



HIS 477 – WOMEN IN AMERICA

Woman and Moral Reform

Lecture 5

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MORAL GUARDIANSHIP

- During the late 1830s the United States experienced economic hard times and the widespread belief that America was no longer the Promised Land
- The term “reform” soon became common; and out of it came the first feminist movement
- Women’s literature of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s emphasized women’s role as the moral keepers of the home and family
- Many women writers wrote books that became immediate bestsellers

MORAL GUARDIANSHIP

- Caroline Lee Hentz published her first stories in Godey's during the 1830s
- She wrote full-time to support her family.
- Her story lines always revolved around strong, decisive, all-suffering and highly moral females who rescued ill, mindless, or morally crippled men



MORAL GUARDIANSHIP

- A contemporary of Hentz, E.D.E.N. Southworth removed men from the scene entirely. She sent them off to war, the West or in pursuit of pretty young women. The women they left behind turned out to be self sufficient, energetic, and capable of supporting themselves and their siblings or children. When the man returned the women always forgave them.



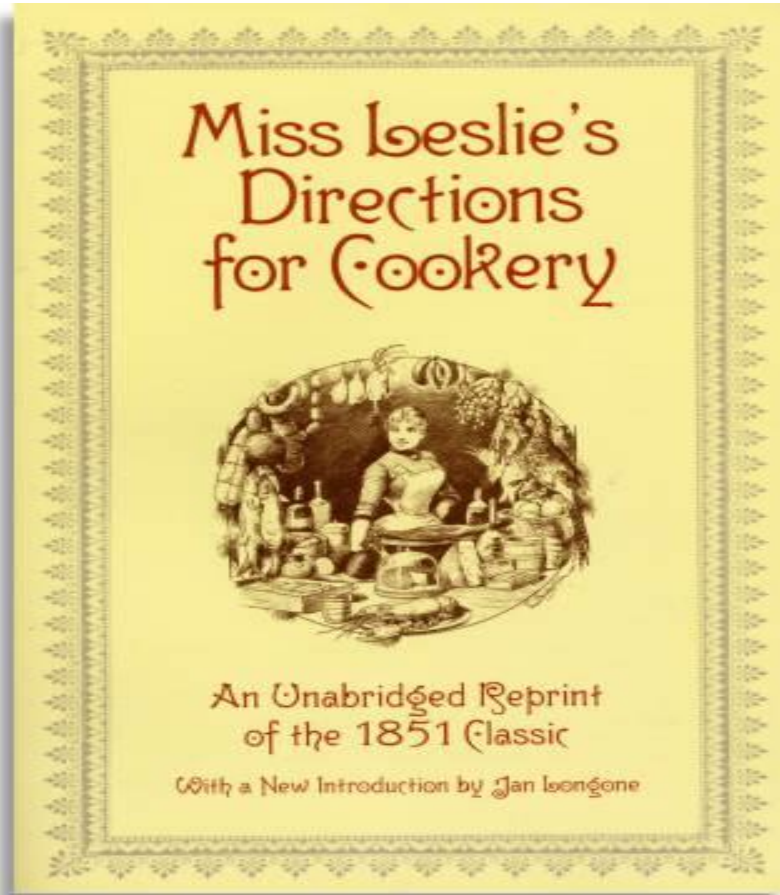
MORAL GUARDIANSHIP



- A less vitriolic writer was Lydia B. Sigourney. She became a writer to support her family as well.
- She lauded the traditional virtues of home and family
- She wrote more than 50 books in a career that lasted over 50 years



MORAL GUARDIANSHIP



Catherine Sedgwick



MORAL GUARDIANSHIP

- Eliza Leslie and Catherine M. Sedgwick, neither married, gained popularity by idealizing domesticity. Sedgwick championed the unmarried woman
- On the surface these and other women writers preached all the fashionable beliefs regarding true womanhood

MORAL GUARDIANSHIP

- Deep discontent riddled their portrayals of domesticity:
 - Men characterized as sinful, obsessed with desire for wealth and social position and in need of reform
 - Women characterized as superior beings, responsible for families, capable of guarding society against evil
- The moral guardianship theory therefore justified the argument that –
 - Women must understand politics to influence legislators wisely
 - Women rather than men must teach school to inculcate children with virtue
 - Women must form charity organizations to implement their goodness on behalf of the poor and destitute

MORAL GUARDIANSHIP

- morally superior women must dominate any function or social situation that would benefit from piety and righteousness
- This line of thought made it easier for women to stay in their own “sphere” because the sphere grew to accommodate more of the everyday world.
- Although American cultural values still promoted such “male” qualities as aggressiveness, economic achievement, and shrewdness, they also began to encompass such “female” values as flexibility, moral success, and lack of guile.

MORAL GUARDIANSHIP

- Those who had the leisure and resources to pursue moral reform were middle and upper class white and black women.
- The logical extension of Republican Motherhood, True Womanhood, and Moral Guardianship was that resulting beliefs regarding women virtually commanded them to assume the task of reforming society

EDUCATION

- Beginning in the 1840s, Catherine Beecher spoke and wrote for improved education for women. She believed that women teachers should be sent West to educate and morally improve native peoples, children and unprincipled men.



EDUCATION

- Almira Lincoln Phelps and her husband felt the same way and they took charge of the Patapsco Female Institute in Baltimore in 1841. The curriculum includes subjects such as science.

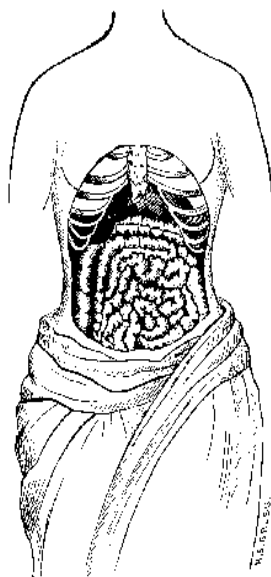


EDUCATION

- Beecher and Phelps diverged from domesticity in many ways –
 - Agreed that women should exercise and encouraged women to abandon stays, corsets, and other fashionable but unhealthy practices
 - Argued that women's roles demanded a robust physical condition
 - They and other reformers believed that women's bodies could sustain only a limited amount of moderate exercise

EDUCATION

Fig. A.



A healthy female form, with the internal organs in their natural positions.

Fig. B.



A female form compressed by tight lacing. It is plain to be seen that the lungs and heart are crowded up into a small space, and the liver, stomach, intestines, womb, and bladder are pressed down into the pelvis.

Fig. 68.



EXERCISE 54.

Word of Command—
"Weights Out!"

Let the pupils carry the weights as at Fig. 68, marching to music.

Fig. 69.



EXERCISE 55.

Word of Command—"Weights Up!"

Let the weights be carried as at Fig. 69, still marching to music.

EDUCATION

- Women began exercising and in the 1850s, they began competing in “female equestrian” events
- Predestrianism became a major sport and in 1852 American Kate Irvine competed in a British race in which she covered 500 miles
- Most women’s magazines suggested moderate walking and sedate dancing.

EDUCATION

- But a few reformers concerned themselves with other types of American women
 - In 1837, the Quakers established the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia.
 - Sarah Mapps Douglass became a teacher and later an administrator there; Fanny Jackson Coppin also joined the Institute in 1860 as principal



ALCOHOL ABUSE

- Once Americans recognized the existence and extent of drunkenness, they began to identify the problem of alcoholism as male and the solution as female.
- Women joined the Daughters of Temperance in unprecedented numbers; by 1848 it was one of the largest organizations for women with a membership of 30,000
- Women formed bands that prayed and sang hymns outside, or sometimes inside, saloons and petitioned the legislatures for prohibition laws
- Because women could not vote, in the 1840s when the American temperance movement reject moral suasion as a strategy and began to urge legal prohibition, women felt left out of the very cause they increasingly saw as their own

ALCOHOL ABUSE/PRISON AND ASYLUM REFORM

- Women temperance advocates initially resisted abandoning moral suasion as a technique. Between 1852 and 1859, groups of women entered saloons and physically destroyed the liquor.
- The temperance cause also attracted black women who joined white women or formed their own groups or joined black men's temperance societies, although the largest of these, the New England Colored Temperance Society, denied women membership.
- Women also applied their moral powers to prison and asylum reform.
- In 1835, the Mount Pleasant Female Prison of New York became the nation's first women's prison
- In 1844, Eliza Burham Farnham became the matron of the women's prison at Sing Sing in New York.

PRISON AND ASYLUM REFORM

- In 1843, Dorothea Dix petitioned the Massachusetts legislature to construct enough buildings so that mentally ill and other disadvantaged people could be separated from felons and murders.



OTHER MORAL REFORMS

- Other women who wanted to improve American society participated in Utopian experiments dedicated to alternate forms of labors and products
 - Brooks Farm, Boston, 1841
 - Oneida, up state New York, 1848 – complex marriage
 - Shakers – free women from the handicaps of marriage and childcare

MORAL REFORM

- Moral reform societies attracted a myriad of women. In 1840 when the New York female reform group organized into the national American Female Moral Reform Society, it had 555 auxiliaries
- Women reformers used the technique of “visiting” meaning they sang hymns and prayed at brothels, almshouses, and jails.
- They talked to prostitutes, the ill and the poverty-stricken and solicited data and case histories relating to sexual abuse and other societal problems.
- Moral reformers petitioned state legislatures, lobbied for reform legislation, opened refuges for women in need:
 - in New York, House of Reception, a home for prostitutes;
 - in Boston, Home for Unprotected Girls, Refuge for Migrant Women, and Asylum for the Repentant
- By the 1850s, benevolent organizations appeared in virtually every city and town
- Charity and relief groups formed and offered services as well.

ABOLITION AND THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- The attack on slavery came primarily from northern women
- Black women, who by the 1830s were 52% of the total black population, campaigned energetically for the abolition of slavery
- In integrated and segregation groups, black and white women worked together to bring an end to slavery
- Several integrated antislavery groups included the Boston Female Antislavery Society and the Female Antislavery Societies of Lynn, MA and Rochester, NY

ABOLITION AND THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- The Forten family of Philadelphia was especially active in abolition. Sarah, Harriet, and Margaretta help found the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society
- Other black female abolitionists included Mary Ann Shadd Cary, teacher, journalist, lawyer; Sarah Parker Redmond, speaker and author; Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, lecturer, author, poet; Charlotte Forten, writer; Harriet Wilson, novelist; Harriet Tubman; and Sojourner Truth.





Mary Shadd Cary



Frances Ellen Watkins Harper



Charlotte Forten
Courtesy of Salem State College



Sarah Parker Remond



Harriet Tubman



Sojourner Truth

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IDEOLOGY

- Black women contributed to the emerging women's rights ideology as well.
- Harriet Forten Purvis, her sister Margaretta Forten, Sarah Parker Remond, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth helped lay the groundwork for black feminism.

ABOLITION AND THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- White women championed the cause of antislavery because they saw slavery as a moral wrong and they began to feel a sense of identification with black women
- In 1837 Angelina Grimke told a white women's antislavery convention that they were "sisters" to slave women
- Abolitionist women also hoped that if they helped free the slave, liberation would be extended to white women as a logical outcome of their efforts
- At first, white women's abolitionist societies engaged in fundraising and exhortation. Then they adopted more aggressive tactics--

ABOLITION AND THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- Organizing petition campaign
- Holding national conventions
- Speaking on the public platform
- The Grimke sisters lecturing and political reform activities led to a heated discussion of women's roles and responsibilities.
- Abolitionists leaders feared that such controversy would jeopardize the antislavery crusade so they begged the Grimke sisters to ignore the controversy.

ABOLITION AND THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS



- One of the most eminent abolitionist writers was Harriet Beecher Stowe. Stowe directed her early work toward the issues of temperance, women wages and improved women's education. She later became involved in abolition and wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852.



ABOLITION AND THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- During the 1840s and 1850s, thousands of women followed the example of Sarah and Angelina Grimke by joining the abolitionist movement. They petitioned Congress, lectured, help slaves escape and wrote books and pamphlets.



ABOLITION AND THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- Abolitionist and other voluntary organizations drew women out of their homes, trained them in a large variety of business positions and helped turn women's morality into a paid vocation
- Yet few people seemed to appreciate women's efforts. Susan B. Anthony complained that American men simply left the dirty work of society to women
- The limits on women abolitionists became obvious in 1840 after the national antislavery organization split into male-only and male-female factions over the so-called 'woman question'
- The integrated group sent female delegates to a world antislavery convention in London in 1841 where the female delegates were seated behind a curtain and denied the right to vote in the convention

ABOLITION AND THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton agreed that a women's protest meeting was needed in America. It was 1848 before the first women's rights meeting occurred on July 19, 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. Mott's husband, James, chaired the meeting.



ABOLITION AND THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- Approximately 300 people attended including 40 men.
- After much debate, 68 women and 32 men signed the *Declaration of Sentiments and Revolution*, the first formal declaration regarding women rights in the United States
- A major demand of women's rights advocates was married women's property rights
- Several states passed protective legislation in the 1830s regarding women's property and New York considered a statute in 1836 but Mississippi passed the first married women's property law in 1839.
- New York passed a bill in 1848 and Pennsylvania followed with a similar bill.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IDEOLOGY

- Women's rights leaders developed an intricate ideology during the 1840s and 1850s—
- Following the doctrines established during the American Revolution, they believed in and called for equality, human progress, and the right of citizens to participate in their own governance
- British reformers fed the American crusade by discussing women's issues and fostering a climate that made reform plausible and possible
- American writers and speakers offered a variety of perspectives and philosophies

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IDEOLOGY

- Margaret Fuller, known as the “high priestess” of the Transcendentalist movement, addressed the issue of equality. In 1845, her book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* became the first to examine woman’s place in society.



WOMEN'S RIGHTS IDEOLOGY



Elizabeth Cady Stanton
1815 - 1902
American Suffragist Leader

- Stanton, writer and speaker, concentrated her efforts on gaining the ballot for women. She believed that liberation lay in political participation. In 1850, she met Susan B. Anthony and they became collaborators.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IDEOLOGY

- Lucy Stone also contributed to women's rights ideology. Raised a Quaker, she deplored the idea of Civil Death. When she married Henry Blackwell in 1855 she kept her family name and entered into a well-publicized marriage contract.



WOMEN'S RIGHTS IDEOLOGY



- Lucretia Mott, an ordained Quaker minister, used the Bible to argue that the inferior status of women was neither natural nor divinely ordained. Rather than promoting women's suffrage, Mott concentrated on a new view of women as responsible, self-sustaining individuals.

