

*Well-Tempered
Women*

Nineteenth-Century
Temperance Rhetoric

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Woman's Rights in Woman's Wrongs: Temperance Women at Mid-Century

You who, clothed in the garb of womanhood, excuse yourselves from any participation in opposing the vice of drunkenness, under the plea of sacrifice of female delicacy, or of departure from your proper sphere, look for a moment at the condition of the drunkard's wife and children, and the nobler impulses of your nature will certainly prompt you to some effort to rescue and sustain female delicacy in the degraded home of the drunkard.

—"Address of the Woman's Temperance Convention"

BY THE MID-NINETEENTH century, many women recognized that the temperance issue offered an ideal vehicle for speaking about women's concerns. A serious problem in the nineteenth century, intemperance was associated more with men than with women. W. J. Rorabaugh has convincingly shown the excessive use of alcohol, especially during the first third of the nineteenth century, when "the typical American annually drank more distilled liquor than at any other time in our history" (17). Notions that alcohol promoted health had been a prevailing sentiment in the United States. Americans also believed that drinking distilled spirits showed patriotism, because it supported home industries. In addition, the well-established social custom of "treating," or buying drinks for companions to display hospitality and friendship, also contributed to the increased use of alcohol. But by the late 1830s, notions about the positive aspects of alcohol gave way to increasing fears of addiction and public disgust with inebriates.

Even though some women drank alcohol in large quantity, men drank far more. According to Rorabaugh, two-thirds of all imbibed distilled spirits were consumed by 50 percent of adult males, who comprised only one-eighth of the total population (11). As the century progressed, women drank even less proportionally because of cultural restrictions on such consumption. Therefore, intemperance came to be accepted as a problem characteristic of men rather than women.

Furthermore, men's intemperance uniquely served to highlight the many inequities and injustices within the legal system, especially with regard to married women. In the United States at mid-century, coverture, the traditional common law that united women's legal rights with that of their husbands, existed to varying degrees in every state. When women married, their personal property, and to differing extents their real property, their persons, their labor, and their children came under the ownership of their husbands. Therefore, all personal property and income—whether from rents, investments, or wages, and often from real property—were subject to a husband's disposal and could be confiscated by his creditors. While women's property might be misused or squandered by any husband, chances of loss became greater when husbands became alcohol abusers.

Laws regarding women's legal status varied greatly according to region. Southern states first instigated reforms beginning in the late 1830s, assuring a wife's ownership of, though not control of or income from, real property. Even in these states, wives might continue to own lands and slaves, but husbands were entitled to the control of both. The Panic of 1837 had encouraged such limited reform, partly out of sympathy for women left destitute when their husbands' creditors seized their property, and partly because men who married wealthy women wanted to protect their interests in their wives' property in case of financial disasters.¹

Other states began making changes in their laws of coverture in the 1840s. Michigan allowed for a wife's separate estate beginning in 1844. By 1848, seven southern states and twelve northern states had passed legislation in varying degrees of generosity, restoring rights to married women. Most gave the wife ownership over her real, but not her personal property. Only one, Maine, permitted her the legal right to contract and manage her real property. In every state, children remained the legal property of the father, and only in Michigan and New York did women retain control over their own wages and income.

Women's inability to protect themselves or their children from abusive, irresponsible husbands who drank thus provided effective ammunition for speakers to point out women's precarious position with regards to the law. Official concern for needed reforms helped to focus public attention on problems with existing laws. Although a limited amount of legal

reform improved conditions somewhat for some women, most were still vulnerable to the profligate behavior of husbands, and profligacy was more likely and less acceptable when husbands were intemperate. Women temperance speakers at mid-century sincerely believed that alcohol consumption should be controlled and that such control would improve conditions for women and their children. But they also wanted more far-reaching reforms and believed that addressing the issue of temperance effectively permitted them to reach otherwise inaccessible audiences in order to make their case for greater rights for women. Their presentation of women's rights by emphasizing wrongs women endured became an effective rhetorical means for temperance women throughout the century.

Resistance to increased rights for women was great and legal reform slow. Nineteenth-century wisdom, especially among those with the greatest power to legislate change, held that separating the material interests of a wife from her husband endangered the marital institution. As Nancy Cott has pointed out, marriage, often presumed to be a private matter, was instead very public and a primary means of control for those in authority ("Giving").² Because of the strong support for maintaining coverture, instigating change in the laws affecting marriage was far more effective when presented as protection for women and children victims of intemperate men.

Women who supported temperance reform actively supported a broad definition of woman's rights. Many believed that temperance, equal rights, and suffrage were equally important in advancing women's causes; however, they believed that the temperance issue would most effectively change attitudes about women's injustices and encourage women to become active on their own behalf. Some viewed women's temperance activity as an avenue for creating a changed consciousness as well as a move toward greater public participation on the part of women. Amelia Bloomer (plate 3) commented on the importance of women's temperance activity in changing attitudes among women. She referred to an 1852 woman's temperance society

which became very effective and had much to do in breaking down the barriers and introducing women into temperance and other work. Some half-dozen women were employed by the society as agents on salaries of twenty-five dollars per month and their expenses . . . it was surprising how public sentiment changed and how the zeal of temperance women helped on the new movement of women. (Bloomer 85-86)

Many temperance women recognized the positive appeal of the issue, and their rhetoric reveals how skillfully these speakers argued for women's rights while overtly supporting the temperance cause. But it also

reflects, I believe, the widespread, if repressed, unhappiness of many women with the failure of the legal system to protect them. While temperance women carefully named their addresses "temperance" lectures, sometimes modestly presenting benevolent pleas on behalf of suffering women and children rather than insisting upon their own rights, their promotion of equal rights is very thinly veiled. Framed in language that evoked concrete, familiar images of injustice, woman's rights issues could be safely heard and discussed by a broad spectrum of listeners through temperance rhetoric.

Temperance women were especially attuned to their audience, and, recognizing the need to meet women according to their level of awareness, they delivered speeches according to the consciousness of their listeners. For example, Clarina Howard Nichols (plate 4) and Lydia F. Fowler traveled the state of Wisconsin during the autumn of 1853 lecturing as agents of the Wisconsin Woman's State Temperance Society. Nichols acknowledged and tried to comply with the Society's concern that she "plead the cause of the poor and needy . . . without offending old-time ideas of woman's sphere" (Stanton, Anthony, and Gage 182). But, because of the prejudice toward women speakers, Nichols, as was often the case, was forced to defend women's right to speak at a number of stops. At one point, she was even excluded from speaking by men who deliberately spoke at length in order to usurp her lecture time.

Temperance speakers consciously chose a rhetorical strategy that served their purposes when they met such opposition. Nichols capitalized on her mistreatment to convince her audience of the need for greater rights for women, but she placed her argument within the context of abuses women suffered at the hands of intemperate men. She explained,

Worse than unwise would it have been to allow an unjust prejudice against Woman's Rights, to turn the edge of my appeals for a law in the interest of temperance, when by showing the connection, as of cause and effect, between men's rights and women's wrongs, between women's *no-rights* and their helplessness and dependence, I could disarm that prejudice and win an intelligent support for both temperance and equal rights. . . . I assured my audiences, that I had not come to talk to them of "Woman's Rights," that indeed I did not find that women had any rights in the matter, but to "suffer and be still; to die and give no sign." But I had come to speak of *man's rights* and *woman's needs*. (183)

Nichols, understanding her audience and combining her purposes, effectively used wordplay on women's rights and wrongs to persuade her listeners of the validity of both her causes.

Speakers repeatedly recounted the effectiveness of temperance rhetoric in presenting audiences with the need for change in laws with regard to women. According to Nichols, her method worked well: "My audience had accepted woman's rights in her wrongs; and I—only woman's recording angel can tell the sensations of a disfranchised woman when her 'declaration of intentions' is endorsed by an Anti-Woman's Rights audience with fervent thanks to God!" (184). Nichols gained an ear for woman's rights among unsympathetic audiences by framing such rhetoric with complaints about intemperance. Her attitude is characteristic of the many women who believed in providing role models for women, in furthering women's acceptance as public speakers, and in enticing an audience to listen to women's grievances by using an indirect means of address. Within the context of temperance speeches, most audiences accepted the inclusion of what were considered woman's rights issues.

The Madison Argus's response to these addresses typifies many reactions to such speeches. Reporting that Nichols and Fowler had addressed a Madison, Wisconsin audience "upon the subject of the Maine Law," and, *incidentally*, upon woman's wrongs and woman's rights "[emphasis mine], the newspaper editorialized,

We have the usual prejudices of education, and the established usages of society, against the practice of women engaging in public lectures, or meddling in politics; but such prejudice has not blinded us to the fact, that in men's laws woman has not yet attained those rights and immunities which the laws of nature and necessity imperiously demand upon the fundamental principles of human equality; and we are free to confess that the intelligence, delicacy and grace exhibited by those lectures, more than half removed our scruples to female labor in such a sphere. No one could look upon their highly intelligent faces, without feeling that they were true women, acting from noble impulses, and outraging none of the instinctive delicacy of their sex. ("from the *Madison Argus*" 3)

The editor of the *Argus* recognized that the two women were breaching their accustomed roles and that they were including woman's rights issues in their delivery, but found the inclusion acceptable, placed as it was within the context of temperance. Thus, by carefully presenting their cause as an unselfish effort on behalf of suffering women and children, and by scrupulously maintaining the cultural expectations that defined their sphere (except for their uncharacteristic public speaking), these women "more than half convinced" powerful and influential newspaper editors to reconsider the legal position of their sex.

Wordplay on woman's rights and wrongs became a favorite means of address for temperance women. Amelia Bloomer even gave an address entitled "Woman's Rights and Woman's Wrongs." One account described that address as follows:

She dwelt with much pathos upon the injustice of the laws of our country in regard to Woman, in the disposal of her property and her off-spring, and in *taxation* without *representation*. She said that it was only because the heart of man was so much better than the infamous laws which he had enacted, that Woman was not rendered the most abject *mental* upon earth. ("Woman's Rights" 3)

In spite of her emphasis on the need for greater rights for women, Bloomer dispelled negative notions about women speakers and the fear that women were becoming masculinized. She carefully attacked the law and not the man, even praising men's generosity, clearly wishing to persuade those whose power might help her cause. Her careful rhetorical stance even permitted her to speak of women's need for power; couching her desire for greater power for women as a selfless plea on behalf of abused women and children, she reached women who felt less free to insist on such powers.

Who of our sisters are there, who do not weep tears of pity over the fate of this fair victim of the liquor seller's cruel business? . . . Who does not feel the wish for power to hurl down both the drunkard and the drunkard maker, and restore to their true position and happiness those who are subjected to cruelty? ("The Chivalry" 14)

Despite Bloomer's thinly cloaked appeals for greater rights and power for women, when she spoke in Detroit, the *Tribune* praised her "appearance and demeanor," calling it "modest and unassuming in the extreme" ("Mrs. Bloomer" 3). Thus her demeanor and conciliatory approach won receptive audiences that more confrontational woman's rights speakers could never hope to attract.

Throughout the country women spoke on temperance, almost always incorporating evidence that in another venue would have been opposed as arguments for woman's rights. Many insisted that women must have more rights in order to protect the helpless against the evils of alcohol. Others, while insisting on greater rights for women, assured audiences that they were not part of the woman's rights movement. They maintained a careful balance between encouraging listeners to question traditional assumptions and assuring them that they were not seeking disruptive changes.

Such was the case, especially on local or state levels, where speakers

lived in the communities where they spoke and therefore understood their audiences. A good example is that of Mrs. R. Ostrander, president of the Wisconsin Woman's State Temperance Society, who assured members that they would not become a woman's rights convention. But her assurances masked only superficially her adamant efforts on the part of women. Ostrander's tactful but obvious oscillation between prodding women to claim greater rights and reassuring them about cultural codes exemplifies local temperance rhetoric. Her melding of traditional feminine expectations with persuasive appeals for change began with the opening of her address, as she modestly asked for forbearance during her newfound position, while at the same time praising the new activity among women:

I bring a warm heart to the cause which has convened us—and a willing one, too, to act in *any* position, and to perform *any duty* which shall subserve the interests of this cause; at the same time, I crave your forbearance and your charity for any imperfections during this meeting. The time *will come* when women will be at home, here, and everywhere, where humanity's call is heard. ("Mrs. Ostrander's Address" 2)

Ostrander deftly justified and emphasized women's right to act in any capacity in the name of temperance, but she carefully phrased that right as a duty, wording that made her suggestions more acceptable to many listeners. She also placed such duty in the context of the Old Testament "call to battle" by trumpet, adding further weight to the imperative of their action:

The cause of *temperance* is one which, ever since its agitation in our country, has lain near my heart. I have watched its progress and rejoiced at its success. But, my friends, *heretofore*, we have watched afar off and rejoiced in silence. We did not dream that we had much to do but to weep and mourn in secret places over the misery Rum was creating, and pray to the Ruler of the Universe to stay the destroying flood. But a new era has arisen and a brighter day has dawned. The call now is, 'WOMAN! be up and doing! Let your voice be heard, as sure and certain as a trumpet's sound. We will not cease to *pray*, but we will unite our labors with our prayers. We will let *our faith be seen by our works*. (2)

Ostrander also celebrated women's new role. Later temperance women would more fully and directly incorporate praise for temperance women into their speeches, but early leaders already recognized the empowering force in rhetoric that celebrated women's work and glorified their activity. Ostrander carefully reassured those less confident of the propriety of

women's new role: "Many there are whose hearts are true to the cause, but from timidity, or some other cause, stand aloof from this movement. But we will show them by our example—I trust we shall—that there is no danger—that we are not transcending our limits and getting "out of our sphere" (2).

Accordingly, Ostrander reassured women and men who feared the derogatory naming so often applied to reform women—that of becoming masculine or unsexed. But even as she reassured women, she scoffed at those who accused women taking public action of unbecoming behavior:

Oh, I am sick of hearing this canting phrase—"getting out of our sphere!" Oh, that some giant intellect among our opposers would define our sphere—as *they understand it!*—so that we might, at least, see how far we may diverge from our *ac-customed orbits* without danger of flying off to a returnless distance from the *great centres of attraction*—the "*lords of creation*." (2)

At the same time that she challenged the rights of "the lords of creation" to define a woman's public role as improper, Ostrander once again strove to reassure the more timid in her audience:

It is feared by some that this is to be a "Woman's Rights concern;" and hence the question has been repeatedly asked, "Is that subject to be agitated at your meeting?" My answer has been, No! The question to be discussed is the all-absorbing one of Temperance. (2)

While insisting that temperance alone was the issue of the convention, like other temperance leaders, Ostrander had ridiculed those who questioned a woman's right to public activity and praised women who had chosen to work outside the home. She further cloaked women's public activity in the sacred realm of tradition by drawing parallels between pioneering Wisconsin women and contemporary women, both justifying the activity of temperance women and implying a heroic courage: "Shall we stand still and see the combat thicken, and not lend *our aid*? Have we one drop of our revolutionary mothers' blood in our veins? Then let us respond to the call." Ostrander completed her address with a rousing call for courage and independence on the part of Wisconsin women. Once again, she associated opposition to women's public stance with negative connotations:

Women of Wisconsin! Let not the fear of man—let not pride or opinion—let not the love of popularity, nor of ease, prevent your taking a stand, and performing your part in the

efforts that are being made [*sic*] to get a law prohibiting the sale of intoxicating drinks. Let the tears and groans and sighs, and poverty and crime, caused by intemperance, weigh heavier on your minds than all these considerations I have mentioned. Let your watchword be—"No rest, no ease, until Rum is banished from our land!" (2)

Ostrander's evocation of duty was a typical means of diffusing arguments against women's public involvement, since duty played prominently in those activities consigned to a woman's sphere. For example, in the late 1840s, Pennsylvania women were already holding their own temperance conventions and often cited such justification for their public activity. Following the pleas for formal participation from women, members emphasized that women "have solemn obligations resting upon us, and we should be faithful to the highest call of duty, false to the instincts of womanhood, and the pleading voices of love, if we should sit quietly down in careless ease while vice is thus spreading around us" ("To the Women" 1). These women took the charge of duty one step further, insisting that women would be failing in their true calling "if we did not exert ourselves to rescue those around us from the degrading vice of drunkenness" ("Address" 1). The Chester County, Pennsylvania women deftly manipulated charges against them and inverted strictures accorded to sphere in order to provide support for their undertakings. Such skilled acuity would mark rhetorical presentations of temperance women for generations to come.

Whenever permitted, temperance women lectured in churches, making it more difficult for their opponents to attack them. For example, when the *Milwaukee Morning News* criticized her for "taking the stump," Mrs. E. K. Fonda pointed out that the "stumps" where she had spoken were successively the Baptist Church, the Presbyterian Church, and the Methodist Church, and that she had been introduced by the pastor on each occasion ("The Morning" 3). Activity given religious sanction could hardly be condemned.

By mid-century, women temperance leaders were already committed to change for women, but they believed their cause could best be served by using a subtle, non-threatening, yet persuasive approach, and they consciously chose to work on women's behalf in that manner. However, a superficial examination of their rhetoric might belie their purpose, since they cautiously crafted their presentations to include words such as duty; they often claimed not to be speaking for the woman's rights cause; and they carefully presented their appeals as benevolent concerns for the weak.

Despite their efforts on behalf of change for women, today's scholars have shown little interest in temperance women because our record

of women's efforts toward achieving greater equality has been dominated by those who believed in taking a more direct, aggressive approach. Since their ideas about the best way to proceed in effecting broader rights differed from that of temperance women, and because they often saw themselves in competition with temperance women, their perspective is worthwhile, but decidedly limited.

The accounts best known to today's scholars are the valuable and impressive collections amassed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton (plate 5) and Susan B. Anthony (plate 6). Because of our reliance on these and related sources, we often assume, as Anthony's biographer Ida Husted Harper tells us in *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, that Anthony and Stanton deserted temperance organizations because, Anthony suggested, "they [temperance organizations] would not accept the principle of woman's rights" (95). According to Harper, the New York State temperance organization that Anthony and Stanton had helped to found "passed into the hands of a body of conservative women, who believed they could accomplish by prayer what these two knew never could be done except through legislation with a constituency of women behind it" (95). As the examination of temperance women's rhetoric in this chapter demonstrates, this was simply not the case. Rather, temperance women chose a different, and arguably a more effective, rhetorical approach to delivering woman's rights messages.

In their *History of Woman Suffrage*, Stanton, Anthony, and Marilda Joselyn Gage provide an account similar to that of Harper's:

Most of the liberal men and women now withdrew from all temperance organizations, leaving the movement in the hands of time-serving priests and politicians, who, being in the majority, effectually blocked the progress of the reform for the time—destroying, as they did, the enthusiasm of the women in trying to press it as a moral principle; and the hope of the men, who intended to carry it as a political measure. Henceforward women took no active part in temperance until the Ohio crusade revived into "The Woman's National Christian Temperance Union," of which Miss Frances E. Willard is president. As now, so in 1853, intelligent women saw that the most direct way to effect any reform was to have a voice in the laws and lawmakers. Hence they turned their attention to rolling up petitions for the civil and political rights of women, to hearings before legislatures and constitutional conventions, giving their most persistent efforts to the reform technically called "Woman's Rights." (Stanton, Anthony, and Gage 512–13)

Because Stanton, Anthony, and Gage's work, along with that of Har-

per, has been our primary source for women's history of this period, scholars have mistakenly assumed that most women left the temperance cause and that those who remained were passive, timid women. Such negative accounts have produced distorted impressions about, and unfair dismissal of, the numerous women who spoke openly and widely for temperance reform.

Although Anthony and Stanton might well have regarded those women who remained active in the temperance cause as conservative because they refused to work exclusively for the woman's rights cause, their perspective that women, especially intelligent women, abandoned the temperance cause is inaccurate. Many women believed woman's rights and temperance to be inextricably intertwined. In addition, temperance women made a conscious, rhetorical decision to reach a broad-based audience by addressing the temperance cause. Many prominent temperance lecturers, including Amelia Bloomer, Clarina Howard Nichols, and Lydia F. Fowler were also among the most active and most effective speakers on behalf of equal rights for women in the country. They travelled widely, adjusting their message to a diverse population throughout the nation.

The tumultuous period Stanton, Anthony, and Gage cite as the culmination of women's active participation in temperance reform does mark a pivotal point for many women active in the movement. The turbulence began with the March 1852, New York meeting of all divisions of the Sons of Temperance from that state in Albany. The Daughters of Temperance were invited to send delegates,⁴ but when Anthony, a delegate from the Rochester Daughters of Temperance, rose to speak, the presiding officer insisted that women were invited to listen only. Even more importantly, at a later "World's Temperance Convention," a group of men hissed and hooted to prevent Antoinette Brown (plate 7), an accepted delegate, from speaking. The minority, primarily ministers, drowned out Brown's efforts to be heard with such calls as "Shame on Woman," because of their disgust at women's attempt at public speech. Newspapers across the country carried the story, angering women and inciting them to active organization.

Anthony and Stanton did desert temperance organizations in 1853.⁵ After Anthony was refused permission to speak, a small group of women called their own organizational meeting, choosing Mary C. Vaughan as president, Anthony as secretary, and Lydia Mott as chair of the business committee. The group subsequently called a state woman's temperance meeting at Rochester the following month, on April 20, 1852, at which Stanton was elected president, and Anthony, Bloomer, and Vaughan were chosen secretaries. At first, only women were permitted to speak and to hold office in the new organization, but when Antoinette Brown refused to participate because of unequal treatment for men, Stanton requested a change in this provision at the second year's meeting.

At that second year's convention, held June 1, 1853, Mary C. Vaughan was chosen president, and Stanton and Anthony abandoned the organization. Accounts regarding the reasons for their desertion differ. According to Ida Harper, some women opposed Stanton's re-election as president because of her radical views, and along with the majority of men who had been admitted, they defeated Stanton, electing Vaughan president instead. Anthony, elected vice president, declined to serve, Harper says, because "the vote showed they would not accept the principle of woman's rights and, as she believed thoroughly in standing for the equality of woman, she could not act as officer of such a society" (95). According to D. C. Bloomer's account of the gathering in his *Life and Writing of Amelia Bloomer*, Stanton was re-elected. But because the majority (including Amelia Bloomer) opposed Stanton's request that men be admitted on equal terms, "prefer[ing] that it should continue to be an exclusively feminine organization," Stanton declined to serve as president, and Anthony, chosen again to serve as secretary, declined as well (121). Bloomer's account, based on the perspective of Amelia Bloomer, is significant because Amelia Bloomer was, in many ways, the most influential person at the meeting. Although twentieth-century scholars are more familiar with Anthony and Stanton, Amelia Bloomer actually had attained far greater national and international name recognition because of her editorship of *The Lily* and the attention surrounding the "Bloomer" costume, the reform dress named for her (plate 8). At times, the *New-York Tribune* even referred to groups of women that included those better known today as "Mrs. Bloomer and assistants" ("Great Gathering" 5). If Bloomer opposed admitting males, she would have held great sway over many others present.

Personality might also have been at issue in the vote if Vaughan was elected over Stanton. Stanton's presidential address suggests her presumption of a knowledge and intellect superior to her audience, taking an "I told you so" attitude that might have offended other members.

A little more than one year ago, in this same hall, we formed the first Woman's State Temperance Society. . . . We who had watched the jealousy with which man had ever eyed the slow aggressions of woman, warned you against the insidious proposition made by agents from that Society. We told you they would no doubt gladly receive the dollar, but that you would never be allowed to speak or vote in their meetings. Many of you thought us suspicious and unjust toward the temperance men of the Empire State. . . . our predictions have been fully realized in the treatment our delegates received at the annual meeting held at Syracuse last July, and at the re-

cent Brick Church meeting in New York. (Stanton, Anthony, and Gage 493-94)

Although a brilliant philosopher and theoretician, Stanton did not always display rhetorical acumen. Similar problems followed Stanton throughout her life, most notably in the 1869 split of the Equal Rights Association into the National Woman's Suffrage Association and the American Woman's Suffrage Association, but also in numerous other disagreements stemming from her refusal to compromise her own beliefs.

Accounts in the *History of Woman Suffrage* also suggest problems associated with male membership:

As it was decided at this second convention to admit gentlemen, a schism was the immediate result. . . . It was the policy of these worldly wise men to restrict the debate on temperance within such narrow limits as to disturb none of the existing conditions of society. . . .

Thus these politic gentlemen manipulated the association, eliminated the woman's right elements *per se*. . . . Those women who had no proper self-respect accepted the conditions; those who had . . . abandoned all temperance organizations, as the same proper pride that forbade them to accept the conditions of a proscribed call of men's conventions, also prevented their affiliation with women who would tolerate such insults to the sex. (498-99)

Stanton, Anthony, and Gage again depict a scenario in which a small radical element (Stanton and Anthony, primarily) left temperance organizations to a conservative majority of women who permitted men to control their proceedings, but there is little evidence to substantiate this interpretation. Such women as Amelia Bloomer and Mary C. Vaughan can hardly be termed conservative, because they actively and openly challenged a woman's traditional role. Others, such as Antoinette Brown and Clara Howard Nichols, also continued to work in both the woman's rights and temperance organizations. Still others, such as Frances D. Gage, Amanda Way, and Eliza Daniel Stewart, participated in equal rights conventions, but devoted the majority of their time to temperance causes. Way held a number of high offices in the Good Templars, while Stewart belonged to and worked closely with a number of temperance organizations; both participated in the WCTU after its formation. Further, Stewart was instrumental in the Woman's Crusade and in organizing the WCTU. Amelia Bloomer had chosen not to join the Daughters of Temperance, of which Anthony was a member, because women were only accepted

into the auxiliary unit. Instead, she joined the Good Templars because they admitted both women and men as equal members. She published *The Libby*, a newspaper dedicated to temperance and woman's rights, and continued to belong to the Good Templars whenever there were organizations where she lived; she continued, as well, to participate actively in women's temperance organizations. When the Woman's Christian Temperance Union was formed in 1874, Bloomer became a member of that organization as well. The attitude of such progressive women who continued to labor for temperance might best be expressed by Bloomer's 1853 explanation:

We cannot consent to have woman remain silent on the Temperance question till she obtain her right of suffrage. Great as is our faith in the speedy triumph of temperance principles were women allowed their right of franchise, and strong as is our hope that this right will be granted ere many years, we feel that the day is too far distant for her to rest all her hopes and labors on that issue. Let her work with her whole heart in this cause and, while she demands a law that entirely prohibits the traffic in strong drink, let her also obtain a voice in making all laws by which she is to be governed. (Bloomer 59-60)

Bloomer and other temperance women believed firmly in the cause of woman's rights, but they pragmatically recognized that support was easier to garner for the temperance cause. They made the tactical decision to work for both causes simultaneously, discerning their beneficial complementarity.

The use of temperance to call for the reform of laws affecting women is apparent in the attention these women give to the issue of divorce. At mid-century, divorce was a major point of concern for a multitude of people, provoking extensive discussion within the churches and among members of the press. Numerous changes had been made in divorce laws in the 1830s and 1840s. By the early 1850s, state laws were as diverse as those in South Carolina, which prohibited divorce for any reason, to those in Indiana, where lenient divorce laws and liberal residency requirements aroused fear among numerous social and religious leaders. Most states had adopted laws that permitted divorce for reasons of adultery, impotence, or abandonment, when the partner failed to return after a specified number of years. Some states had begun recognizing divorce for cruelty, but cruelly usually "presumed extreme physical abuse" (Halem 22).

Often divorces granted were a *mensa et thoro*, or partial divorces that permitted couples to live separately but refused rights to remarriage, rather than a *vincula*, or final divorces. Such divorces could be espe-

cially problematic for women with children, as they were thus prohibited the traditional means of support they might enlist in remarriage. As demands for more permissive divorce laws increased, and western states liberalized divorce laws and residency requirements, a growing fear that collapsing family units would endanger fundamental societal values, leading to the breakdown of the social order, spurred active debate regarding the proper direction for legal reform pertaining to divorce.

For example, Horace Greeley, temperance advocate and editor of the *New York Tribune*, published lengthy tirades against divorce on any grounds with the exception of adultery. Greeley's highly visible attacks were accompanied by those of other high-profile public and religious leaders, such as Yale president Timothy Dwight.⁶ Thus, the topical nature of divorce afforded a popular issue for temperance women. Because few states permitted divorce for reasons of habitual drunkenness, temperance women could readily address this issue, calling for legal reform more favorable to women's needs by highlighting incidents specific to intemperance and evoking the image of suffering women and children. Both women who remained associated with temperance organizations and those, such as Stanton and Anthony, who departed, invoked portraits of women married to intemperate men in order to insist upon legal reform pertaining to divorce.

Even so, temperance women usually exhibited a greater consideration for audience than did women who chose to concentrate solely on the woman's rights issue. The content of Stanton's temperance speeches, for example, varies little from that of other temperance speakers, but her manner of presentation differs greatly. A look at Stanton's and Bloomer's arguments in favor of divorce for women married to drunkards illustrates the two women's disparate approaches. Stanton's appeal would have seemed harsh and unnecessarily accusatory to many listeners, with its third person imperatives and its ad hominem attacks on alcoholic men:

Let no woman remain in the relation of wife with the confirmed drunkard. Let no drunkard be the father of her children. Let no woman form an alliance with any man who has been suspected even of the vice of intemperance; for the taste once acquired can never, never be eradicated. Be not misled by any pledges, resolves, promises, prayers, or tears. You can not rely on the word of a man who is, or has been, the victim of such an overpowering appetite. (Stanton, Anthony, and Cage 482)

Many temperance women, including Nichols, Cage, and Bloomer, spoke in favor of divorce and separation when women were married to alcoholics. Bloomer spoke in support of the divorce resolution at the

first New York meeting in April, a speech more radical in some ways than Stanton's, especially since Bloomer insisted that women who refused to leave alcoholic husbands be forced to do so:

We believe the teachings which have been given to the drunkard's wife, inculcating duty—the commendable examples of angelic wives which she has been exhorted to follow—have done much to continue and aggravate the vices and crimes of society growing out of intemperance. Drunkenness is ground for divorce, and every woman who is tied to a confirmed drunkard should sunder the ties; and if she do it not otherwise, the law should compel it, especially if she have children.

But, whereas Bloomer made a call similar to that of Stanton, she skillfully acknowledged the demand's radical connotations while incorporating rhetoric that would both encourage her listener to reconsider initial scorn for the proposal and diminish the shock of her suggestion:

We are told that such sentiments are exceptional, abhorrent, that the moral sense of society is shocked and outraged by their promulgation. Can it be possible that the moral sense of a people is more shocked at the idea of a pure-minded, gentle woman sundering the tie which binds her to a loathsome mass of corruption, than it is to see her dragging out her days in misery tied to his besotted and filthy carcass? Are the morals of society less endangered by the drunkard's wife continuing to live in companionship with him, giving birth to a large family of children who inherit nothing but poverty and disgrace, and who will grow up criminal and vicious, filling our prisons and penitentiaries and corrupting and endangering the purity and peace of the community, than they would be should she separate from him and strive to win for herself and her children comfort and respectability? The statistics of our prisons, poorhouses, and lunatic asylums teach us a fearful lesson on this subject of morals!

Thus Bloomer capitalized on nineteenth-century images of pure, refined women by juxtaposing them with equally vivid portraits of degenerate drunkards. She also exploited her society's concern about the burgeoning class of destitute and dissolute people, especially children. She finished by again evoking the contrast between angelic women and drunken men, showing that hers was a common-sensical suggestion reinforced by traditional authority, noting that state lawmakers were considering such legislation seriously and would finally adopt it.

The idea of living with a drunkard is so abhorrent, so revolting to all the finer feelings of our nature, that a woman must fall very low before she can endure such companionship. Every pure-minded person must look with loathing and disgust upon such a union of virtue and vice; and he who would compel her to it, or dissuade the drunkard's wife from separating herself from such wretchedness and degradation, is doing much to perpetuate drunkenness and crime and is wanting in the noblest feelings of human nature. (Bloomer 87-89)

Bloomer was not the only skilled rhetorician among temperance women. Mary C. Vaughan, who, along with Susan B. Anthony, organized a separate meeting for women not permitted to speak at the Sons of Temperance meeting, and Lydia Folger Fowler addressed that secessionist group. In her speech, Vaughan said, "We have met to consider what we, as women, can do and may do, to forward the temperance reform. . . . [W]e are learning that our part in the drama of life is something beside inactive suffering and passive endurance" (Stanton, Anthony, and Gage 476). Unlike Stanton, who issued commands for women, Vaughan offered an invitation to women who might work toward reform, suggesting a community of women seeking a common goal. She placed herself as a learner among her listeners. She, like Bloomer, acknowledged that many would perceive their actions as radical, but she skillfully cast their opponents as intolerant: "We are aware that this proceeding of ours, this calling together of a body of women to deliberate publicly upon plans to carry out a specified reform, will rub rather harshly upon the mould of prejudice, which has gathered thick upon the common mind" (476).

Outlining women's grievances against liquor, she justified their involvement as "duty" and, in a lengthy, poignant appeal, effectively incorporated vivid adjectives and physical details to create concrete images for her audience. She concluded the list with the impassioned plea for helpless women and children that temperance women found so effective:

[She] has felt in her own person all the misery, degradation, and woe of the drunkard's wife; has shrunk from revellings and covered beneath blows; has labored and toiled to have her poor earnings transferred to the rum-seller's ill-gotten hoard; while her children, ragged, fireless, poor, starving, gathered shivering about her, and with hollow eyes, from which all smiles had fled, begged vainly for the bread she had not to bestow. Oh! the misery, the utter, hopeless misery of the drunkard's wife! (477)

Vaughan listed the characteristics of what she called "the masculine idea of womanhood," including one who is "gentle, mild, submissive" and "must necessarily enjoy and suffer in the extreme." But she refused to accept such a patriarchal notion, envisioning her own "true woman," one constructed by women themselves to take the place of "this false image of woman" (478). Vaughan did not call for divorce for wives of inebriates, but her speech and her position as president mark her as a strong advocate for women's release from suffering caused by alcoholic husbands.

Lydia F. Fowler also spoke at that meeting. Fowler was a practicing physician in New York City at the time—the second woman in the United States to attain a medical degree. In her address, she noted the sinister effect of intemperance on families and furnished anecdotal instances of the evils visited upon family members of the drunkard (Stanton, Anthony, and Gage 478). Her conversational narratives afforded a comfortable style for women more accustomed to parlor discussions; at the same time they provided tangible images and facts to support her call for change.

Numerous women were speaking publicly about temperance in the 1850s. Unfortunately, many newspaper accounts merely summarize or comment upon speeches. For example, the *New York Tribune*, in reporting on the April 20, 1852, New York Woman's Temperance Convention in Rochester at which Stanton was elected president, lists officers and simply mentions that Stanton, "upon taking the chair, read an address." The report then lists those from whom letters were read and explains that "Many speeches were made both by ladies and gentlemen—prominent among them which was an able address read by Mrs. Amelia Bloomer" ("Women's Temperance Convention" 5). Almost every early account of these addresses mentions their being "read," this apparently being the primary means of delivery for women. Women may have read their addresses because such mode of delivery was deemed more appropriate than looking at and speaking directly to an audience, and many temperance women carefully avoided offending listeners. Since these women modeled behavior for other women, however, and since such speakers as Stanton concerned themselves less with audience, a more likely interpretation seems to be that these women were simply inexperienced at public speaking and felt more comfortable reading addresses; none of them had access to the rhetorical training provided to men. The *Tribune* also reported that on the second day of the convention, "Mrs. Stanton and a lady from Genesee County, read long and interesting addresses," and explained that discussion of one resolution "called out Mrs. Bloomer in a long and eloquent address" ("Woman's Temperance Convention" 4).

In September of 1853, New York hosted the World's Temperance Convention; but since women had been excluded as full members from earlier meetings, including the May 12, 1853, Brick Church meeting that was held to plan the convention, many temperance women and men held a separate, simultaneous meeting that they called the "Whole World's Temperance Convention," labeling the men's convention as the "Half World's Convention" or the "Pseudo World's Temperance Convention." Women's addresses contained several standard characteristics, including an appeal for the sufferers of alcohol, a justification for women's public participation in the cause, and an insistence on the need for greater equality for women—clearly intended to appeal to women of diverse backgrounds.

A representative report comes from *The Pennsylvania Freeman*. As the newspaper suggests, it "condensed from the New York dailies and our own notes" the "report of its proceedings" ("Whole World's" 142); its record of speeches seems a fair account, comprehensive, but consistent with other newspaper descriptions. The *Freeman* printed parts of speeches by Antoinette L. Brown, Lucy Stone, and Clarina Howard Nichols. According to the *Freeman*

Rev. Miss Antoinette L. Brown [delivered] a clear and forcible speech.

She said: The Whole World's Temperance Convention—room on its broad platform for everybody . . . —every man may come here and speak in his own tongue wherein he was born, about one of the most needed reforms ever launched on the ocean of events. Here is Woman invited to speak into the great ear-trumpet of the world, that all may hear. (142)

After establishing the equality in treatment at the Whole World's Temperance Convention, an obvious reproach to the men's convention without directly alluding to it, Brown evoked Pentecostal language to affirm the importance of her cause. Drawing from Acts 2, she suggested that each person could "speak in his own tongue," thereby signifying the beginning of a gospel power endorsed by God. She further drew upon symbolic Christian language regarding the church as the "ship" of Zion, invoking one of the most common symbols from the walls of the catacombs in presenting her suggested reforms as "launched on the ocean." She accordingly employed weighted Christian terms to provide a repertoire of meaning for her listeners and subsequent authority for her position. Having established the ordained righteousness of her cause, Brown brought her audience's attention to the harm alcohol does to the drunkard. But the largest part of her speech was an emotional appeal on behalf of suffering children. Brown, who refused to support Stanton and

Bloomer in their call for divorce, nonetheless did promote legal separation and very effectively presented the atrocities visited on innocent children by the evils of alcohol:

Look at their degradation, when they are cursed with drunken parents. Look now in this dear little face. It would be fair enough, if there were only a soul life to flash over it. But it is an almost blank vacancy. You read there impressions of a gross nature, notwithstanding all that baby innocence. Yet you see a shadow over the face, reflecting the past and prophetic of the future. Poor child; with that worn little face smothered with dirt and filth. Fit emblem of your life is the little mole that lives under ground. There is sunshine in the sky, but you will never look upward. You may well bow your head, for your one talent is rolled up in the napkin of parental sin. God of justice, must there be every year thousands of such children born in our land? (142)

Brown carefully wove the image of destitution around children of drunkards, constructing the mole metaphor to emphasize their deprived lives, void of sunshine. While she could not support divorce, even under the hideous circumstances she presented, her doubts about bringing children into a world with no hope for a happy and fruitful life not only supported her arguments for legal separation but, intentionally or not, bolstered demands for more flexible divorce laws. She continued to assemble images of profoundly miserable children with dreadful prospects for their future lives:

Here is another child, with baby smiles and baby tears crossing each other down its face, gushing up from its little heart struggling each for the mastery. If God would only take her to Heaven now, she would become one of the happiest of angel cherubs; but the fevered effect of the wine cup, delirium descends through her face, and the angels will weep over her own tears and will pluck out the smiles, while she is yet told that the wine cup will wipe out those tears better than the shame that caused them. They will lie down in an early grave; the earth will not be moistened by a single tear; no flowers will grow up over it; weeds and thistles will grow there, and the old sexton will throw them down with his spade as he passes on. We should grow weary in reading the destinies of children such as these—types of human depravity and human sin. They are the children of intemperance and so as surely as the cup of temptation is not taken from them, will they thus miserably perish. (142)

Brown's use of the word "cup" invoked Christ's agony at Gethsemane—"let this cup pass from me"—and further highlighted the danger of death, both physical and spiritual, to children born into families of alcoholics. She finished by turning her emotional appeal for children into a condemnation of lawmakers who sponsored and licensed the trade that so endangered children:

Has the law nothing to answer for in all this? May good men be allowed to sign their names to sanction a traffic which produces results like these? Must they continue to sanctify intemperance and make the world buy their soul destroying drink, and then talk of a good moral character of themselves? Rumsellers good moral characters? The thief, the murderer, the libertine, can lay as good a claim to a good moral character as the patentees and patronizers of alcohol,—that genuine oil of licentiousness! They ought to be weighed in the balance together, to see which will be found wanting.

The *Freeman* report ended with "Miss B. concluded by urging the adoption of the Maine Law, and urging considerations of cheer and encouragement to all friends of the cause" (142). Brown thus juxtaposed suffering, helpless children with powerful and selfish lawmakers. Without explicitly supporting divorce, her analogies and rhetorical questions nonetheless added force to demands for changes in divorce laws. She further associated men with bad laws and the heartless abuse of power, and women and children with the evil consequences of their actions.

At the evening session, Lucy Stone (plate 9) addressed the assembly. Prior to her address, P. T. Barnum, of circus fame, had spoken: "sensible, shrewd, witty, pungent, full of sharp points and amusing illustrations, and though sometimes not peculiarly refined in expression, it kept the audience in excellent humor" (142). The lighthearted break prepared audiences to reconsider the devastating conditions of innocent children, but Stone built further on Brown's presentation by insisting that children not be born into such situations:

Lucy Stone was then called by the President, to present the tragic side of the picture of intemperance, the comic features of which had been so amusingly given.

Miss Stone was received with enthusiastic applause, and her speech was heard with an almost breathless silence broken only by applause. She presented a touching sketch of the sufferings and wrongs endured by women and children, resulting from intemperance, and the domestic ruin and woe it had caused. She desired that a public sentiment should be created, which would forbid marriage to the drunkard and would

dissolve the relation where either husband or wife was addicted to drunkenness, and defended her position with much ability. She said:

Let it constitute a crime on the part of any man or any woman, who shall assume the relation of a parent, who, by his or her habits of intemperance, would be likely to entail upon posterity this curse of domestic life. If it cannot be constituted by law, then let public opinion do that which law will not. Every child has a right to a healthful organization—has a right to come into the world with a fair heritage, that it may go back to its God without blemish, as pure as it was born. The husband and wife have or should have a right to a divorce from a drunken partner. (142)

Stone demanded rights for helpless children and for both men and women victims of drunkards who might produce children subject to such harsh conditions. She carefully placed her demand for rights within the context of care and concern for the helpless, and, aware of the power of custom, appealed for a change in attitudes. She anticipated criticism and defended her position, insisting that her authority came from God.

I know that texts and statutes will be quoted against us, and that usage too will be brought to bear against it, but truth is stronger than either of them. . . . If my position is true, I do not care who is against it or who is for it; for God's own life is in it—that life which never sleeps, but will one day come like leaven in the lump, will come without parchment, and will not come in characters that can be blotted out. (Loud applause.) I appeal to you, fathers and mothers; if you do not wish your sons and your daughters, when they go from your household, themselves and their daughters may be guarded against the miseries of intemperance. (142)

Stone's call for divorce was disconcerting for some members of the convention; Horace Greeley responded by dissenting from Stone's position on divorce for drunkenness.

Stone again spoke the following evening, apparently under pressure from members: "Lucy Stone being loudly called, came forward and spoke for fifteen minutes in one of her happiest and most impressive efforts" (142). In spite of the respected Greeley's demurring from Stone's position on divorce, she remained one of the most popular speakers at the convention.

Clarina Howard Nichols, another favored speaker, also received special treatment at this meeting. According to the *Freeman*, "Mrs. N. was received with applause, and spoke at length (the ten minutes rule being

suspended in her behalf) of the sufferings of woman by intemperance, and her duties, and of the responsibility of the church for the evil" ("Whole World's" 142). Nichols, in order to mollify those who might have contemplated for women who spoke in public, justified her role by pointing out that women were the primary sufferers from alcohol; she painted men as the drinkers, women as the victims, a charge temperance women repeatedly invoked to deflect criticism. Nichols connected women's temperance activity with duty, and like other temperance women, she also assured audiences that she joined the temperance crusade only because men had failed to protect women.

I cannot *present* to you woman's claim to the Maine Law more forcibly than by showing how it will restore the sweet harmonies of domestic life; it is because I believe this I take this position. And if I needed to make any apology for so doing, it is that woman is the greatest sufferer from intemperance. Woman, who is herself not addicted to this vice, suffers more than man; and it is to this point that I wish to direct your special attention. (142)

Having established woman as the victim, Nichols skillfully indicted the legal system, the presumed protector of the innocent and helpless, for its failure to protect women and children. She enumerated incidents, including but not limited to intemperance, whereby the law allowed the good of women and children to be sacrificed, very effectively establishing both the need for a change in the legal system and the necessity for women to take public action.

The laws of this country have bound her hand and foot, and given her up to the protection of her husband. They have committed her soul and body to the protection of the husband, and when he fails from imbecility, misjudgment, misfortune, or intemperance, she suffers. The mother cannot hold in her own hand the bread she earns to feed her babes and children; even the clothes she wears can be taken by her husband to satisfy his inordinate appetites. If intemperance did not invade our homes and tear them from over our heads; if it did not take from us our clothing, our bread, the means for our own self development, and for the training of our children in respectability and usefulness; if it did not take our babes from our bosoms, I would not stand here. (Loud Applause) (142)

Thus, Nichols effectively incorporated graphic images of clothing and food, even children, being torn from the bosom of women made helpless to provide for their suffering children by the law of the land. She also

used repetition—"if it did not"—to drive home the impression that she reticently took the public stage out of necessity. But she also justified divorce for women more broadly than for reasons of intemperance to include imbecility, misfortune, and misjudgment. Having brought her audience to the point of accepting her demands, Nichols chose to complete her address with a statement of understanding and an offer of assistance, ending with an anecdote she knew her mostly female audience would enjoy:

It seems to me that the great cause of humanity is very much in the position of a little child that a friend of mine lately met. She was traveling in a stage coach, when she saw a man with an infant a few months old in his arms; my friend was exceedingly interested in the babe, and wondered that the father should be carrying an infant so long a journey. She naturally fancied that the child's mother was dead, and her big heart yearned toward the little desolate one. She asked the man where the babe's mother was? He replied that she "would not come along with it, and when husband and wife disagree they must separate." "What," she eagerly inquired, "and you take the little babe?" To which he answered that he did, for he had "both the right and the power." "But," my friend inquired, "when the little one is hungry, can you feed it?" "Oh! yes," he replied, "I can feed it, I have a pocket full of cakes." (Laughter and cheers.) And so man has gone through the world in every department of life; in the legislative, and in all the out-of-door avocations, and he has thus carried with him a "pocket full of cakes" until humanity has become dyspeptic. (Loud applause.) And what we now ask is that it may be restored to the mother of humanity, to drink the milk of human kindness which God has stored so bountifully in the breast of women. (142)

As was often typical with women's temperance speeches, Nichols began her speech with an appeal for relieving the suffering of women and children victims, and she concluded with a call to "Christians of every name to engage in this work." Thus, her accusations and claims regarding the injustices toward women were sandwiched between and connected with the cause of temperance. And like many speakers, she narrated humorous but touching anecdotes that further highlighted women's strengths and supported her demand for equality. Women speakers thus subverted the ridicule and humor that was often addressed toward them by redirecting the joke.

So many women wished to lecture that speakers strictly adhered to an allotted amount of time; such cooperation and sharing underscored a

theme of unity and sisterhood typical of women's temperance organizations throughout the nineteenth century. But, although a large number of women spoke, newspapers reported in detail only the addresses of the best-known women, simply summarizing or mentioning speeches of others. For example, the *Freeman* noted that

Mrs. Vaughan, the President of the Women's New York City Temperance Society, spoke of the operations and success of that organization, concluding with an appeal for the Maine Law, urging women until they are permitted to vote to *elect-tioneer* for it. (142)

The newspaper account put the attendance for the first evening session at 2,500 to 4,000 persons and for the second evening at over 3,000. Although the newspapers did not print all the women's speeches in full, they actually gave more space to women's addresses than to men's presentations at similar conventions. Very popular male speakers, such as Horace Mann or Gerrit Smith, might find welcome print for their entire addresses, but generally men's speeches were summarized, if the content was given at all. Because of the novelty and controversy surrounding their public roles, women aroused more interest in their activities; women's addresses, therefore, received greater coverage.

Women reformers differed, understandably, on some of the finer points of women's advancement, yet their appeals for women were remarkably similar. Some could not accept the notion of divorce, for example, but felt comfortable promoting legal separation. Others were uncomfortable even with the notion of marital separation. Women reformers' beliefs about how best to further women's cause—through a direct and assertive approach or by means of an indirect, non-threatening one—was more likely to determine the paths they chose, although such decisions sometimes reflected the circumstances of their own lived experiences. Some, fearful of fathers or husbands, undoubtedly were forced to refrain from overt participation. For instance, Eliza Daniel Stewart, in her report of the Ohio Woman's Crusade, noted that a Crusade woman "turned to a miserable inebriate" during one of their marches saying, "Your wife ought to be with us." A fierce light came into his eyes as he answered, "I'd kill her if she was!" As Stewart noted, the woman "could not, dared not, lend a helping hand, for fear of that imbruted husband" (172). Such was surely true for many women, but such incidents offered ready material for leaders who encouraged other women to come to the aid of those unable to speak for themselves.

Others, fearful of injuring loved ones, chose modified courses. For example, Antoinette Brown requested that Caroline M. Severance accompany her as a delegate to the World's Temperance Convention to test

the convention's sincerity in promising to include women. Severance, a prominent speaker for both temperance and woman's rights in her own state of Ohio, nonetheless demurred at taking a highly visible or controversial role in New York. Severance agreed to accompany Brown, but asked that she be allowed to "go in quietly" because "I have in this city venerated grandparents, whose feelings I greatly regard, and would not willingly or unnecessarily wound"; Severance felt that she should "take no active part in what will seem to them an antagonistic position for woman, and uncalled for on my part" (Stanton, Anthony, and Gage 153).

Paulina Wright Davis reported similar complications among a committee of seven organized to plan a national woman's rights convention: "[T]he work soon devolved upon one person [Davis]. Illness hindered one, duty to a brother another, duty to the slave a third, professional engagements a fourth, the fear of bringing the gray hairs of a father to the grave prevented another from serving" (Stanton, Anthony, and Gage 216).

Stanton also finally gave up the "Bloomer" costume because of the wishes of her brothers and father. According to Ida Harper, the women who wore Bloomers were constantly harassed, "Their husbands and children refused to be seen with them in public, and they were wholly ostracized by other women" (114). Harper says, "Mrs. Bloomer wore the costume eight years, but very few held out one-fourth of that time" (114). "Mrs. Stanton was the first to capitulate" (115). Stanton apparently discontinued wearing the Bloomer after "two or three years," because "the pressure brought to bear upon her by her father and other friends was so great, that she finally yielded to their wishes and returned to long skirts" (Bloomer 70).

Because of such pressures, women temperance speakers secured audiences for their addresses and recruited women for their cause by avoiding agonistic presentations. They effectively presented their case for greater rights for women—for changes in the law of coverture giving women legal rights to their personal and real property, to their own income and wages, and to their children. They also convincingly argued the need for more flexible divorce laws. By emphasizing such needs in relation to intemperance, and insisting upon women's duties toward and concern for those in need, women forcefully and permissibly encouraged and participated in public debate over issues of great concern to them.

The complex rhetoric of temperance women can help us to understand more fully the complicated choices women made. Only superficial examinations allow for the dismissal of women's temperance rhetoric as conservative and unimportant. The women who worked so arduously for temperance reform at mid-nineteenth century made complicated and sophisticated rhetorical decisions that represent a complex weaving of women's philosophies and historical circumstances. The product was often a beautiful, varied, and sophisticated rhetoric.

Patriotic Reformers: "Called by the Spirit of the Lord to Lead the Women of the World"

We are here to-day as the representatives of a great and growing society—a society so large and so far reaching in its influence that its name is a household word wherever the English language is spoken.

—Annie Wittenmyer, 1878 Presidential Address to WCTU

BY THE FINAL quarter of the nineteenth century, women had firmly established temperance as a woman's issue. Beginning in the 1820s, women had comprised a substantial portion of membership in temperance organizations,¹ and since at least the 1830s, they had published fiction presenting temperance as an overwhelming concern for women. From the 1840s, women had organized in independent, exclusively female organizations to fight for temperance, publishing their proceedings and resolutions in state and local newspapers. By the early 1850s, numerous women had begun to speak publicly in support of temperance, some confronting retail dealers and occasionally destroying their wares.

Often men's fiction and speeches helped to solidify this perception of women as the principal movers and beneficiaries of the temperance movement, and laws passed in some states furthered the notion that women were the primary sufferers of intemperance. For example, in 1870, Ohio passed the Adair Law, which permitted wives and children of alcoholic men to bring suit against saloon keepers to recover damages.

By the time women established the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1874, they felt little further need to defend their participation in the temperance cause. In earlier years, they had most often portrayed women as victims in an effort to justify their public action on