers, Anna Jameson in England and Sarah Grimke in the US, during the 1850s, Gerda Lerner identifies contemporary attacks against male sexuality and 'the horrors of forced maternity' as unmistakable 'euphemisms for marital rape.'¹¹²

So the passionate rhetoric against men, tormenters of women, both in upper and lower classes, was in the air. Stanton's heavy handed attack on masculinity expressed not only her own feelings but embodied a collective value judgment that had originated in Temperance circles and was later echoed in campaigns from various parts of the women's movement.

The contemporaneous discourse on the family encouraged a Manichean view of the world which condemned men and idealized women. Stanton had her moments of ambivalence towards the idea of woman's superiority and proved quite capable of contradicting herself. But on the whole, she idealized women as excessively as she had reviled men. Not only did she endow them with perfection as mothers, teachers, and organizers, but she believed women had the ability to learn any profession they chose.¹¹³ Moreover, in the best Victorian tradition she assigned to them the special mission of abolishing male violence by female peace and justice. Like many of her contemporaries, she saw women as divine instruments of salvation of mankind.¹¹⁴ Only through woman's glorious mission (Sarah Grimke), 'her superior power' (Frances Gage) did man stand a very slim chance of redemption.

The idea of woman's mission and social responsibility seemed to originate obscurely from her maternal function.¹¹⁵ 'As mothers of the race,

there is a spiritual insight, a divine creative power that belongs to women' wrote Stanton.¹¹⁶ Whatever the exact nature of this mission, it prescribed the preservation of the race as the imperative duty of 'scientific mothers'.¹¹⁷ Stanton's eugenic preoccupation with 'enlightened motherhood' sometimes took on alarming proportions: 'A High sense of justice will restrain the nervous, the feeble, the diseased from entailing their weaknesses from other generations. In China they whip the Father for the child's short-comings . . .'¹¹⁸ However alarming the implications of the eugenic crusade, one can read in it the demand for women's right to their bodies, the refusal of access or control of procreation, in the context of a respectable scientific pursuit.

Woman's superiority, man's baseness, woman's oppression, male tyranny, these contrasts couched in many different ways already structured women's rights thinking in the early days. As early as 1848, Gerda Lerner detects a 'polarized view of the sexes' in the 'Declaration of Sentiments', and in Sarah Grimke's 'Sense of her Own Selfhood'.¹¹⁹ The impossibility of communication between men and women, other than in terms of oppression or violence, emerged early as a leitmotiv in feminist discourse and continued as a part of it for several decades. How could one imagine a common future in a heterosocial order? How could such a damning appraisal fail to suggest a separatist solution? Avoiding marriage was a step in the right direction. Without the possibility of divorce, warned Stanton, 'beware of putting your head into [the marriage] noose'.¹²⁰ Others suggested alternatives to marriage. Convinced that attitudes lagged far behind reforms, Anthony predicted that 'an epoch of single women' would provide a necessary transition between man-made marriage and a new more egalitarian relationship. Her community was a place where independent women, blissfully free from the marriage obsession, met men as equals: 'Lovely white cottages wreathed in vines, nestled midst gardens of vegetables and flowers . . . each a little Paradise save the presence of the historic Adam'.¹²¹ Earlier, an article in *The Una* voiced a similar desire to make single life both attractive and even financially profitable for unmarried women in a mixture of utopia and realism. Women in this communal framework could both invest their savings and enjoy freedom from domestic chores. 'If a sufficient number of such women join, all the domestic work would be divided among them . . . it seems to me that a good many ladies of small means, or discontented life and wasting it without objects, might make themselves homes in Rarity Bay'.¹²²

'We shall be our own lawyers and our own judges . . . our own jury too', Ernestine Rose had said in 1853.¹²³ In her universalist philosophy this statement pointed to a temporary stage before the glorious times to come, when humanity, justice and universal love would abolish class and sex barriers. As early as 1852 Stanton had contrasted more categorically the radically diverging interests of men and women. 'Let us have separate purses, separate schools and a new code of laws for our special benefit'.

This sounded like a boycott of a government, which denying the right of half of the human race, had waged 'war on the helpless nations, to enslave the helpless Africans, or hunt to death the red man of the soil . . . We consent not that one tithe of our money shall go to support such abominations.'

Viewed as a temporary or a lasting solution, a separate women's world was alluring to the early suffragists, and the separatist message rang loud and clear.¹²⁴

CONCLUSION

This survey of the women's rights discourse on marriage reveals views of the oppression of women, of the strategies of resistance, of gender differences and incompatibility, which explode far beyond the confines of a few piecemeal social reforms. Through the content of their arguments and the emotional power conveyed by tone, metaphor and symbols, these women boldly challenged the prevailing value system. Whether arguing from a 'natural rights' or from a 'true womanhood' position, they struck at the roots of Victorian patriarchy. Both these ideological trends made extreme and unattainable demands for the total overthrow of male dominated culture and politics, and for a radical change in human nature, based on the innate superiority of women and the inferiority of men. Feminists found the oppression of women by men so inextricably built into the social fabric, that the first basic step towards equality, the enfranchisement of women, implied no less than a major upheaval. So, while assuming that woman's vote would revolutionize public and private life, they also realized that entrenched male supremacy ruled out the whole undertaking. In this double message, confident radicalism alternated with realistic pessimism.

The theme of gender incompatibility naturally raised the question of the separation of the sexes. We hear the voices of these women, incensed by male tyranny, repelled by male grossness, suggesting a separate world of woman-identified women. Meanwhile, a few others evoked the remote possibility of harmonious relations between men and women, in a mood of utopian longing and wishful thinking. Upheaval, separatism, and revolution were sometimes heard in full in the suffragists' discourse, sometimes read between the lines as a definite, if blurred, subversive message.

Subversion, however, did not define the identity of the women's rights movement as a political force within the framework of reform. The suffragists had taken a major step in moving from the private to the public sphere, thus challenging conventional roles and basic Victorian assumptions about sexuality. Their approach differed, however, from that of other reformers. To the Spiritualists and Utopians, the fight against women's oppression was only one cause in their comprehensive alternative scheme which defended individual freedom, opposed clericalism, explored the

spirit world and the psychic unknown, constructed Heaven on earth and experimented with new forms of family life. Casting their net more widely, they experimented in a marginal and controversial terrain. The women's rights advocates, on the other hand, who effectively questioned dominant nineteenth-century values through their critique of marriage, used traditional methods of agitation, spoke the same language as their opponents and moved within an intricate network of institutions and in permanent dialogue with them. Reformers in their unique ideological and strategic terms, they inserted the critique of marriage into their fundamental challenge of the contemporary power structure.

NOTES

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- 1 Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, New Haven, 1977, p. 205.
- 2 B. Glasman Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex*, Chicago, 1978, p. 201.
- 3 Ellen Carol DuBois, 'The Radicalism of the Woman Suffrage Movement', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1/2, 1975, pp. 63–71.
- 4 The campaign for the legal reform of marriage in the 19th century was one demonstration, among many others, of the connection between the two domains. See Norma Basch, *In the Eyes of the Law*, Ithaca, 1981, pp. 162–163. On the same subject, see Susan Kent, 'Sex, Power and Politics', Ph.D. thesis, Brown University, 1984, p. 101.
- 5 The struggle for the Married Women's Property Acts in the State of New York started in 1836 and ended twenty four years later with the Earnings Act of 1860.
- 6 Basch, *In the Eyes of the Law*, p. 113.
- 7 Ernestine Rose (1810–1892). Jewish. Born in Poland. Rabbi father. Reformer, suffragist, and free thinker. Mary Gove Nichols (1810–1884). Born in New Hampshire; free thinking and universalist parents. Women's rights and health reformer. Edited health journals and ran a water cure establishment. Novelist. In 1848, married her second husband, Thomas L. Nichols. Both turned to spiritualism and Catholicism.
- 8 Victoria Claflin Woodhull (1838–1927) began as a Wall Street broker. In 1870, she ran for president of the United States. She belonged to Marx's International Working Men's Association, later fought for woman's suffrage with the National Woman's Suffrage Association. A defender of free love, she was involved in the Beecher Tilton adultery case. Arrested and jailed, she became an outcast in the U.S. and spent the latter part of her life in England. Working hard at disowning her past, she married a banker in 1883.
- 9 Letter to Lydia Maria Child, 1856, quoted in Kirk Jeffrey, 'Marriage, Careers and Feminine Ideology in 19th century America', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2/3, 1975, p. 123. Lydia Maria Child (1802–1880), woman of letters, wrote for the causes of abolitionism and woman's emancipation. A Unitarian, she lived mostly in Boston.
- 10 Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902). Born in Johnstown, N.Y. Father a judge. Presbyterian family. Woman's rights leader and writer.
- 11 T. Stanton and H. Stanton Blatch, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diaries and Reminiscences*, New York, 1969, vol. 2, p. 82.
- 12 *The Revolution*, 19 May 1870.
- 13 *The Revolution*, 17 and 24 February 1870.

- 14 *History of Women's Suffrage* (Hereafter referred to as HWS), New York, 1881, I, pp. 718–719.
- 15 'Home Life', *Elizabeth Cady Stanton Papers*, The Library of Congress, August 1875, reel 4.
- 16 Stanton, *The Revolution*, 14 April 1870.
- 17 Stanton, *Letters, Diaries* . . . II, p. 127.
- 18 Lucy Stone (1818–1893). Born in Massachusetts. Suffragist and abolitionist. School teacher. Studied at Oberlin College. Married Henry Blackwell in 1855.
- 19 *Proceedings of the Seventh National Convention of Women's Rights*, New York, 1856, p. 88 (hereafter referred to as *Proceedings*) and Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex*, p. 197–198.
- 20 23 Dec. 1859, Stanton, *Letters, Diaries* . . . II, p. 75.
- 21 *Proceedings*, October 1853, New York, p. 41.
- 22 Stanton *Letters, Diaries* . . . II, p. 16.
- 23 Stanton, *The Revolution*, 15 October 1868.
- 24 'Legal Rights of Women', *The Una*, April 1854, p. 244. Rose, *Proceedings*, New York, October 1853, p. 49.
- 25 *The Revolution*, 15 October, 1853.
- 26 *Proceedings*, October 1853, New York, p. 49.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 *Proceedings*, p. 52, October 1850, Worcester, p. 52.
- 29 *Stanton Papers*, Address before the 1st National Convention of Women's Suffrage, 1869, reel 3.
- 30 *Proceedings*, September 1852, Syracuse, p. 30.
- 31 Stanton, *Letters, Diaries* . . . II, 1 May, 1859, p. 73.
- 32 *Letters, Diaries* . . . II, 20 June, 1853, p. 51.
- 33 Lois Banner, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, Boston, 1980, p. 34.
- 34 *Stanton Papers*, reel 1, 1834, Library of Congress.
- 35 Stanton, *The Lily*, August 1851.
- 36 Speech to the McFarland-Richardson protest meeting, May 1869 in Ellen DuBois (ed.), *Elizabeth Cady Stanton/Susan B. Anthony Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, New York, 1981, p. 127.
- 37 Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right*, London, 1980, p. 90.
- 38 Banner, *Stanton*, p. 54.
- 39 'Marriage and Divorce', *The Revolution*, 22 October 1868 and HWS, I, p. 719.
- 40 *The Revolution*, 8 July, 1869.
- 41 Stanton, HWS, I, p. 719 and Rose, HWS, I, p. 731.
- 42 Banner, *Stanton*, 82. Gordon, *Woman's Body*, p. 90.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- 44 *Abigail Kelley Foster Papers*, 30 July 1843, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. Abby Kelley Foster (1810–1887). Born in Pelham, Mass. Quaker background, farmer father. Abolitionist and woman's rights lecturer. Married Stephen Foster, a radical abolitionist, in 1845.
- 45 Jane H. Pease, *The Freshness of Fanaticism, Abby Kelley Foster, an Essay in Reform*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Rochester, N.Y. 1969, p. 83.
- 46 The source for this and the following quotations of the Stone-Blackwell correspondence is Leslie Wheeler (ed.), *Loving Warriors*, New York, 1981, pp. 73, 80, 109, 136 and 115.
- 47 Olympia Brown (1835–1926) was a women's rights advocate and a Universalist minister.
- 48 Some examples: S. B. Anthony at the Convention of the American Woman Suffrage Association in Cleveland, 22–23 November 1870. *The Revolution*, December 1 1870. In October 1870, a woman from Vineland, N.J. wondered at 'the strong attack' on *The Revolution*, from *The Woman's Journal* 'whose two principal proprietors . . . shocked the whole world . . . by creating a new and radical marriage service, and by refusing to be called by one another's name.' *The Revolution*, October 27 1870. In the *Woodhull and Claflin Weekly*, 16 December 1871, Stanton, in one of her articles written in support of Victoria Woodhull, also wondered at Lucy Stone's inconsistency.
- 49 HWS, I, 2 August 1848, p. 80.
- 50 Stanton, *Letters, Diaries* . . . II, p. 84 and p. 117.
- 51 Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906). Born in Mass. Quaker family. Mill owner father.

Woman suffrage leader, temperance and abolitionist militant. *Anthony Papers*, Diary, October 2, 1878, reel 2, Library of Congress.

52 *Letters, Diaries* . . . I, p. 68 and *The Revolution*, March 24, 1870.

53 *HWS*, I, pp. 686–687. (This act gave a wife control over her earnings and she became joint guardian of her children.)

54 *Stanton, Letters, Diaries* . . . I, p. 185.

55 Speech to the McFarland-Richardson protest meeting, May 1868, in DuBois, *Stanton/Anthony*, p. 127. Found guilty of murdering his ex-wife's lover, McFarland was acquitted on grounds of insanity, yet entrusted with their son's custody.

56 *Ibid.*, and *The Revolution*, 14 April, 1870.

57 Banner, *Stanton*, p. 54.

58 *HWS*, I, pp. 482, 494.

59 *HWS*, I, p. 496.

60 Ellen DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage 1848–1869*, New York, 1980, p. 34.

61 'The Tribune thundered every morning in its editorial its loudest peals which reverberated through the state . . . ' *Stanton, Letters, Diaries* . . . I, p. 184.

62 Lucy Stone to E. C. Stanton, April 16, 1859, reel 1, *Stanton Papers*; Alma Lutz, *Created Equal*, New York, 1940, p. 113.

63 *Stanton, Letters, Diaries* . . . II, 81.

64 *HWS*, I, p. 725. Antoinette Brown Blackwell (Reverend) (1825–1921). Born in Henrietta, N.Y. revival country. Congregational and Unitarian minister. Studied theology in Oberlin College. Lecturer on woman's rights, anti slavery, temperance.

65 *HWS*, I, p. 732.

66 *HWS*, I, 735.

67 *HWS*, I, 719.

68 *HWS*, I, 731.

69 *Stanton, Letters, Diaries* . . . I, p. 190.

70 'Feminism and Socialism', Ph.D. thesis, Wisconsin, 1974, p. 45.

71 On September 8, 1855, for example, the *New York Times* made some acid remarks about 'free lovers' and 'reformers' within feminism.

72 *HWS*, I, p. 131.

73 *Banner of Light*, 10 July, 1858.

74 *Proceedings* from the Free Convention held at Rutland, 25, 26, 27 July 1853, Boston, 1858, 56.

75 N.Y. *Daily Times*, 2 July, 1858 and E. Suhl, *Ernestine Rose and the Battle for Human Rights*, 1959, New York, p. 195.

76 Clarina Irene Howard Nichols (1810–1885). Born in Vermont. Baptist family. Newspaper editor, woman's rights leader. Active in campaign for women's property rights in 1847.

77 *S. B. Anthony Papers*, 1880, Schlesinger Library, Cambridge, Mass. reel M 42 (1).

78 *New York Daily Times*, 14 May, 1858.

79 Ellen DuBois, 'On Labor and Free Love: Two unpublished speeches of Elizabeth Cady Stanton', *Signs*, Autumn, 1975, p. 257.

80 *Stanton Papers*, 'Speech to the Young Men Suffrage Association, 1870, reel 3.

81 'On Labor and Free Love', *Signs*, p. 265 and 'Address to a Club of Men and Women in New York City about 1869', *Stanton Papers*, reel 3.

82 *Stanton Papers*, 'Address to a Club of Men . . . ' reel 3, p. 5.

83 'Address . . . ' and 'Home Life', 1875, reel 4.

84 DuBois, 'On Labor and Free Love', p. 268. Andrew Jackson Davis (1826–1910). Shoemaker's son. The Poughkeepsie seer was a renowned healer and mesmerizer. Author of works on the occult, mysticism and science. Twice married. First wife died in 1853. Two years later, married Mary Robinson Love, who like his first wife was a divorcee.

85 DuBois, 'On Labor and Free Love'.

86 See William Leach, *True Love and Perfect Union*, New York, 1980, p. 8, and Mary Ryan, 'The Empire of Mothers', *Women and History*, Summer/Fall 1982.

87 *Proceedings*, Syracuse, 1852, p. 56 and *Ibid.*, New York, 1853, p. 33.

88 *HWS*, I, p. 675 and Paulina Wright Davis (1813–1876). Born in Bloomfield, N.Y. reformer, suffragist, anti slavery and temperance lecturer. *HWS*, I, 57.

89 *Proceedings*, New York, 1853, p. 45.

90 Two French feminist socialists jailed after the failure of the 1848 revolution.

- 91 *HWS*, I, p. 237.
- 92 Suhl, *Ernestine Rose* . . . p. 128.
- 93 *Proceedings*, Syracuse, 1852, p. 69 and p. 129.
- 94 *Anthony Papers*, Diary, April 1854 in DuBois, *Stanton/Anthony*, p. 75.
- 95 *Proceedings*, Worcester, October 1851.
- 96 Suhl, *E. Rose*, p. 130–1.
- 97 *HWS*, IV, p. 165–166.
- 98 Stanton, 'Home Life', in DuBois, *Stanton/Anthony*, p. 132.
- 99 *Proceedings*, November 1856, New York, p. 74.
- 100 Ryan, 'The Empire of Mothers', p. 80 and p. 37.
- 101 Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860', *The American Quarterly* XVIII:2, part 1 (1966), pp. 151–174.
- 102 Harriot Hunt, *Glances and Glimpses*, Boston, 1856, pp. 393–395. Harriot Hunt (1805–1875) was born in Boston in Universalist family. Physician and reformer, she practised alternative medicine based on good nursing, natural diet and bathing.
- 103 *Proceedings*, September 1852, Syracuse, p. 21, 22.
- 104 Stanton, 'Marriage and Divorce', *The Revolution*, 22 October 1868.
- 105 *Stanton Papers*, 'The Subjection of Women', 1876, reel 4.
- 106 *The Lily*, May 1852.
- 107 Stanton, *Letters, Diaries* . . . II, p. 82.
- 108 In their article, 'Seeking Ecstasy in the Battlefield', in Carol Vance (ed.), *Pleasure and Danger*, New York, 1984, Ellen DuBois and Linda Gordon relate the two symbols of sexual danger to women, prostitution and rape, respectively to the 19th and 20th centuries. They also find among 19th century feminists 'an avoidance of criticizing men and marriage directly', (p. 35). These statements need qualification. For we find substantial evidence of strong reaction against male brutality in the family on the part of both liberal and conservative suffragists. And the rhetoric of Temperance, shot through with the fear of male sexual violence often suggesting rape, influenced feminists at large.
- 109 Elizabeth Pleck, 'Feminist Responses to "Crimes Against Women", 1868–1896', *Signs*, vol. 8, no. 3, Spring 1983, p. 458.
- 110 Pleck, p. 459.
- 111 Horace Greeley, *Recollections from a Busy Life*, New York, 1869, p. 576.
- 112 Gerda Lerner, 'Comment on Lerner's "Sarah Grimke's Sisters of Charity",' *Signs*, Summer 1985, p. 814.
- 113 *Stanton Papers*, 'Self Government', reel 4.
- 114 *The Lily*, May 1852, p. 40.
- 115 Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, p. 148.
- 116 Banner, *Stanton*, p. 76.
- 117 *Stanton Papers*, undated, untitled.
- 118 *Ibid.*
- 119 Lerner, p. 813.
- 120 *Stanton Papers*, 'Home Life', August 1883, Providence, reel 4.
- 121 Anthony, 'Homes for Single Women', October 1877, DuBois, *Stanton/Anthony*, p. 146.
- 122 Letter in *The Una*, April 1853.
- 123 *Proceedings*, September 1853, New York, p. 48.
- 124 *The Lily*, May 1852.