The Lily and its Impact on Feminist Thought in Nineteenth Century America

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Abstract

Editor Amelia Bloomer created controversy through her nineteenth century periodical—The *Lily*—which started out as a temperance journal but quickly came to include women's rights issues. Her influence on the first women's rights movement of the nineteenth century can be partially attributed to her success at creating controversy as a way to bring attention to women's issues in three key areas: through her advocacy of temperance which emphasized, among other things, the vulnerability of a woman married to a drunkard; through her endorsement of the bloomer costume which would help inspire the nineteenth century dress reform movement, and through her use of the comparison between married women and slaves as a way to bring attention to the disadvantages facing married women in nineteenth century America.

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Acknowledgments

Through the work I have done on this thesis I have come to realize the importance of the women who in nineteenth-century America, despite everything that was stacked against them, were not afraid to fight to have their voices heard as a way to implement change.

I would like to thank all those who encouraged me towards the completion of this project, it has been a long road and I was close to giving up many times. I would also like to thank Dr. Stretton, Dr. Reid and Dr. Naylor for their patience, advice and feedback.

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Introduction

Despite living in a land heralded as the land of opportunity and freedom, a nineteenth century woman in America had limited rights, especially when compared to her male counterpart. While some women accepted this as the natural order of things, others were not willing to stand idly by. Despite their limited options, these women took advantage of the few avenues they could use to express their discontent; one of these was the production of early American feminist periodicals which began to spring up in the mid-nineteenth century in various states across America. Women's periodicals were one avenue that could be used by female writers and advocates to express their dissatisfaction with their lack of rights in society.

Mid-nineteenth century New York was a State had some of the most liberal laws in place for its citizens, and produced numerous women's rights activists. It was a place where female writers and editors flourished. One such woman, Amelia Bloomer, became the editor of a popular nineteenth century journal titled the *Lily,* which initially started as a temperance journal six months after the Seneca Falls Convention.[1] The journal's first slogan stated "A Ladies' Journal, devoted to temperance and literature" but soon came to include "Devoted to the Interests of Woman." Interestingly, Bloomer was the first woman to edit, as well as own and operate, a news instrument for women.[2] While editor Virginia Allen's 1846 temperance periodical *The New York Pearl* preceded the *Lily*, unlike Bloomer, Allen, along with the majority of female temperance activists, were, for

[1]Early Women's Rights Convention that occurred from July 19-20, 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York.
[2] D.C. Bloomer, *Life and Writings of Amelia Bloomer*, (Boston Arena Publishing Company, 1895), 45.

the most part, satisfied with their subordinate roles within the temperance movement which prevented them from doing things such as speaking in public. In the 1850s, as temperance reform tactics changed from the advocacy of appealing to morality to prohibition, women were stripped of their role, which resulted in a demand to enter what was typically considered the male spheres of action, resulting in a new feminine perspective.[3] Many women were beginning to realize that they wanted to play a more active and equal role in the temperance movement. In *The Origins of Temperance Activism* Jed Dannenbaum said "in these years a close link developed between women's rights and female temperance activism."[4]

The *Lily* played an instrumental role in helping the first women's rights movement of the nineteenth-century come to fruition; it gave female writers a platform from which to share their grievances, and it brought together key women's rights activists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, women who would go on to be influential figures in the movement as they paved the way for future generations of activists. Bloomer was said to have introduced Stanton and Anthony after an anti-slavery meeting in 1850, and the two would become life-long friends. In *The Road to Seneca Falls* Judith Wellman describes this first meeting. "There she stood," Stanton recalled "with her good, earnest face and genial smile, dressed in gray delaine, hat and all the same color, relieved with pale blue ribbons, the perfection of neatness and sobriety. I liked her thoroughly, and why I did not at once invite her home with me to dinner, I do

[3] Jed Dannenbaum, "The Origins of Temperance Activism and Militancy among American Women", *Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Winter, 1981), 236-237.
[4] *Ibid*, 237.

not know."[5] According to Bloomer, "neither would have done what she did without the other… they helped and strengthened each other, and together they have accomplished great things for woman and humanity."[6]

The *Lily* also had a significant influence on drawing attention to married women's lack of legal rights, a lack which would become a key driving force behind the first women's rights movement of the nineteenth-century, and which would also be an important focus of the periodical throughout its publication. In addition, it paved the way for other women's rights journals that would come after, such as *Una*, *The Revolution* and *Sibyl*, providing a successful working formula to emulate in order to help editors and writers in their quest for women's equality.[7] Bloomer was not afraid to tackle unpopular and controversial topics that more mainstream papers or magazines of the time would ridicule.[8] Anne Coon states that, "Within three years the *Lily* was not only flourishing financially but had also become an important forum for publicizing, discussing, and influencing women's issues in the United States."[9]

This thesis will argue that the key to the *Lily*'s success was the way in which pioneering editor Amelia Bloomer startled and affronted her audience by going against societal norms in order to bring attention to the many constraints placed on women in nineteenth century America, thereby helping women garner a much needed political voice. With both temperance and women's rights, Bloomer used shock tactics to get her

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[5] Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman's Rights Convention* (University of Illinois Press, 2004), 221.
[6] Bloomer, *Life*, 54-55.
[7] Kathleen L. Endres and Therese L. Lueck, *Women's Periodicals in the United States, Social and Political Issues* (Greenwood Press: Westport, Connecticut and London, 1996), 183.
[8] *Ibid*, 183.
[9] Anne C. Coon, *Hear Me Patiently, The Reform Speeches of Amelia Jenks Bloomer* (Greenwood Press: Westport, Connecticut and London, 1994), 5.

points across, a popular method employed by previous temperance writers when attempting to bring attention to the ills of drinking.[10] Bloomer was not afraid to discuss issues that were both highly controversial and had not been previously publicized by a female. This helped her garner more attention for both the *Lily* as well as the bigger issue of women's rights.

This thesis will explore three pivotal ways that Bloomer successfully used this technique throughout the pages of the *Lily*, as well as the impact such techniques had on the first women's rights movement of the nineteenth-century. The first to be examined is the issue of temperance itself. While the earlier editions of the periodical focused primarily on this issue, it would remain prevalent throughout the lifespan of the journal. Here, articles would often emphasize the inherent dangers for a woman and her children if her husband consumed alcohol; according to the literature, a mere drop could lead to a man behaving like a raving lunatic. Women's involvement with temperance served as an pre-cursor to their involvement with woman's rights, as they came to realize just how little they were allowed to do based on their gender, such as not being allowed to speak in public. In addition, it exposed the vulnerability facing a woman married to an alcoholic due to her lack of rights. It also suggested that women could be the ones in the wrong, if they used alcohol in their cooking or influenced a man to drink. Ultimately, temperance gave women a common cause to fight for which would lead to another common cause, their own lack of rights. Further, Bloomer was one of the first women to tackle this issue in print.

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[10] Douglas W. Carlson, "Drinks to his Own Undoing: Temperance Ideology in the Deep South," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter 1998), 659-691.

The second way that Bloomer employed the extreme to garner attention for the issue of women's rights was through her public support of the pant-like outfit that became synonymous with her name, "Bloomers"—which helped inspire the nineteenth-century dress reform movement while also bringing Bloomer, as well as the periodical, notoriety. It was the first time that a woman had so openly defied accepted convention.[11] Subscription numbers for the *Lily* would increase substantially after her public endorsement of this outfit and the worldwide attention it received.

The third and final point to be examined is Bloomer's frequent use of the comparison between married women and slaves—a radical analogy which was used as a way to bring attention to the unjust legal disadvantages facing both groups. Bloomer's purposeful use of such provocative material in the *Lily* played an invaluable role in its success, ensuring more readers and thereby creating the necessary awareness that resulted in more exposure for the controversial nineteenth-century topic of women's rights.

Not afraid to counter those who did not support the temperance cause, or those who supported the limited legal rights of married women, Bloomer often published material that belittled their beliefs, just as opponents sought to belittle women's rights supporters for seeking change. At a time when many writers heralded women for being confined to a supposed private or domestic sphere, and for "knowing" their place in the world, *Lily* editor Bloomer blazed a trail with the nature of the material she published in her forward-thinking journal.

Bloomer was the youngest child in a fairly large family; she had three sisters and two brothers. She was born on May 27, 1818 in Homer, New York to Ananias, a clothes

[11] Endres and Lueck, *Women's Periodicals*, 181.

merchant, and Lucy Jenks, a devout Christian, who was a member of the Presbyterian Church. She had little formal education, but was trained by her mother to believe in honesty, duty and fidelity, and to have a strong regard for the rights of others. She attended the local district school where girls were taught how to read and write. She went on to teach for one term at the age of seventeen in a local village, but did not continue with this initial vocation, despite being successful at it. In 1837, she went to live with her newly married sister's family in Waterloo, New York.[12]

After a few years, she accepted a position as a governess and tutor working for the Chamberlain family.[13] Subsequently, she would meet a cousin of the Chamberlains, Dexter Bloomer. He worked as a publisher for the *Seneca County Courier* and was a Quaker. He was trained as a lawyer but practiced only periodically. They fell in love and were married in 1840. After their marriage, they would move to their new home in Seneca Falls, New York, where they rented part of the house from Dexter's partner in printing—Mr. Issaac Fuller.[14]

Her new husbands influence was a part of her success story; he encouraged her to write articles for the public on various issues. At her wedding party, after being presented with a glass of wine by her new husband, much to his astonishment she politely refused it. "What" he said with the greatest earnestness, "will you not drink a glass of wine with me on this joyful occasion? Surely it can do you no harm. "No", she replied firmly, but with a smile, "I cannot—I must not."[15]

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[12] Coon, *Hear me*, 4.
[13] Bloomer, *Life*, 10-13.
[14] Bloomer, *Life*, 16.
[15] Ibid,16.

In 1842, after the creation of the Independent Total Abstinence Society, Bloomer began to write for their paper, *The Water Bucket*, often under pseudonyms such as 'Gloriana' and 'Eugene.' Standing by her beliefs in total abstinence, she wrote an article against women who insisted on using liquor in their baking. She stated,

> But I would ask these ladies if they have ever tried to do without it? Their answer I fear would be in the negative. They do not *wish* to do without it. They act from purely selfish motives. Would they but visit the drunkard's home and see the misery and wretchedness that is brought upon families once happy and prosperous as themselves, and hear the drunkard's wife recount her tale of woe, methinks their hearts would soften.[16]

In 1843 she and her husband became members of the Episcopal Church in Seneca Falls where she remained a member for the rest of her life. She did not always agree with the interpretations of Scriptures relating to women, showing the beginnings of her burgeoning interest in women's rights. She would continue to write articles for the *Water Bucket*; as well as for *The Temperance Star* of Rochester, which was an organ of the total abstinence society, Sons and Daughters of Temperance. Women were admitted to the society after its creation in 1849, and according to Bloomer, the Daughters of Temperance came to be comprised solely of woman. She explained:

> The order was planted in 24 states and in England and the British Provinces. The daughters held state and national conventions, issued addresses and appeals to the women of the state, circulated petitions to the legislature, and were very zealous in good works. In 1851 this order numbered over twenty thousand members. It was a secret society and no one could gain admittance to their meetings without the password. This, as far as I know, was the first organized movement ever made by women to make themselves felt and heard on the great temperance question.[17]

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[16] *The Water Bucket*, as quoted in Bloomer, *Life*, 21.
[17] Bloomer, *Life*, 36.

Buoyed by her success and the support of the Ladies Temperance Society, which was formed in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York, Bloomer began discussing the possibility of starting her own paper with other members of the Society.[18] Her confidence also increased after her husband, Dexter, appointed her to be his deputy after he was appointed postmaster of Seneca Falls in 1849. She stated "It was a novel step for me to take in those days, and no doubt many thought I was out of woman's sphere; but the venture was very successful and proved to me conclusively that woman might, even then, engage in any respectable business and deal with all sorts of men, and yet be treated with the utmost respect and consideration."[19]

Despite her husband's obvious admiration for her abilities, Bloomer did not initially have his support when it came to starting her own newspaper. He told her that, "we women did not know what we were talking about, that it cost a good deal of money to print a paper, and that we could not carry on such an enterprise and would run ourselves into debt, get into trouble and make a failure of it."[20] Despite her husband's initial opposition, the paper would go ahead, and the idea became a reality in 1849 with the first edition of the *Lily*. Prior to this, women played few active roles in temperance work. As Bloomer explained, "They could attend meetings and listen to the eloquence and arguments of men, and they could pay their money towards the support of temperance lecturers, but such a thing as their having anything to say or do further than

[18] *Ibid*, 27.
[19] *Ibid*, 48.
[20] *Ibid*, 40-41.

this was not thought of."[21]

Bloomer's courage in creating and publishing the *Lily*, despite her husband's initial resistance and the difficulties encountered in society, represents an early example of her willingness to go against societal norms and to create controversy. As Bob Ostertag points out in *People's Movement, People's Press*, "like the early abolitionists, early women's rights campaigners were shut out of the mainstream press. The lack of words, the family control, the lack of independent social networks, and the banishment of the press formed a web of constraints that denied women not only a *public voice* but even a *private community*."[22] Bloomer overcame these constraints, benefiting the causes of temperance and women's rights, as well as her own sense of self.

In addition to her publishing career, Bloomer also became a popular public lecturer in the early-to mid-1850s in New York State and across the Midwest; she spoke before thousands of people on various issues-ranging from social to moral to legal themes.[23] According to Anne Coon, she "waged her own holy war against the devastation caused by intemperance, reasoned calmly with her audiences for providing broader opportunities for women in education and employment, and refuted the prevailing arguments against woman's suffrage."[24]

In order to further clarify the significance of the *Lily* to women's causes in nineteenth- century America, an examination will be made of what other historians have said about it. The majority agree that it played a significant role in women's quest for

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[21] Bloomer, *Life*, 40.
[22] Bob Ostertag, *People's Movements, People's Press, The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (Beacon Press: Boston, 2006), 58.
[23] Coon*, Hear Me*, 2.
[24] *Ibid*, 2.

gender equality, with historian Hincks, for example, believing that the *Lily* was responsible for the creation of much of the discourse that laid the foundation for the early woman's rights movement.[25] Aronson points out that it is common for scholars of journalism and women's writing to examine feminist periodicals with regard to how they interacted with the masculine, conventional press of the day.[26]

Russo and Kramarae viewed the *Lily* and other feminist periodicals that came out around the same time as being important because they "publicized a broad range of women's issues and protests at a time when many men editors throughout the country were transmitting messages hostile to women's rights."[27] They believe that through these periodicals, women had a forum where they could debate issues that were of personal and national importance to them, and join a community of like-minded individuals to whom they could relate, at a time when the growth of the railroad system made possible an increasingly national press.[28]

Hincks, historian and author of *The Lily, 1849-1856, From Temperance to Woman's Rights*, regards the periodical as especially significant because it "was a forum that circumvented the prohibition on the public appearance of female advocates in the nineteenth-century."[29] He also states that in arguing that intemperance was a threat to all women, the *Lily* helped the issue of intemperance become a widespread concern. This

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[25] Edward A. Hinck, "The *Lily*, 1849-1856, From Temperance to Woman's Rights," in *A voice of Their Own The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1910* (The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 47.
[26] Amy Aronson, *Taking Liberties Early American Women's Magazines and Their Readers* (Library of Congress, 2002), 199.
[27] Russo and Kramarae, 1991, 2 as quoted in Amy Aronson, *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, "American's First Feminist Magazine", 199.
[28] Anne Russo and Cheris Kramarae, *Radical Women's Press* (Routledge: New York and London, 1991), 11.
[29] Edward A. Hinck, "The *Lily*, 1849-1856, From Temperance to Woman's Rights", in *A Voice of Their Own The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1910* (University of Alabama Press: Tuscaloosa, 1991), 32.

tactic broadened the basis of activities open to women, by revealing that the basic values of society needed to be restructured if women were to obtain the necessary power to effect legislative change.[30] Hincks argues that by helping its readers see themselves as reformers, the *Lily* helped legitimize actions outside the domestic sphere. He explains that:

> As they confronted the cultural and legal barriers to a temperate society, they discovered that their inability to protect themselves from intemperance was due to a sexist social order. In this respect, the *Lily* contributed to the early women's rights movement by revealing how temperance issues stemmed from the problem of unequal rights.[31]

Hincks believes that through participation in the temperance movement, women found a much-needed sense of community which was an important first step in the formative stages of the early women's rights movement. He argues that ultimately the *Lily* "fulfilled two critical requirements for social change. It confronted women with their own powerlessness within the prevailing social order, while reshaping the image of women in ways that empowered them to act as reformers without violating their traditional roles."[32]

The importance of newspapers in reaching larger numbers of people, versus a single speaker addressing one particular group, cannot be underestimated. Jerry explains that newspapers could also be shared, and re-read, giving what they had to say a longer lasting impact. It would have been very plausible, say, for a Seneca Falls subscriber to the *Lily* to lend her copy to a friend, who could then perhaps pass the copy on to her sister.

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[30] Hincks, *The Lily,* 32.
[31] *Ibid*, 40.
[32] *Ibid*, 46.

Feminist periodicals such as the *Lily* also brought together women who were geographically separated, as well as identifying women who would go on to be leaders of the movement. She explained that "these papers served to reach women who might not think of themselves as feminists or women's rights activists, who might not be aware of their frustrations."[33]

In addition, the *Lily* helped open the doors for women writers, as the journal published works not only from well-known reformers, but also from young women who were just beginning their careers[34]. According to Endres and Lueck, "The *Lily* contained opinions and ideas that had never before been publicly addressed by a woman in print, and some of these opinions proved upsetting to the public."[35] They also said that "From the start, The *Lily* reflected Bloomer's political ideas and was more of a mouthpiece than a magazine for a mass audience."[36] They argue that Bloomer's success at the business of journalism represented what could be seen as her most significant achievement. "By carrying out her duties as a writer, editor and proprietor so successfully for so long, Bloomer exploded the myth that women could not handle work outside the home and proved that women could compete with men on equal grounds."[37] They also argued that "Bloomer could be recognized as the pioneer behind the development of a new genre of magazine, known as women's advocacy magazines" and explained that "while for years before The *Lily* there were publications run by women, never before had one been so

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[33] E. Claire Jerry, "The Role of Newspapers in the Nineteenth Century Woman's Movement", *A Voice of Their Own, The Women Suffrage Press, 1840-1910* (University of Alabama Press: Tuscaloosa, 1991), 29.
[34] Endres and Lueck, *Women's Periodicals*, 183.
[35] *Ibid*, 175.
[36] *Ibid*, 175.
[37] *Ibid*, 183.

solely devoted to the unique concerns of the female sex…Bloomer proved herself a courageous editor by tackling unpopular topics that other mainstream papers and magazines could only ridicule."[38]

With regards to periodicals in general and the suffrage movement, Wells said "periodicals, it has been argued, were particularly important to the northern suffrage movement because they provided women with both a platform for new ideas and a way to disseminate those ideas."[39]

The first feminist magazines were unique in that they were able to help women produce and share progressive gender images. They could openly discuss issues that before would not have been addressed in public. Aronson felt that "the significance of the *Lily* did not lie in its numbers. The magazine was important in gender politics and media history for the ways it appropriated the popular gender discourse of the day and transformed it, producing new images and stories that were both visible to and viable in the public eye."[40] According to Steiner in *Evolving Rhetorical Strategies/Evolving Identities*, "these periodicals engaged women in consciousness-raising and consciousness-changing, both individually and collectively."[41]

All these historians agree that Bloomer played a significant role in bringing the first woman's rights movement of the nineteenth-century to fruition in varying ways, whether it was by bringing together a group of like-minded individuals, legitimizing

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[38] *Ibid*, 183.
[39] Jonathan Daniel Wells, *Women Writers and Journalists in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2011), 94.
[40] Aronson, *Taking Liberties*, 201- 202.
[41] Linda Steiner, "Evolving Rhetorical Strategies/Evolving Identities" in *A Voice of Their Own, The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1940*, ed. Marth M. Solomon (University of Alabama Press: Tuscaloosa, 1997), 183.

actions outside the domestic sphere, empowering women to act as reformers, reaching a large group of individuals via newspapers, opening doors for women writers and promoting women's journalism, or by sharing progressive gender images. To further these arguments, this thesis will promote the idea that it was her provocative and controversial stance when discussing three key issues: temperance, dress reform and the analogy that compared married women to slaves which resulted in her profound influence on the first woman's rights movement of the nineteenth- century.

The origins of the *Lily* go back to the early 1840s, when a group of six men made a promise in a Baltimore tavern that they would dedicate themselves to spreading the gospel of temperance. They were known as the Washingtonians, and began to make temperance speeches across the United States. The temperance organizations of the time excluded women from participating in their activities, this being the time when advocates of separate spheres ideology discouraged women from speaking out in public. Despite this, temperance was an issue of great interest to women which led Amelia Bloomer and other female temperance activists to form the first Ladies Temperance Society in 1848. Not being able to express their views on a public platform vocally, they decided to express their views in the form of a journal. Thus, the *Lily* was created.[42]

The yearly subscription cost of the periodical was fifty cents, and the circulation increased significantly after the first year. Initially, the subscription list was generated through word of mouth and those who moved in the same circles as Bloomer and her friends. According to her husband, Dexter Bloomer, Amelia had to "make contracts for

[42] Edward A. Hincks, "The Lily, 1849-1856, From Temperance to Woman's Rights", in *A Voice of Their Own, The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1910*, ed. Martha M. Solomon (The University of Alabama Press: Tuscaloosa 1991), 30.

the printing and publication, and to send out circulars to friends asking for their assistance in extending its circulation.[43]" Women's rights activists Susan B. Anthony and Mary C. Vaughan also came forward to help with subscription numbers so as to support the temperance cause.[44] Soon after starting the *Lily*, Anthony began to compile mailing lists.[45] The periodical went from selling two to three hundred for the first issue, to selling between six to eight hundred copies by the end of that first year of publication. By 1853 the *Lily* was selling over four thousand issues and according to historian Hincks, "At its peak, probably around late 1853 or early 1854, the *Lily* enjoyed a circulation of six thousand, due in part, perhaps, to the notoriety of the costume named for its editor, the bloomer."[46] Aronson stated that "The *Lily* reached its height in 1855, with a circulation of about 6000 subscribers; half the average circulation of other women's monthly magazines in the mid-19th century, but nearly the same as the average circulation of all American monthly magazines at the time.[47]

The practice of clipping of copy also played a hand in the success of the *Lily*. The periodical often reprinted material from a vast array of periodical types: literary magazines, newspapers, women's magazines, trade publications, books, and other feminist or reform periodicals, selecting contributions according to their themes, not the notoriety of authors. Bloomer was also happy to reprint contributions by amateur or anonymous writers. Reprinted articles were written by a range of writers; some radical,

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[43] Bloomer, *Life*, 43.
[44] Bloomer, *Life*, 45.
[45] Coon, *Hear Me*, 8.
[46] Hincks, "The Lily", 31, drawing information concerning circulation from the *Dictionary of American Biography*, 385.
[47] Amy Beth Aronson, "America's First Feminist Magazine: Transforming the Popular to the Political," in *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, eds., Laurel Brake, Bill Bell and David Finkelstein, (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 201-202.

such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and others more sentimental, such as Lydia Sigourney. As Aronson explains, the *Lily* employed a familiar industry practice to assist with a political agenda. She stated that, "in America, pilfering copy had long helped to evolve and circulate emergent political ideals."[48]

Following in the footsteps of the *Lily*, numerous other periodicals sprang up. These included: the *Una* (1853-55) which was policy-oriented and edited by Paulina Wright Davis and Caroline Healy Dall in Providence, Rhode Island. This periodical is mentioned by Ostertag in *People's Movements, People's Press* as a forward-thinking journal which was sprinkled with texts of speeches given at women's rights conventions and served as an alternative to the "ladies Journals" of the day.[49] He states that "Wright Davis was ahead of her time, and the pages of her paper expressed growing frustration that women were not embracing the *Una* with subscriptions at a rate that could sustain it."[50] He stated that this journal was the first feminist one to emerge after the creation of the annual women's rights convention, which originated in Seneca Falls in 1848. He does not mention the *Lily*, although it did in fact precede the *Una*, possibly because it started as a temperance journal, although the inclusion of women's issues began to appear towards the end of the first year.[51] Interestingly, Mari Boor Tonn in *The Premiere of the Woman's Rights Press* states that "although another woman's newspaper, Amelia Jenks Bloomer's *Lily*, had begun publication in 1849 as the organ of the local ladies' temperance society, the *Una* is acknowledged as the first "feminist" newspaper to spring

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[48] *Ibid*, 201-202.
[49] Aronson, *Taking Liberties,* 58.
[50] Aronson, *Taking Liberties*, 58.
[51] Hincks, *The Lily*, 30.

from the fledgling woman's rights movement of the nineteenth-century."[52]

There was also Anna W. Spenser's, The *Pioneer and Women's Advocate* (1852-53), published near Providence; The *Genius of Liberty* (1851-53), produced in Cincinnati, Ohio, and edited by Elizabeth Aldrich; Anne McDowell's Philadelphia monthly, The *Woman's Advocate* (January 1855-1860); and The *Sibyl* (1856-64), edited by Dr. Lydia Sayer Hasbrouk of Middleton, New York, which began as a dress reform magazine but was quick to expand its focus, and the *Mayflower* (1861-64). The *Woman's Advocate* was one of the few feminist magazines published during the Civil War years.[53] These periodicals were all pivotal in bringing attention to the limited options women had in society and advancing the cause of reform.

According to Mitchell in her *Historiography of the Women's Rights Press*, these female editors all had similar backgrounds and were "a homogenous group, the small town daughters and wives of white, professional men."[54] She noted that the editors of the women's rights press were all privileged, white and financially comfortable. Paulina Kellogg Wright Davis, for example, the editor of the *Una*, was a wealthy socialite who actually funded and helped organize one of the earlier women's rights conventions.[55] It stands to reason that they needed to come from a family of some affluence as they were all educated and knowledgeable in matters of politics and state issues. Certainly, Amelia Bloomer fit into this category, being the daughter of a small business owner and the wife

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[52] Mari Boor Tonn, "The Una, 1853-1855, The Premiere of the Woman's Rights Press," in *A Voice of Their Own, The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1910* (University of Alabama Press: Tuscaloosa ,1991), 48.
[53] Aronson, *Taking Liberties*, 124.
[54] Catherine C. Mitchell, "Historiography of the Woman's Rights Press", from *Outsiders in 19th Century Press History: Multicultural Perspectives* (Bowling Green State University Popular Press: Bowling Green, 1995), 162.
[55] Ostertag, *People's Movements*, 58.

of a lawyer and newspaper editor.[56]

Most of the women that were interested in and subscribed to the *Lily* were also educated and came from families with some degree of affluence; not surprisingly, Bloomer and her friends generated the initial subscription lists for the *Lily* from the circles they moved in. In terms of their ethnic backgrounds, as Aronson observes "one need only refer to the enforced illiteracy of slaves in America, and to the struggles among freedmen to attain even basic literacy skills, to know that magazine subscribers and contributors were almost exclusively white."[57] Hinks explained, with regards to the audience for the *Lily* specifically, that "it was composed mainly of women: wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, grandmothers, and widows, all of whom who allegedly had potential influence over men. At the time of publication, the intended audience had to have fifty cents for the yearly subscription, were probably Christians, and were quite likely members of a local Temperance society."[58]

Various female writers and advocates would come to use periodicals as an avenue to voice their concerns about their limited rights within society, as this allowed them to reach a wider audience while potentially encouraging other women to take a closer look at their place within the private and public sphere. It was an avenue that allowed these women, sometimes for the first time, to voice their frustrations in a relatively safe environment.

The *Lily* came after the women's magazine in America had taken off as a popular

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[56] *Ibid*, 124.
[57] Aronson, *Taking Liberties*, 13, as quoted in Dana Nelson Solvino, "The Word in Black and White: Ideologies in Race and Literacy in Antebellum America", in Cathy Davidson, ed., *Reading in America: Literature and Social History* (John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1989), 140-156.
[58] Hinks, *The Lily*, 43-44.

genre, with the first being published in Philadelphia in 1792, half a century after the appearance of the first general magazine in America in 1741. According to Aronson in *Taking Liberties*, the first general magazines "arose amidst a changing relationship of people to print. The "democratization of print" described by Elizabeth Eisenstein and others basically entails the unseating of the privileged classes as the exclusive keepers of knowledge."[59] In addition, the first magazines were published because of a rivalry that existed between Philadelphia's Benjamin Franklin and Andrew Bradford. They both announced their ideas for their individual magazines at the exact same time and rushed the publication process, Franklin's *General Magazine, The Historical Chronicle For all the British Plantations in America* being published within three days of Bradford's *American Magazine*, *A Monthly View of the Political State of the British Colonies*.[60] These early magazines would not prove to be lucrative businesses, with subscriptions only averaging about 200 a year before 1820.[61]

According to Aronson, women's magazines entered the market soon after, and by initially appealing to the ideals of democracy in the new nation, these early magazines were able to succeed and grow in popularity. By the 1820s, women's magazines were thriving and being produced in cities and towns across America. Between 1790 and 1830, 20 women's magazines appeared in New York alone.[62] The number of magazines in print continued to increase across the country, growing from 12 magazines in 1800 to 40

[59] Aronson, *Taking Liberties*, 30.
[60] *Ibid*, 30-31.
[61] *Ibid*, 31.
[62] *Ibid*, 2.

by 1810, and rising to 100 women's magazines being produced by 1825.[63] From this point on women's magazines held a viable place in the industry, and from the 1830s to the 1850s, several had the ability to reach mass audiences, influence the public, give a name to the writers and editors, as well as turn a profit for the owners.[64] As Aronson reflects:

> As an inventive genre containing content deemed off-limits to a lady, the magazines had to attest to their noble character and high caliber. To survive and sell, they came elaborately draped in democratic dress. Like their numerous successors soon to follow, early women's magazines fended off accusations of indecency by their elaborate wrapping in the banner of democracy. The American women's magazine gained a genuine identity as both a sign and a site of democratizing culture.[65]

It is important to realize that the subjects being discussed in these magazines changed over time; the *Lily* (1849-1856) was one of the first periodicals to veer in a direction that would help pave the way for other women's rights reformers. Prior to this, women were frequently encouraged to embrace the role of wife and mother, with the popular writings of the 1820s and 1830s agreeing that the wife belonged at home. During the 1820s, criticisms of the legal relationship between husband and wife came almost exclusively from men educated in law.[66] In addition, according to Kerber and De Hart in *Women's America*, the first married women's property acts, which were passed in Mississippi in 1839 and in New York in 1848 "were supported by many male legislators out of a desire to preserve the estates of married daughters against spendthrift sons-in-

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[63] *Ibid*, 2.
[64] *Ibid*, 2.
[65] Aronson, 1, sourced from Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, Vol. I*: 1741-1850 (D. Appleton and Company: New York, 1930).
[66] Elizabeth Bowles Warbasse, *The Changing Legal Rights of Married Women, 1800-1861* (Garland Publishing, Inc.: New York, 1987), 78-79.

law."[67]

The prevalent notion that women belonged in the home was often supported by references to the Bible, an example of which is shown in the following quote from *Letters on Female Character* (1828), an influential advice book by author Virginia Cary; "it is no derogation from the dignity or utility of woman to declare that she is inferior to man in moral as well as physical strength. She has a different part to act and therefore requires different qualities from the being whom has been pronounced her superior by the almighty himself."[68] This would change slightly by the late 1830s when popular magazines began to discuss the notion that legal reform could make women better wives and mothers, although the predominant idea was still that marriage would be endangered if men lost their power.[69]

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who moved to Seneca Falls in 1847, would become an important contributor and supporter of the *Lily* from the outset. She was a social activist whose views were in line with the initial premise of the magazine: the issue of intemperance, its threat to domestic harmony, and the vulnerable position a woman could be placed in if she was married to a drinker.[70] Stanton did not start writing for *The Lily* until November of 1849, and initially used the pseudonym *Sunflower*; perhaps because at first she did not want the general public to know who was behind the articles. She, as well as the other female writers who used pseudonyms, may have felt more freedom to

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[67] Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, *Women's America, Refocusing the Past*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 2004), 217.
[68] Virginia Cary, *Letters on Female Character, Addressed to a Young Lady on the Death of her Mother* (2d ed. Enlarged; Richmond, Virginia, 1830), 21-22; Charles Butler, *The American Lady* (Philadelphia, 1841), 190-191, as Quoted in Warbasse, 79.
[69] Cary, *Letters,* 21-22; Butler, *American Lady*, 190-191, as Quoted in Warbasse, 136.
[70] In addition, she also wrote for *The Una*, and was co-editor of the national *Revolution* (1868-70).

speak openly about controversial issues if they could do so anonymously. According to Lois Banner, when Stanton began writing for *The Lily*:

> Woman's magazines rarely ventured beyond the standard fare of piety, domestic advice, and fashion information. *The Lily* was important because of its social reform emphasis and its wide readership among temperance women. In addition, Cady Stanton eventually convinced Bloomer, a moderate, to support woman's rights. At first Cady Stanton wrote on child care, education and temperance.[71]

With the publication of Stanton's first article, Bloomer told the public that she was as much in the dark as they were with regards to who the author behind "Sunflower" was. In November, 1849, the periodical stated:

> "Sunflower" -- We publish today the first of a series of articles which are promised us, over the above signature. The writing is an unknown hand and would puzzle anyone to tell whether it is from the pen of a lady or gentlemen. And such a signature! – it leaves us quite in the dark. We are no botanist, and not know its signification. Will someone skilled in the subject, please tell us whether the "Sunflower" belongs to the masculine or the feminine gender?
> We hope that the "Sunflower" as it rears its head above the earth, may take a wide and truthful survey of the doings of man and jot them down for the more humble *Lily*. We welcome the Sun Flower to our pages, and so long as it will act in concert with the *Lily*, for the promotion of good objects, we shall consider it a valuable auxiliary; but should it grow proud; and in its loftiness presume too much, the Lily will chide○ and reprove and teach it that they who hold their heads the highest are not always the best.[72]

Despite this statement by Bloomer, she was, in fact, aware of whom the author was. According to Dexter Bloomer, one day during the fall of 1849, Elizabeth Cady Stanton walked into the post office where Bloomer was, introduced herself, and suggested that she write for the *Lily.* Bloomer was happy to oblige.[73] According to

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[71] Banner, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 54.
[72] *The Lily*, Nov. 01, 1849, vol. 1, no. 11, col. 2, p.86.
[73] Bloomer, *Life*, 46.

Charles Gattey in *The Bloomer Girls*, the first time Bloomer actually saw Stanton was when she attended the first woman's rights convention in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. Although she did not sign the Declaration of Sentiments, the now famous document that was produced as a result of the convention,[74] Bloomer would have been influenced by the progressive nature of the event.[75]

The first article written by "Sunflower" for *the Lily* was titled *Henry Neil and His Mother;* this was an on-going fictitious column and in this first instance was essentially a conversation between a mother and a son where the son in interested in learning more about the temperance cause as he hopes one day to be an advocate for it. The mother explains that the politicians of the day are too worried about losing votes to prohibit alcohol entirely and that "the object of all just government is to protect the weak against the strong, and to make laws by which the greatest amount of happiness can be secured to the greatest number." To this Henry responds:

> Well, mother, this government certainly has no such object in view, it is from what you have mentioned quite the opposite. The helpless wife and children of the poor drunkard are not protected against the grasping rumseller, but on the contrary, the law allows him to strip our fields of their luxuriant crops, and torture what is intended for man's sustenance into a horrible poison, which if he will give the government a certain sum of money, he may sell to anyone who sees fit to buy.[76]

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[74] This was a document that was produced in 1848 when one hundred men and women met in Seneca Falls, New York to hold what was to be the first woman's rights convention in the United States. The document, which was meant to resemble the Declaration of Independence, said that "all men and women are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." In *Road to Seneca Falls*, Wellman said "It reminded Americans that no democracy could be real without respecting the rights of all citizens. It helped create what Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the convention's main organizer, called "the greatest revolution the world has ever seen"; Wellman, *Road to Seneca Falls*, 10.

[75] Charles Neilson Gattey, *The Bloomer Girls* (Coward-McCann, Inc.: New York, 1967), 36.

[76] *The Lily*, Nov. 01, 1849, vol. 1, no. 11, col. 2, 86-87.

Following it first year of publication, Stanton wrote a letter to Bloomer, with regards to the success of the *Lily* following its first year of publication and the importance of the continued growth of the paper for women. Stanton complimented Bloomer on her acumen as an editor and financial manager, despite her inexperience, and the importance of the journal in the fight for women's rights. As Stanton observed, the *Lily* pleaded the cause of woman in two ways. It did this by first waging war on intemperance, which was a continued threat to her domestic peace, and "next by a practical manifestation of woman's capacity to feel, to think, to act; and by the eloquence of her pen, to do much for suffering humanity." Stanton was adamant that those who supported women's rights should do what they could to help sustain the newspaper. She explained that, "although its pages may not be filled with that subject, yet the fact that its editor is a woman is a great argument on that side of the question: then too, the interest of the whole human family are so linked together that whatever is done for the elevation of one class effects all."[77]

Stanton then went on to address the critiques that the *Lily* was facing, such as those that made fun of its name, as well as those individuals who made fun of the brains behind the paper. To this, she said "'The brain is like the hand and grows with using.' If this be true, the men and women of Seneca Falls ought to do all they can to strengthen and encourage the *Lily* to greater activity."[78] Stanton's focus from the beginning was women's rights, and drawing attention to and heralding the fact that the editor of the paper was a woman both directly and

[77] The *Lily,* December, 01, 1849, vol. 1. no. 12, col. 3, 96.
[78] The *Lily,* December, 01, 1849, vol. 1. no. 12, col. 3, 96.

indirectly served this aim.

Stanton would go on to have an immense influence on the periodical and, according to biographer Alma Lutz, "under her influence, Bloomer's newspaper, the *Lily*, became the only medium in the whole country—for spreading among women accurate news of the women's rights movement."[79] Because of this, feminists of all kinds began to turn to her. "Every article you write hits the nail on the head," wrote Mary Gove Nichols, a health reformer and early proponent of free love. "I like you vastly."[80]

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The first chapter will focus on the early publications of the *Lily*, and examine the threat that intemperance represented for families in mid-nineteenth century America. In the beginning, this would be Bloomer's primary topic for the journal, although she quickly came to realize how interconnected it was with women's rights and that it was almost impossible to address one issue without the other. This chapter will examine how it was common for temperance writers to use extreme examples to get attention for their cause, and how Bloomer would use this method to get attention for temperance and women's rights. She would continue to fight for temperance throughout the life of the periodical.

The second chapter will explore the "Bloomerism" controversy that resulted after her public endorsement of the "scandalous" pant like outfit that would see her name forever tied with dress reform and women's rights. The constraints placed on women's

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[79] *Alma Lutz,* Created Equal, 46, as quoted in Ellen Carol DuBois, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton Susan B. Anthony Correspondence, Writings, Speeches* (Schocken Books: New York, 1981), 15.
[80] M.S. Gove Nichols to Stanton, August 21, 1852, Stanton Letters, 44, as quoted in DuBois, *Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, 15.

clothing in nineteenth- century America were synonymous with the constraints women experienced both legally and socially.

The third chapter will examine the use of the comparison between a married woman and a slave, an analogy which was used frequently throughout the pages of the *Lily*. This comparison exemplified the legal disadvantages that many women experienced in nineteenth- century America after marriage. As married women, they would become, for most purposes, legally dead, a state highlighted in the various published articles that shed light on the disadvantages facing married women. This chapter will also examine divorce, which was considered an unthinkable act by most nineteenth-century Americans, and the *Lily* scenarios which highlighted women who were in desperate situations, empathizing, for example, with the unfortunate woman married to a drunkard who put their lives, as well as the lives of their children, at risk.

Chapter One

Temperance and the Early Years of the *Lily*

Temperance became an important issue for female activists in the United States during the mid-nineteenth-century; a period when drinking was one of the nation's biggest consumer industries. [81] The first temperance movement was led by one of the movement's key leaders, Dr. Benjamin Rush (1746-1813), a Philadelphian man who believed that the overuse of hard alcohol could be deadly. He wrote a tract in 1784 titled *An Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits upon the Human Body and Mind.* He was not against the moderate use of beers and wines, but argued that "ardent spirits did more than cause drunkenness. Consumed in quantity over the years, they could destroy a person's health and even cause death." He was one of the first Americans to call habitual

[81] There is considerable controversy surrounding the origins of the early Temperance Movement in America. To mention a few of the theories: In *Symbolic Crusade* (1963) Joseph R. Gusfield argues that it was a reflection of the first American political party –the Federalists'– anxieties about their declining status. He also said that industrialization led factory owners to advocate temperance to improve the production of the labor force. Norman H. Clarke, in *Deliver Us from Evil* (1976) argues that it was based on society's obsession with drinking for the sake of getting intoxicated, which tended to bring out violence and aggression in people. This led to the need for anti-liquor movements. In W.J. Rorabaugh's *The Alcoholic Republic* (1979), he argues that the major reason for the over consumption of alcohol was psychological, as the generation of people born around the time of the Revolution witnessed considerable upheaval. They would, for example, see the deterioration of colonial social harmony due to a very rapid population growth, a need to move and search for arable land, and the development of a national market economy and increased production. Due to the anxieties these new conditions created in people, they turned to the most potent drinks available and moved from the colonial way of frequently drinking small amounts to binge drinking. He argues that after 1830 a new generation had arrived, who were highly motivated and overcame their dependence on liquor by turning their anxieties into creative ventures such as temperance societies, evangelical churches, and business enterprises. They believed in self-restraint. In Craig Heron's *Booze A Distilled History* (2003), he notes that in both British North America and the United States, temperance was a campaign brought about because of severe Christian conviction (first, evangelical Protestantism, then pietistic Catholicism as well) and because of the need to make the economy better.

drunkenness a disease.[82] While his warning went unheeded by the majority of Americans, others would continue in his footsteps and advocate for temperance.[83] The American temperance movement began in 1808 and was consolidated into a national organization, the American Temperance Society, in 1826. It would initially call for the moderate consumption of alcohol, but by the mid-1830s, some advocates began demanding total abstinence.[84] Protestant ministers, for example, shifted the focus of alcohol from a health related issue to one that centred on the issue of sin, and encouraged total abstinence, with church members often having to take pledges not to drink at all. [85]

In the 1830s, the notion of total abstinence would have wavering support from the populace. In *Drinking in America*, Mark Lender and James Martin said, "Most dry workers knew that coerced abstinence was many steps ahead of popular opinion…to press the question too soon, they feared, could provoke an unfavorable reaction, particularly if an unwilling public saw prohibition as an invasion of public rights."[86]

According to William Rorabaugh in *The Alcoholic Republic*, "Alcohol was pervasive in American society; it crossed regional, sexual, racial, and class lines. Americans drank at home and abroad, alone and together, at work and at play, in fun and in earnest. They drank from the crack of dawn. At nights taverns were filled with boisterous, mirth-making tipplers." [87] Whiskey was especially popular, as it could be

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[82] Mark Edward Lender & James Kerby Martin, *Drinking in America: A History* (The Free Press: New York, 1982), 37.
[83] W.J. Rorabaugh,"Alcohol in America", *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall 1991), 17-19.
[84] Craig Heron, *Booze, A Distilled History* (Between the Lines: Toronto, 2003), 53.
[85] Rorabaugh,"Alcohol in America", 17-19.
[86] Lender & Martin, *Drinking In America*, 73.
[87] W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic* (Oxford University Press, 1979), 20-21.

produced locally and was one of the first plentiful and cheap products that American technology and utilization of resources brought into being.[88]

Rorabaugh argues that in order to understand the popularity of whiskey, we have to realize the shortage of other available beverages. Water, for example, which was meant to replace alcohol as the preferred beverage, did not meet the same standards we have today. It was often polluted, unless boiled first.[89] He gives an example of citizens of St. Louis who had to let water from the Mississippi River stand before drinking it so the sediment could settle, while other water was too muddy to ever drink. People drank rain water, but during droughts this was not feasible. There were clear, free-flowing streams, but they were not always easy to access.[90] Whiskey, on the other hand, was cheap and readily available.

In *From Prohibition to Regulation: Lessons from Alcohol Policy for Drug Policy*, Harry Levine and Craig Reinarman argue that "The temperance campaign was devoted to convincing people that alcoholic drink in any form was evil, dangerous, and destructive. Throughout the nineteenth- century, temperance supporters insisted that alcohol slowly but inevitably destroyed the moral character and the physical and mental health of all who drank it."[91]

Temperance was a movement that was intent on curbing the ever-increasing use of alcohol in American society and would have an effect on both the politics and society

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[88] Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, 92.
[89] Heron, *Booze*, 54.
[90] *Ibid*, 95-96.
[91] Harry G. Levine and Craig Reinarman, "From Prohibition to Regulation: Lessons from Alcohol Policy for Drug Policy", *The Milbank Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 3 Confronting Drug Policy: Part 1 (1991), 462.

in general in both the nineteenth and twentieth century. As the moral gate-keepers of society, women were in a perfect position to speak about the evils of alcohol, and, through the efforts of editor Bloomer, the *Lily* was dedicated to this issue from the outset. According to Jed Dannenbaum in "The Origins of Temperance:"

> a woman could inculcate strict temperance ideals in her children, refuse to serve alcoholic beverages to guests, abandon their use as ingredients in cooking and in medicines, maintain so attractive a home and fireside that male family members would not be tempted to seek the conviviality of the saloon, and urge sons, husbands, fathers, brother and suitors to adopt or to maintain total teetotal pledges.[92]

Women were involved with the temperance movement from its foundation as a national movement in the 1820s and 1830s, joining groups such as the Daughters of Temperance. Nevertheless, in the beginning their role was very limited. They were not supposed to hold office, or vote, and they were not allowed to speak at any meetings where men were present. Yet they were still considered pivotal to the movement's success.[93] In 1833, at an Ohio State Temperance Convention the all-male delegates passed a resolution stating, "it is a matter of high importance to the cause of temperance that the united influence and energies of females should be enlisted actively in its support: Resolved, therefore, that a committee of five be appointed to prepare an address to the ladies of the State on this subject…"[94] At this point women still were using only their influence in the home. However, by the 1840s, women were establishing and running independent organizations, such as The Temperance Society and The Martha

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[92] Jed Dannenbaum, "The Origins of Temperance Activism and Militancy among American Women", *Journal of Social Science*, vol. 15, no. 2 (Winter, 1981), 237-238.
[93] Dannenbaum, *Origins*, 237.
[94] *Ibid*, 237.

Washingtonian total abstinence Society—formed in New York City with an enrolment of 6,000 members by 1842. Other societies were formed in Rochester and Seneca Falls, N.Y., Philadelphia, P.A., and Worcester, Mass.[95]

According to Collins in *America's Women,* "temperance represented women's desire to keep their men at home, and their dedication to that great middle-class American virtue of self-control. It also spoke to fear of a changing world populated by foreign people with strange ways. Immigrants–even many immigrant women–drank."[96]Temperance was one of many reform movements that had sprung up by the 1830s in the United States, with Brinkley explaining that "the philosophy of reform arose in part from the optimistic vision of those such as the transcendentalists who preached the divinity of the individual. Another source was Protestant revivalism – the movement that had begun with the Second Great Awakening (1790-1840) early in the century and had, by the 1820s, evolved into a powerful force for social reform."[97]

Brinkley further argues that part of the New Light Evangelicals' beliefs was that every individual could reach salvation through his or her own efforts, thinking which came to include a desire to reform society in general. This led to a campaign against personal immorality, with drinking alcohol being considered one of the biggest dangers for society.[98] According to Brinkley:

> No social vice, temperance advocates argued, was more responsible for crime, disorder, and poverty than the excessive use of alcohol. Women

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[95] Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2000), 259.
[96] Gail Collins, *America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* (HarperCollins: New York, 2003), 316.
[97] Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation, A Concise History of the American People,* Volume I: To 1878 (McGraw-Hill: New York, 2004), 314.
[98] Brinkley, *Unfinished Nation*, 314.

> complained that men spent money their families needed on alcohol and that drunken husbands often beat and abused their wives. Temperance also appealed to those who were alarmed by immigration; drunkenness, many nativists believed, was responsible for violence and disorder in immigrant communities. By 1840, temperance had become a major national movement, with powerful organizations and more than a million followers who had signed a formal pledge to forgo hard liquor.[99]

Historian Norton explains that after the influx of females that converted to Protestantism due to the Second Great Awakening, charitable and reform associations, including temperance groups, experienced rapid growth. Historians of the nineteenth century refer to these associations as "the benevolent empire" and, as Norton notes, "many historians now argue that the benevolent societies were an important step in the American women's movement toward emancipation from patriarchal power."[100]

In the early and mid-1840s temperance reformers believed that they were winning the war with temperance. There was a notable decline in the use of alcohol, especially within the middle class and drinking was becoming less fashionable. However, by the late 1840s, things began to change, as alcohol consumption was once again on the rise and temperance reformers seemed to be losing ground.[101] According to social historian Dannenbaum:

> the principal cause of this changed perception was the massive influx of German and Irish immigrants during those years and the concurrent rise in urban social disorder. Temperance activists argued that only legal suppression of the drink trade could counteract the enslaving nature of alcohol addiction, the growing influence of the cannibalistic "Rum Power", the relative inaccessibility of the new immigrants to moral

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[99] *Ibid*, 314.
[100] Mary Beth Norton, "The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Early America", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 89. no. 3 (June 1984), 616.
[101] Dannenbaum, *Origins*, 239.

persuasion appeals, and the fearful increases in poverty and crime.[102]

Lily editor Amelia Bloomer was drawn to temperance reform, and was not afraid to take action. Before her own periodical was published, the frequent articles about the moral state of the nation she sent to various local newspapers, such as the *Water Bucket* and the *Temperance Star,* could be partly attributed to the encouragement she received from her husband Dexter; he encouraged her to put some of her beliefs into writing as a way to help achieve change. After attending the first woman's rights convention in 1848, her desire for reform increased, and she went on to help form the Ladies Temperance Society, which led to the creation and funding of the *Lily.*[103]

In the July 1851 edition of the *Lily*, Bloomer articulated her concerns about what women might actually be able to accomplish with the Daughters of Temperance. She felt that no matter how much work they did and how many accomplishments they achieved, ultimately it did little to stop the constant flow of alcohol. She stated, "It must be so, for they have no power to make it otherwise. Men hold the power in their hands to say when the infamous traffic shall cease, and all that women can do now will not affect the matter in the least."[104] Regardless of this, she kept fighting for what she believed in, as did other women who struggled for any small victories they could attain.

The first edition of the *Lily* was published on 01 January, 1849. It was a monthly, eight-page, three-column periodical and has often been called the first American woman's rights newspaper, despite its initial focus on temperance, and the dangers of

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[102] *Ibid*, 239.
[103] Endres and Lueck, *Women's Periodicals*, 174.
[104] The *Lily*, Nov. 1851 as quoted in Dannenbaum, *Origins*, 240.

intemperance.[105] In addition to temperance, the *Lily* also initially reported on literary subjects, the duties of parents in bringing up their children, as well as analyzing various education theories and presenting new methods. Two to three hundred copies were printed off for the first edition, but subscriptions would steadily increase the number of copies produced.[106]

An article in the first edition, addressed: "To the Patrons of the *Lily*," effectively portrays the periodical's initial passion for issues related to temperance, although it also shows that Bloomer did worry about the ability of women to make a difference due to their lack of political rights In part, it states:

> The first number of the *Lily* is to-day presented to its patrons and the public: and as it is customary in such cases, we suppose it becomes us to say a few words as to the causes which will be pursued by those who have the supervision of its pages. It is WOMAN that speaks through the *Lily*. It is upon an important subject, too, that she comes before the public to be heard. Intemperance is the great foe to her peace and happiness. It is that, above all, which has made her home desolate, and beggared her offspring. It is that above all, which has filled to the brim the cup of her sorrows, and sent her mourning to the grave. Surely she has a right to wield the pen for its suppression. Surely she may, without throwing aside the modest retirement, which so much becomes her sex, use her influence to lead her fellow mortals away from the destroyer's path. It is this which she proposes to do in the columns of the *Lily*.[107]

It is evident that the writers of the *Lily* were concerned with the effect drinking could have on the family unit and wanted to educate the public as much as possible about temperance and the potential dangers of intemperance. If a married woman's husband became dependent on alcohol, it could put the survival of herself and her children in jeopardy, due to the economic and legal dependence she had on her husband. To gain

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[105] Russo and Kramarae, *Radical Women's Press*, 11.
[106] Bloomer, *Life*, 43.
[107] The *Lily*, January 01, 1849, vol. 1, no. 1, col. 2, 2.

support and attention for their cause, it was common for temperance advocates to utilize extreme examples of drunkenness and its side effects. According to Heron in *Booze, A Distilled History*, temperance supporters would typically paint all men who drank as drunkards, while claiming that public drinking was behind the poverty that gripped the working class, despite the reality that only a small percentage of men were habitual drunkards who put their family's welfare at risk.[108] *Lily* editor Bloomer took advantage of this method to bring attention to both her periodical and the issue of intemperance.

An article from December 1849, almost a year after the paper began publication, illustrates the early goals of the periodical. It was titled "A Few Words about the *Lily*:"

> The *Lily* was commenced without any intention of making money by its publication, and in this respect the purposes of projectors have not been disappointed. The subscriptions received during the year have been barely sufficient to pay the heavy expenses attending its publication. More than this we have not expected. The object of those who have started the enterprise was solely to aid in alleviating the sufferings of the victims and to restrain the sway of the monster intemperance. Soul destroying as that terrible evil is, we have sought to point out the remedy for the fearful calamities it has inflicted and still inflicts on our sex, and we have raised our voice—feeble though it is—against the guilt of those who will continue, in spite of warnings and entreaties to prosecute a business, the sole results of which are poverty, misery, disease, and death to so many of their fellow beings.[109]

Temperance was an issue that resonated with numerous women nation-wide, with temperance supporters often portraying alcohol as an evil that men should avoid at all costs. This is evident with the following article that was printed on 01 January, 1848 and was titled "Shun the Wine Cup":

> You who are just entering on the verge of manhood, for you we fear and tremble, when we think of the many temptations with which you

[108] Heron, *Booze*, 121.
[109] The *Lily*, December 01, 1849, vol. 1, no. 12, col. 1 & 2, 93.

> are surrounded, and of the dangers which beset your path. We would extend to you a word of warning, and beseech you by the affection of fond parents, and kind friends, who are watching your steps with anxious solicitude, to shun the wine cup as you would a deadly foe who was thirsting for your blood. If you have any regard for your reputation—if you have any love for your friend, if you have any wish to become useful members of society, and worthy the respect of the virtuous and good—shun the wine cup!—If you have any hope of happiness in this world or the next—shun the wine cup! It is written, "No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven." If then you would avoid the drunkard's *woe*, and escape the drunkard's hell—shun the wine cup![110]

While the initial publications of the *Lily* concentrated on the issue of temperance, and men were frequently targeted as being the abusers of alcohol and the ones that needed to clean up their act, women were also seen as being in danger of becoming victims to its lure. The following incident was relayed in the *Lily* in March 1849 in order to emphasise the importance of female temperance organizations and how alcohol in society was an issue that could affect both sexes:

> One of our physicians was called to see a woman who was supposed to be very sick. After examining his patient he came to the conclusion that it was unnecessary for him to prescribe for her, as it was his opinion that she would recover without the aid of medicine. And what was the cause of this sudden and alarming illness? Simply this, she has partaken too freely of a legalized poison, obtained through the aid of Board of Excise, and directly from his agent the rum-seller. In plain words, (and we have the doctor's word for it), the woman was drunk, *dead drunk*! This is a startling fact, and one that should call forth the sympathy of every hand of humanity. We were well aware that there were *gentlemen*(?) in our village who are frequently bereft of reason and sunk to the level of the brute by using this fatal poison, but we were not prepared for the intelligence that there were those of our own sex who had become so degraded. Yet what wonder is it? If man, strong minded man, cannot shun a practice so base, how can we expect that *woman*, who is called the "weaker vessel," should do so, when man sets the example and leads her on.[111]

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[110] *Ibid*, 93.
[111] The *Lily*, March 1849, vol. 1, no. 3, col. 2, 24.

Here, the *Lily* takes advantage of the fact that women were often portrayed as being the weaker sex, and she almost pokes fun at this idea, stating that men, being of a "stronger mind", should be the ones to lead and set an example by refusing alcohol. In addition, an article printed in the April, 1850 edition explains that there are even women who are being housed in the state prisons because of their intemperance.

> It is not man alone who [is] in danger, or who falls beneath the stroke of the destroyer. Women, too, are its victims! Yea, *women*, by thousands, are corrupted, torn from their families, robbed of their virtue, derided, insulted, and driven forth inebriate outcasts to a life of prostitution, infamy, and crime, by this same scourge with which men have cursed the earth. The legislative reports show that about 6,000 intemperate women have been confined in the jails in our State during the past year! This is of course but a small number of those who are addicted to the use of intoxicating drinks.[112]

There were also women who were said to have ruined their families' happiness, propelled to do unthinkable things under the influence of alcohol. This is shown in an article titled "Awful Scene" from August, 1850.

> A few days ago we saw a woman raving with the delirium tremens. She was young, handsome, and a mother. An uncontrollable passion for intoxicating drinks, soon made a hell out of a once happy home, drove a kind hearted husband to despair and death, and brought the wretched mother and her two boys to the degradation of public shame and beggary. Her ravings were terrible. She fancied herself a fiend of perdition, compelled by a superior of darkness to thrust her children into fierce flames, and hold them there until their bodies were burned to a crisp![113]

Temperance supporters often discouraged women from using alcohol in any

[112] The *Lily*, April 1850, vol. 2, no. 4, col. 2, 29.
[113] The *Lily*, August 1850, vol. 2, no. 8, col. 1, 59.

form, meaning that they should practice total abstinence, [114] thereby becoming teetotalers.[115] The *Lily* and its editor Bloomer shared in this belief of total abstinence, which is demonstrated in an article from April 2, 1849, entitled "Woman's Wrong Doing":

> There is one pernicious practice among our own sex, which we feel bound to expose and condemn. It is the use of intoxicating liquors in culinary preparations. There are ladies who profess to think it impossible to prepare food fit for the palate, unless they mix it with a certain quantity of deleterious compound in the form of alcohol. These ladies stand greatly in the way of the temperance reform. While they may condemn the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage and pretend to be greatly in favour of temperance, yet they insist upon it, that cake, mince pie, or puddings, cannot be made eatable without it-and their friends must take just so much of the poison as they see fit to season their food with.

The article goes on to state the hypocrisy of teaching a son not to drink or encouraging a husband to abstain from alcohol while serving alcohol to them freely in the food they consume. By adding alcohol to their pudding, for example, her husband or son are a lot less likely to escape the "drunkard's fate."[116]

As well as showing women as individuals who could become victims of alcohol, the *Lily* also characterized some women as potential temptresses when it came to getting a man to drink. The advocates of temperance made sure they covered all their bases when attempting to educate men, and women, on the potential lures of alcohol. This is

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[114] Iain Gately, *Drink: A Cultural History of Alcohol* (Gotham Books: New York, 2009), 248.
[115] The term was said to come from Richard Turner, a man with a stutter, who, at a Preston Temperance Society meeting in Preston, England in 1833, when addressing the issue of partial abstinence from alcohol, stated that it was intolerable and that they must insist upon tee-tee (stammering) tee total abstinence, *Ibid*, 248.
[116] The *Lily,* April 02, 1849, vol. 1, no. 4, col. 2, 29.

exemplified in an article from the *American Temperance Recorder*, titled "The New Year's Glass" which was reprinted in The *Lily* on 02 April, 1849.

> "So you refuse a glass of wine with me this New Year's morning, Mr. Carl?" said a fair lady and very young, to a youth of not more than nineteen.
>
> "Nay, I beg your pardon! Answered the youth. — "It was among my mother's solemn warnings: and I perhaps have a peculiar reason"—the young man hesitated and blushed.
>
> "Ha, Ha, Ha!" laughed some companions, gazing upon the confused youth as each held a glass of wine in his hand.
>
> Miss Lyons, the young lady in question, remarked—"You are very excusable, Mr. Carl: but yet, if you will," she added with her sweet smile, and stretching forth a small waiter towards him, "we should be pleased to have you join us." The young man ventured to raise his eyes.—the gaze of the whole group was riveted upon him. A lovely woman bent upon him her smile and bewitching glance, which in her hand she held toward him the beguiling cup. The blood tingled in the youth's cheek. "Sweet tempter," he inaudibly whispered, and the glass was in his hand.
>
> "Compliments of the season!" re-echoed from each one of the happy group, and every glass was emptied. The youth had broken the ice and resisted no more.
>
> "Come! We have a hundred calls to make," said his companions, and amidst scrapes, and bows and flattering words, they departed.
>
> That night Mr. Carl was carried to the station, a raving madman from the effects of wine. Six years have scarce elapsed, and he lays mouldering in dust, a victim of delirium tremens, and the **New Year's Glass**.[117]

This is also a good example of how temperance writers used extreme examples to make an impression. According to Carlson in "Drinks He to His Own Undoing," "the first theme in temperance literature was the negative effect of alcohol on the individual, physiologically, mentally, morally, economically and socially." He went on to describe how "the psychological impact of drinking was portrayed in grotesque descriptions of alcohol induced illnesses, ranging from red-eyes to epileptic convulsions and delirium

[117] The *Lily*, April, 02, 1849, vol. 1, no. 5, col. 2, 27.

tremens."[118] By saying yes to that single glass of wine, the story would have Mr. Carl end up as "a raving madman," someone who would be deemed to be good as dead six years down the road, as "he lays mouldering in dust, a victim of delirium tremens."[119]

Other stories could portray people doing ridiculous and shocking things while under the influence of alcohol, things that would often have disastrous results. In an article titled "Death By Spontaneous Combustion," a man known for his intemperance took a wager that he could eat a lighted candle one night while out drinking with some friends.

> His bet was taken; and scarcely had he introduced the flaming candle into his mouth, when he uttered a slight cry and fell powerless to the ground. A bluish flame was seen to flicker about his lips, and, on an attempt being made to offer him assistance, the by-standers were horror struck to find that he was burning internally…Bones, skin, and muscle are all devoured, consumed, and reduced to ashes. A handful of dust, on the spot where the victim fell, is all that remains.[120]

Another man passed out in the middle of the streets and froze to death, portrayed in an article titled "The Drunkard's Bed." "A young man, 27 years of age, named Alfred Acuffs, was found on the morning; frozen fast in the mud and ice in the middle of one of the streets in the suburb of Philadelphia. An axe had to be used to cut him out. When last seen alive he was on his way home in a beastly state of intoxication."[121]

The temperance movement attracted different women for different reasons. Some were drawn to the cause because, as DuBois explains, "by indicting men's drinking, they were also able to protest the domestic vulnerability of women, which it

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[118] Douglas W. Carlson, "Drinks to his Own Undoing: Temperance Ideology in the Deep South," *Journal of the Early Republic*, vol. 18, no. 4 (Winter 1998), 671.
[119] The *Lily*, April 02, 1849, vol. 1, no. 4, 29.
[120] The *Lily*, April 02, 1849, vol. 1, no. 4, 43.
[121] The *Lily*, June 1850, vol. 2, no. 6, 43.

exposed and intensified."[122] And this vulnerability was legal as much as social. Based on coverture doctrine, a married woman had no rights to her earnings, and a husband was permitted to take her money and spend it on whatever he desired.[123] In the case of a woman who was married to an alcoholic, he could take any money she made and spend it on drink. Intemperance could also place women in a physically dangerous position, one where the husband could become aggressive and violent after drinking, thereby putting the life of his wife and children in danger. A *Lily* article from March of 1850, "The Fireside Fiend," makes exactly this point:

> We can hardly enter a country village without hearing some recent case of brutal treatment by a drunkard, of his wife and family. For instance, we spent the last Sabbath in Windham, and were told that within a week, a man was arrested in one part of the town for having threatened the life of his wife, pursuing with a carving knife and attempting to injure his child. In another part of the town, a man had been sentenced to the country jail, for shamefully abusive treatment of his wife. In both instances, the men were said to be "good fellows when sober."[124]

The article explains how this behaviour is especially cruel because it happens in the home, where a woman and her children are at their most vulnerable:

> But intemperance assaults the wife at her domestic hearth, and there she must bear her sorrows until her heart breaks, shut up from the world's observation, and world's sympathy. She must bear too, not only her sorrows, but the cold and cruel indifference of the great majority of the community, who by their patronage, their votes, and their laws, sustain the destroyers of her happiness in their rightness

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[122] Ellen Carol DuBois, "The Pivot of the Marriage Relation: Stanton's Analysis of Women's Subordination in Marriage" in her *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Feminist as Thinker, A Reader in Documents and Essays* (New York University Press: New York, 2007), 84.
[123] Norma Basch, *In the Eyes of the Law, Women, Marriage, and Property in Nineteenth-Century New York*, (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 1982); Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows, A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge Mass. and London, 2000). Hendrik Hartog *Man and Wife in America, A History,* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge Mass. and London 2000). Marylynn Salmon, *Woman and the Law of Property in Early America,* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1986).
[124] The *Lily*, March, 1850, vol. 2, no. 3, col. 2, 19.

> business. There are at this moment thousands of wives bearing this great burden of sorrow, striving to cherish and protect their children, exposed as they are to a father's evil example, a father's neglect or violence, exposed to hunger and hardship, and to the cold and unfeeling contempt of lookers on, who see nothing but vice in their ignorance, nothing but crime in the degradation which a father's vicious habits have forced upon them, and that father, too, ruined by the customs of society, and the temptations of legal rum-sellers.[125]

The *Lily* also told tales of one time affluent women whose families' lives were ruined from alcohol addiction, as is evident in "The Widow's Will, A True Tale", by Rev. A.M. Scott. It tells the story of a promising young lawyer, Mr. Watkins, who is lured into drinking by his associate, Mr. Rowland; a man who became wealthy after becoming involved in "the nefarious trafficking of ardent spirits."[126]

> After he had grown rich—had induced Watkins to drink—made him drunk, and by degrees, a drunkard; and when the poor besotted victim was unable to pay his debts, contracted mostly for rum, but partly by neglecting his professional duties, he, his former associate, his pretended friend, his destroyer, was the first to decry and oppress him. His horses and oxen were sold by the sheriff, next his household and kitchen furniture were seized, and finally a mortgage was given to Rowland upon the homestead of the drunkard, to secure the rum-dealer in the payment of a pitiful balance in his favour.[127]

The story goes on to say that Mr. Watkins eventually ended up freezing to death after falling, drunk, into a gutter on the way home one cold winter evening. Mr. Rowland ended up foreclosing the mortgage on the house, which Mrs. Watkins had received from her father as a wedding present, thus causing Mrs. Watkins to be in his debt. He allowed her to stay on the property for a sizeable rent, but eventually, "mental anguish, excessive labour, want of proper nourishment, and exposure, had well-nigh

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[125] *Ibid*, 19.
[126] The *Lily*, December 01, 1849, vol. 1, no. 12, col.1, 96.
[127] The *Lily,* December 01, 1849, vol. 1, no. 12, col. 2. 96.

worn her out, and she was fast sinking into the grave, where the weary are at rest." One winter evening, Mrs. Watkins sent her seven-year-old ragged child to the home of Mr. Rowland to request that he come and pay a visit. Perhaps because he had some rent owing to him, he agreed to go, and found Mrs. Watkins in a bed of straw, pale and sickly looking, in a scantily furnished room. She remarked:

> I have sent for you sir, to pay me a visit, that I may make you the *heir* to my estate. My estate? I know you are ready to ask what estate I have to bequeath? And well you may ask that. I was once happy. This house was once mine; it was my father's gift—my wedding portion. I had horses and oxen, cows and sheep, and orchards and meadows. 'T was you that induced my poor erring husband to drink. It was you who placed before him the liquid poison, and pressed him to take it. 'T was you that took away my horses and cows, and meadows and orchards, and my own home. 'T was you that ruined my peace, destroyed my husband, and in the very noon of life, sent him down to a drunkard's dishonored grave, 'T was you that made me a beggar, and cast my poor starving babes upon the charity of a pitiless world. I have nothing left but these ragged quilts; them you do not want—yet I have determined to bequeath you my estate. Here, sir, is my last willed testament; I do bequeath you this vial of tears. They are tears that I have shed—tears that you have caused. Take this vial; wear it about your vile person: and when, hereafter, you present the flowing bowl to the lips of a husband and father, remember that you are inheriting another vial of widow's tears.[128]

Mrs. Watkins died within the hour, and this story (which the *Lily* claimed to be true) was meant to serve as a warning, explaining the potential dangers that could come when individuals were lured into drinking. Temperance advocates were attempting to show that it was not just the poor who were in danger, but that the wealthy also could be victims, and there was often little legal recourse available for the widowed wife and children left behind.

The *Lily* would frequently print letters from its readers, which showed that

[128] The *Lily,* December 01, 1849, vol. 1, no. 12, col. 2. 96.

the efforts of the journal were succeeding in its goal as women were becoming more educated about temperance, and beginning to ponder the larger concept of women's rights. The following letter written by Evergreene Glade on December 17, 1849, emphasizes this point:

> I am very glad to become acquainted with your paper, which I think may do great good in the temperance enterprise, and may also do much to elevate and develop women. It is time woman should show her individuality which has been too long lost in her dependence on man. Let her learn to think for herself, to form her own opinions, and when she makes herself equal with man in ability to act for herself, her equality will be acknowledged.[129]

While temperance was Bloomer's initial focus for the *Lily*, and would be an important part of the journal until it ceased publication, it also served as a catalyst for the larger issue of women's rights. This exposed many women, sometimes for the first time, to the full reality of the disadvantages they were facing as a result of their limited legal position. According to Hinks, "woman's station would be greatly improved if inequality under the law were to be eradicated. Once women obtained equal rights, they would have the power to protect themselves."[130] After the first two issues of the journal, women's rights became a more prevalent feature of the journal. Bloomer addressed this issue in a *Lily* article from April, 1853, never being one afraid of creating controversy. She stated:

> Some of the papers accuse me of mixing Women's Rights with our Temperance, as though it was possible for woman to speak on Temperance and Intemperance without also speaking of Woman's Rights and Wrongs in connection therewith. That woman has rights, we think that none will deny; that she has been cruelly wronged by the law-sanctioned liquor traffic, must be admitted by all. Then why should we

[129] The *Lily*, December 17, 1849, vol. 2, no.1, col. 2, 3.
[130] Hincks, *The Lily*, 46.

not talk of woman's rights and Temperance together?[131]

Her point is further explicated by a letter, from December 1849, where a reader gives her opinion on what it is she thinks the *Lily* is trying to accomplish. She wrote: "The *Lily* pleads her cause in two ways. First, by a continued warfare on one of the greatest enemies of her domestic peace—intemperance: and next, by a practical manifestation of woman's capacity to feel, to think, to act; and by the eloquence of her pen do much for suffering humanity."[132]

While many of the stories and examples that temperance advocates related throughout the pages of the *Lily*, were, at times, exaggerated, they did the job of getting attention for their cause, through worst case scenarios that increasingly illustrated how temperance was tied in with women's rights; the *Lily's* initial focus on temperance drew more and more women to reflect on the vulnerable position a married woman's lack of rights placed her in, and so to think more broadly about the issue of women's rights. While Bloomer would continue to report on and endorse temperance throughout the life of the periodical, the fact that she branched out to include women's issues was an important step, and was an interest that may have been piqued in her childhood.

When Bloomer was fifteen, a close family friend, who was an elderly woman, suffered the loss of her husband, who died unexpectedly and did not leave behind a will. As a result, his widow was displaced from her home, and lost the majority of her property, because, according to the law, she was only entitled to a life interest in one-third of the estate, which had been accrued jointly by herself and her husband throughout

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[131] The *Lily*, April 1853 as quoted in Bloomer, *Life*, 95-96.
[132] The *Lily*, December 01, 1849, vol. 01, no. 12, col. 2, 95.

their lifetime together. They had no children, so the nearest relative was a distant, unknown second or third cousin, who became the sole beneficiary of two-thirds of the estate. As an adult Bloomer would become aware of cases similar in nature, which made her see just how cruel the law could be towards women.[133] These realisations led her to offer strong support to the Women's Rights Convention and its declarations.[134] As Bloomer explained, "I was ready to join with that party in demanding for women such change in the laws as would give her a right to her earnings, and her children a right to wider fields of employment and a better education and also a right to protect her interests at the ballot-box."[135]

A speech given by women's rights activist Ernestine L. Rose on November 26, 1856 in New York City at the Seventh Annual Woman's Rights convention addresses the issues that affected a married women's lack of rights:

> During the lifetime of her husband she cannot claim the value of one dollar as her own, no matter by whom the property is acquired, whether by the united efforts of both or by the industry, perseverance, and economy of the wife alone: it still belongs to the husband. The law makes no distinction between man and man, only between man and woman; it has given the wife into his uncontrolled possession—her person, her talents, her time, her industry: all are his by right of law (which means by right of might). Even the husband who spends his time in idleness, dissipation, and vice; he who cannot feel the sacred tie of home and of family; he has the same power over his wife, and if she has to go out to daily labor to keep herself and her children from starving, the worthless husband can come and claim his wife's earnings from the employer, or force it out of her hands; and if she remembers her starving children, and resists, he can use the means the law has provided him with, to enforce obedience, namely, give her a "wholesome chastisement," to make her sensible of the "husband's

[133] Bloomer, *Life*, 47-48.
[134] A document signed in 1848 by 68 women and 32 men at the first women's rights convention organized by women.
[135] Bloomer, *Life*, 46.

prerogative" over the wife.[136]

Rose's reflections show how by protesting for temperance, women also highlighted the potential dangers that came with their limited legal status if a husband did not fulfill his end of the bargain: that of family provider rather than selfish and reckless consumer. As a *Lily* article from May 1849 entitled *"*Protection to Married Women" explained:

> There is a certain kind of protection much needed by a certain class of married women, which the philanthropy of legislators has somehow overlooked. We mean that which is required by unfortunate wives, with dissipated husbands, whose earnings are habitually taken from them by their legal masters to minister to their depraved appetites. It is hard indeed for a poor woman, who has earned a few shillings for washing or sewing, to see herself and her children robbed by a drunkard husband, is there no "protection" for such?[137]

This shows once again how temperance led many women to realize how fragile their situations were when the law and the legal system failed to protect them, encouraging them to look more closely at the other issues that affected women's rights. Advocates such as Bloomer were no longer satisfied with sitting on the sidelines and periodicals such as the *Lily* not only gave them a voice, but also the confidence to use it for what they considered to be the greater good.

As many women were starting to realize, options available for a woman who ended up married to a heavy drinker were limited. If her husband spent all his money on drinking instead of feeding his family, it was his prerogative, despite, or even because of, the common law doctrine of coverture that supposed a wife to be placed under the

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[136] Paula Doress-Worters, ed., *Mistress of Herself, Speeches and Letters of Ernestine L. Rose Early Women's rights Leader* (The Feminist Press at the City University of New York: New York, 2008), 232-33.
[137] The *Lily*, May 01, 1849, vol. 1, no. 5, col.2, 40.

"protection" of her husband. The wife's inferior status was often the catalyst for various women's rights activists. According to Basch in *In the Eyes of the Law*:

> Bloomer's original focus, like that of Susan B. Anthony, had been temperance, and she frequently delivered women's rights lectures at temperance meetings. Underscoring Bloomer's predilection for lumping the evils of the rum-shop with married women's legal disabilities, the *New York Times* pointed out that although the 1853 temperance meeting that she attended in New York City was convened "nominally to promote the cause of Temperance," it propagated "all the wild extravagances of Woman's Rights."[138]

Bloomer's increasing interest in women's rights was thought to stem partly from a debate in the Tennessee legislature in February 1850 with regards to a woman's right to own property. The legislature came to the conclusion that "women have no souls" and therefore "no right to own property."[139] Prior to this her concerns with woman's rights lay more with how it related to the hurdles which the laws threw in the way of procuring the triumph of total-abstinence principles.[140] According to Gattey in *The Bloomer Girls*, "Mrs. Bloomer was extremely put out by the suggestion that she did not possess a soul. From that time on, a considerable part of the *Lily* was devoted to the same subject. The effect of all of this was to make her more aggressively a feminist."[141] Endres and Lueck said that after this particular episode with the Tennessee legislature "Bloomer started her journey as one of the most outspoken critics of the legislative process in America and one of the most vocal supporters of woman suffrage."[142] Despite this, she continued to remain passionate about the issue of temperance for the duration of her role as editor; the

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[138] "Temperance and Woman's Rights," *New York Times*, February 8, 1853, 3, as quoted in Basch, *In the Eyes of the Law*, 173.
[139] *The Lily*, March 01, 1850 as quoted in Endres and Lueck, *Women's Periodicals*, 178.
[140] Bloomer, *Life*, 34.
[141] Gattey, *Bloomer Girls*, 43.
[142] Endres and Lueck, *Women's Periodicals*, 179.

periodical merely grew to include more women's rights articles. For example, when agreeing with the importance of women getting the vote so they could have a say in the laws, she reflected on the continued importance of temperance, stating "We cannot consent to have woman remain silent on the temperance question till she obtain her right of suffrage…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 right to a voice in making all laws to which she is to be governed."[143]

Susan B. Anthony's interest in the organized women's rights movement intensified after she was prohibited from speaking at a temperance convention in 1852, where she was the delegate for the Rochester Daughters of Temperance to the New York Sons of Temperance. She was advised by the presiding officer that she and the other ladies were there for the purpose of listening and learning, not for speaking.[144] After this, in March 1852, the women re-grouped and decided to call a state women's temperance convention, where they appointed Mary C. Vaughan to be president of the group. In April of 1852 they would go on to form the New York Temperance Woman's Society in Rochester, which Elizabeth Cady Stanton would preside over.[145] As indicated above, Bloomer became more interested in women's rights after being told she lacked a soul, and spoke out vehemently throughout the pages of her journal on the subject, and it is revealing that Anthony's interest also grew after a personal affront experienced while advocating for temperance reform.

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[143] Bloomer, *Life*, 60.
[144] Dannenbaum, *Origins*, 240.
[145] Carol Mattingly, *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth Century Temperance Rhetoric* (Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale IL, 2001), xiii.

Much to their frustration, women temperance advocates would continue to be excluded from participating in temperance conventions. This happened at the May 1853 Brick Church Meeting, which was called to plan the world's temperance convention, as well as at the World Temperance Convention that met in New York in September, 1853. In response women temperance supporters would hold their own "Whole Worlds Temperance Convention" which would include both sexes.[146]

As the *Lily* evolved to include more material about women's rights, it nevertheless stayed true to its initial cause. Temperance was clearly something that Bloomer was passionate about. In his biography of her, which was published shortly after her death in 1894, her husband, Dexter Bloomer said: "That it was always loyal to temperance is evidenced by the fact that its files are sought after by writers of temperance history. That subject was never lost sight of in a single number, as its files will show."[147]

Temperance advocacy was an important reform movement in the nineteenth-century United States; it allowed many women to realize just how necessary it was for them to have a political voice in order to implement change, and Bloomer astutely used the pages of her journal to bring exposure to the issue. According to Dannenbaum, "Although women did secure an expanded role within the temperance movement, their inability to vote still left them largely powerless in the political arena. At the same time, temperance women began to fear for the safety of their own families."[148] Bloomer's passion for temperance advocacy spurred her to create the *Lily*, just as her radical articles about the danger of intemperance served as a stepping stone to women's rights. Bloomer

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[146] Mattingly, *Well-Tempered*, xiv.
[147] Bloomer, *Life*, 50
[148] Dannenbaum, *Origins*, 236.

would also use the *Lily* as a source for news about the temperance movement, which served an encouragement for activists to keep fighting. According to Hincks "the coverage of temperance issues empowered women to serve as agents of change."[149]

Temperance would remain a controversial issue throughout much of the nineteenth- century, with Maine passing in 1851 the first state law that prohibited the manufacture or sale of alcohol. The *Lily* served as a pre-cursor for many important temperance-related events that would succeed its publication, although during the Civil War from 1861-1865, women would change their focus to war efforts. In 1870 the Ohio legislature passed the Adair Law, which allowed the wives and children of alcoholic men to sue saloon keepers to recover damages. In 1873-1874 women joined in The Woman's Crusade which involved numerous women across the United States taking direct action against saloons and the liquor trade. It had the desired effect of significantly disrupting traffic in liquor and forcing many manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers out of business. As women still had no real political power at this point, they used whatever means they could to persuade saloons to close their doors; be it prayer vigils, petitions, or marching demonstrations. This lead to the 1874 founding of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union that played a prominent role in promoting prohibition. [150] Dannenbaum said, "the Woman's Crusade of 1873-1874 was the beginning of a new period of development, organization, and expansion for the temperance movement, one that led directly to the formation of the WCTU and indirectly to the victory of national

[149] Hincks, *The Lily*, 37.
[150] Hincks, *The Lily*, 235.

prohibition[151] nearly a half-century later."[152]

While temperance reform was an important aspect of the periodical, and one that would stay relevant in the United States into the next century, the *Lily* would soon expand its influence. Editor Bloomer created considerable controversy with her public endorsement of a pant-like outfit, garnering worldwide attention for the *Lily*, as well as the larger issue of women's rights. Continuing to court controversy to get attention for the *Lily* and the issues it promoted, the new costume for women—called "Bloomers"—would bring a significant increase in subscriptions to the periodical, as well as guarantee that Bloomer would forever be associated with dress reform.

[151]A national prohibition on liquor would occur in the United States after the eighteenth amendment to the constitution was passed on January 17th, 1920. This would last until 1933. For thirteen years, there would be a nationwide constitutional ban on the production, sale, importation and transportation of liquor: Mattingly, *Well-tempered*, xv.
[152] Dannenbaum, *Origins*, 246.

Chapter Two

Dress Reform and the Bloomerism Controversy

The "Bloomer costume" attracted national attention to the dress reform movement and women's rights movement, as well as to the *Lily* and its editor Amelia Bloomer. According to Dexter Bloomer "the circulation of her paper was largely increased through the notoriety given to it by her adoption and defense of the new costume. Nearly every newspaper in the land had to have its comments on it, as well as upon those who had the courage to wear it."[153] The *New York Journal* stated: "If ever a lady waked up one morning and found herself famous, that woman is Mrs. Bloomer; she has immortalized her name, and the Bloomer Costume will become as celebrated as Mary Queen of Scots' Cap, the Elizabeth Ruff, or the Pompadour Robe."[154] Bloomer's endorsement of the new outfit created a revolution of sorts, as it was about much more than a simple style change. According to Nelson in *Dress Reform and Bloomer*:

> In no time, Amelia Bloomer was notoriously identified with the new costume dubbed by the media the "Bloomer costume," and the dress reform movement was launched. Through the Bloomer, Victorian society was forced to engage in consideration of women's rights, including their right to choose their own style of dress, even one that facilitated their movement into the public realm. These were radical notions for the time, threatening the established roles of men and women.[155]

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[153] Bloomer, *Life*, 82.
[154] Gattey, *Bloomer Girls*, 82.
[155] Jennifer Ladd Nelson, "Dress Reform and the Bloomer," *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures*, vol. 23 no. 1 (2000), 23.

Bloomer aired ideas towards women's fashion in a *Lily* article published in February 1851 "Female Attire," which starts out discussing the upcoming World's Fair in London, where improvements in the clothing of females was to be discussed. She says "that there is abundant room as well as necessity for improvement in this respect we firmly believe. We favor such reform for the reason that it would contribute greatly to the comfort, happiness and convenience of the sex; considerations to which we are always alive."[156] She goes on to reprint an article in which the editor of the *Seneca County Courier* more or less endorses the Bloomer outfit for women. The editor of the *Courier* states, in part:

> With regard to means proposed to protect the persons of females from the chills of winter, and thus preserve their health and promote their comfort and convenience, it seems as though but one opinion should prevail. Who has not been pained to witness the inconvenience attending the act of entering a carriage or alighting? Ten to one but the dress is soiled, if not utterly ruined…—many a shock to the delicate female might be obviated—great addition to her comfort be wrought, by the substitution of a mode of dress having in view these considerations. A pair of Turkish pantaloons, wide, and nearly meeting the shoe, of such material and texture as the season demanded, and of a hue adapted to the taste of the wearer; and a garment neatly fitting the person, buttoned, or permanently closed on all sides, extending just below the knee, of a material and texture that would ward off the chilly atmosphere, colored and ornamented; a head-gear not subject to be crushed and destroyed by every slight contact with other objects, yet neat. What reasonable person could object to the constitution of such a costume for that now worn.—[Courier.[157]

Bloomer expresses her indignation that because the notion of women wearing the Turkish pantaloons was broached by "the cautious editor of the *Seneca County*

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[156] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1851-02-01.
[157] *Ibid*.

Courier,"[158] who was a male, that it would now be considered acceptable for her to discuss it. She states:

> Really, we are surprised that the cautious editor of the *Seneca County Courier* has so far overcome his opposition to woman's rights as to become himself an advocate of their wearing the pantaloons!...Had we broached the subject the cry would have been raised on all sides, "She wants to wear the pantaloons," and a pretty hornet's nest we should have got into. But now that our cautious editor of the *Courier* recommends it, we suppose that there will be no harm in our doing so. And what is this dress, which we are to don at the bidding of our self-constituted lords and guardians? As near as we can get at it, it is simply a sack-coat and pantaloons, and a cap or hat similar to those worn by men.[159]

According to Nelson in *Dress Reform and the Bloomer*, with this article Bloomer "noted the control men exerted over women's dress and the tendency for women to acquiesce to the tastes of men."[160] Clearly emphasizing her sense of frustration, Bloomer concludes the article by saying "women should not dare to make a change in their costume till they have the consent of men—for they claim the right to prescribe for us in the fashion of our dress as well as in all things else."[161] Reacting to this combination of what they regarded as controversial ideas and controversial dress, the Ladies Temperance Society would withdraw their financial support of the *Lily*.[162] This would not stop Bloomer from continuing on without their help.

Women's dress was a hotly debated subject in nineteenth-century America. Prior to the advent of the "Bloomer" spectacle, numerous doctors had considered current women's fashion unhealthy, especially for pregnant women, due to the restrictions of

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[158] *Ibid*.
[159] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1851-02-01.
[160] Nelson, "Dress Reform", 22-23.
[161] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1851-02-01.
[162] Aronson, *Taking Liberties,* 124.

corsets and petticoats. Corsets were said to prevent the development and normal functioning of a woman's organs and were blamed for various ailments, including consumption, but this did not deter the majority of women from dressing this way. [163] Nelson in *Dress Reform and Bloomer* said, "illness was understood to be part of a fashionable woman's life. It both proclaimed her frail and delicate nature while it maintained her dependent status."[164] She went on to explain that the sphere assigned to most middle and upper class women was reinforced by their clothes and the restraints these imposed. Victorian society was built on a complex system of beliefs that had to be followed in order to maintain the status quo. As reform movements such as abolitionism and temperance spread, more women began to question their own situations, and to view dress as an impediment.[165] According to Endres and Lueck, "the movement represented the first time that women had openly rebelled against accepted convention."[166]

In addition to the obvious health risks, feminists saw the fashionable clothing of the day as restricting what they could comfortably do in public, as the clothing was cumbersome, with the corset restricting movement and the petticoats adding excessive weight, sometimes up to an additional fifteen pounds. In public, the wide skirts, supported by crinolines, would make seemingly simple tasks, such as going up and down stairs, or getting on and off public transportation, difficult.[167] In *Women in Pants, Manly Maidens, Cowgirls, and Other Renegades*, Catherin Smith and Cynthia Greig said "constricting corsets, dragging skirts, and heavy petticoats—all elements of mid-century

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[163] Nelson, "Dress Reform", 22-23.
[164] *Ibid*, 23.
[165] Nelson, "Dress Reform", 23.
[166] Endres and Lueck, *Women's Periodicals*, 181.
[167] Nelson, "Dress Reform", 22-23.

couture—made it difficult for a woman to leave the home without the assistance of a man who could pick her up when she fainted, guide her through muddy streets, or help her into a coach."[168] In *Pantaloons and Power*, Gayle Fisher, supporting the awkwardness that came with the traditional style of dress, said that "some detractors noted that cumbersome lone frocks made locomotion uncomfortable and forced women into sedentary positions and lifestyles. Others recorded instances when the length of a woman's gowns hindered her free movement, forcing her to avoid carrying heavy or awkward objects for fear of becoming entangled in her skirts."[169]

The influence Amelia Bloomer had through the *Lily* and its support of the new "Bloomer" outfit spread as far as London and Paris, with Bloomer stating that "As soon as it became known that I was wearing the new dress, letters came pouring in upon me by the hundreds from women all over the country making inquiries about the dress and asking for patterns—showing how ready and anxious women were to throw off the burden of long, heavy skirts."[170] According to *Notable American Women*, one American woman in particular, Tracey Hannah Cutler, was responsible for introducing the outfit to London. He said "she joined a peace convention in Columbus and was chosen as one of the delegates to the World's Peace Congress in London that August…while in England Mrs. Tracy lectured on woman's rights, drawing good audiences, and introduced the Bloomer costume."[171] Interestingly, London had quite a restrictive history when it came

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[168] Catherine Smith & Cynthia Greig, *Women in Pants, Manly Maidens, Cowgirls, and Other Renegades* (Harry N. Abrams, INC., publishers: New York, 2003), 12.
[169] Gayle V. Fisher, *Pantaloons And Power, A Nineteenth-Century Dress Reform in the United States* (Kent State University Press: Kent, Ohio and London, 2001), 26.
[170] Bloomer, *Life*, 69.
[171] Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, editors. Paul S. Bayer, assistant editor. *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, 3 vols (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass.,

to fashion, they had laws at the end of the seventeenth century that could see an individual hanged for dressing in the apparel of the opposite sex. Although these laws had lessened in severity by the nineteenth-century, arrests and imprisonment were not unheard of.[172] One lady wrote "Dear Mrs. Bloomer. It seems you are destined after all to become a revolutionist. No one would have supposed that the change in costume of a few American women would have ever shaken the mighty city of London. But it is even so."[173]

Another woman wrote, "I only wish to tell you how *free* I feel, how *light* and *comfortable*—I am like the un-caged bird, I feel as though I could almost fly."[174]

Despite receiving numerous letters about the new costume, requests for patterns, and seeing her name becoming synonymous with the style; Bloomer readily acknowledged that she was not the inventor of the "Bloomer costume." She was unsure who had introduced the new mode of dress, which she first encountered being "worn as an exercise dress at the 'water cures.'"[175] The first article she saw advocating it was an editorial in the *Seneca County Courier*, which she immediately reprinted in the *Lily*.[176] The first person she actually saw wearing the dress was Elizabeth Smith Miller, in 1851.[177] Miller had spent some time in Europe on her honeymoon and there had started

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1971), vol. 1, 426.
[172] Smith & Greig, *Women in Pants*, 13.
[173] The *Lily*, October 09, 1851, vol. 3, no. 11, col. 3, 82.
[174] Selby, Sarah E. "A Bloomer to Her Sisters." *The Water-Cure Journal* (June 1853), 131, as quoted in Nelson, "Dress Reform", 24.
[175] A form of alternative medicine that believed that all people had the right to good health, and that women's health was being put at risk by their form of dress. It was part of a spa movement that became popular in Europe and the United States during the nineteenth century. It was geared towards the upper class.
[176] Selby, *A Bloomer*, 82.
[177] *The Lily*, June 1851, vol. 3, no. 5, col. 3, 45.

wearing an outfit that consisted of full "Turkish" pants underneath a dress that fell below the knees. What led Miller to start wearing the outfit at home has not been ascertained. In *Feminism and Dress Reform*, Amy Kesselman explained that "according to Miller's own account, she recalls her resolution in 1850-51 to adopt an alternative to the long, heavy skirts that 'clung in fettering folds about her feet' as she worked in the garden, but does not mention the source of the style she adopted."[178] There are reports that Miller's inspiration for her new outfit might have come after observing someone wearing something similar at a health spa, or perhaps she was influenced by reading that British actress Fanny Kemble,[179] along with several other women, had appeared in public in pantaloons while in Lennox, Massachusetts a few years earlier.[180] In a December 1849 *Lily* article titled "Mrs. Kemble and Her New Costume," this new outfit is mentioned, as apparently making quite a spectacle:

> There has been a great cry raised by gentlemen from all quarters, about the male attire which Fanny Kemble is said to have adopted; and their fears seem to be excited lest the ladies are going to contest their exclusive right to wear pantaloons. We have scarcely taken up a paper these two months but we have seen remarks on the subject, and we really gathered from them (though we never believed it) that several ladies of Lennox with Mrs. Kemble at their head, had actually paraded the streets, equipped in coats, vests, and pantaloons, and all the other paraphernalia of a gentleman's dress.[181]

The articles went on to say that the women were merely wearing a loose flowing dress with pantaloons that were secured at the ankles. The writer states that men should

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[178] Amy Kesselman, "The Freedom Suit: Feminism and Dress Reform in the United States, 1848-1875", *Gender and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Dec. 1991), 498.
[179] 1809-1893. Fanny Kemble was a well-known British actress and writer.
[180] Gayle V. Fischer, *Pantaloons and Power, A Nineteenth-Century Dress Reform in the United States* (Kent State University Press: Kent, Ohio, 2001), 81-82.
[181] The *Lily*, December 1849, vol. 1, no. 12, col. 1 & 2, 94.

worry about their own clothing, and leave women to wear what they want. It concludes with "We maintain that we have the right to control our own wardrobe, and when gentlemen undertake to arrange it for us they are very ill-mannered and show that they are hard-pressed for something to talk and write about."[182]

Miller adopted the new outfit a few years after this, and would then influence her cousin, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, to embrace the new style of dress. Stanton soon became an advocate for the bloomer costume that many considered scandalous. They expected women to wear dresses that touched the floor, so no one could see their ankles. Only men wore pants.[183] In the July 1851 edition of the *Lily,* Stanton said:

> Heretofore rags have been primary, and woman secondary; we propose, now, to place woman in her true position, making her primary, and rags secondary. The question is now to be, not Rags, how do you *look*? But *Women*, how do you *feel*?... We propose no particular costume; we say to you, at your firesides, ladies, unhook your dresses, and let everything hang loosely about you; now take a long breath, swell out as far as you can, and at that point fasten your clothes. Now please cut off those flowing skirts to your knees, and put on a pair of loose trowsers buttoned round your ankle. To appreciate the great freedom this slight change has made, go down cellar, and bring up a pan of milk, or take yonder lamp and pitcher of water and go up stairs.[184]

After trying the outfit for herself, Bloomer, too, came to love the new sense of freedom it gave her and embraced dress reform. She endorsed the new outfit in a *Lily* article printed in June of 1851.

> We take pleasure in being able to present our readers with a representation of the "New Costume." This is *not* a picture of ourself, but a correct copy of an engraving which appeared a few weeks since in

[182] The *Lily*, December 1849, vol. 1, no. 12, col. 1 & 2, 94.
[183] Endres and Lueck, *Women's Periodicals*, 179.
[184] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1851-07-01.

> the Boston "Carpet-Bag,"[185] and which was cut from a daguerreotype of the first lady who donned the short skirt and trowsers in that city. It is the best representation we have seen of the dress. The skirt is a little shorter, and the trousers are a little taller than any we have worn; otherwise it would answer very well for us. There are a great variety of pictures in all the various papers, claiming to be the "full bloomer costume," and all entirely unlike *us* except this one.[186]

Figure 1 Illustration of Bloomers in The *Lily*[187]

Before her endorsement of the Bloomer costume, Bloomer would have been aware of Helen Marie Weber, a woman's rights activist in England who had been wearing as her everyday apparel "a black coat and pantaloons, and for best, a dark-blue dress coat with gilt buttons, a buff cassimore waistcoat and dun-coloured trousers." [188] Weber wrote: "Those who suppose that women can be political, social, pecuniary, religious equal of man without conforming to his dress, are deceiving themselves. While the superiority of the male dress for all purposes of business and recreation is conceded, it

[185] Boston newspaper which published from 1851-1853.
[186] The *Lily*, June 1851, vol. 3, no. 7, col. 2, 53.
[187] The *Lily*, June 1851, vol. 3, no. 7, col. 2, 53.
[188] Gattey, *Bloomer Girls*, 54.

is absurd to argue that we should not avail ourselves of its advantages."[189] Weber wrote a letter to an American friend in 1850 that stated her belief that within ten years women around the world would be wearing male attire, which would lead to social reform.[190]

In a May 1851 article in the *Lily,* titled "Our Dress", Bloomer asks the question, "from whence men derive the exclusive right to wear the bifurcated garment. They surely cannot bring the bible in proof of this right."[191] She then quotes Weber:

> The nether garment was first worn in the bifurcated form by the women of ancient Judah. How far it resembled the modern trousers we have no definite information; but the fact is worth keeping in mind that women were the original wearer of trousers. The exclusive claim which men so pertinaciously maintain to the use of this garment, is founded upon the principle of no moral or social policy. It is an arbitrary claim, without a solitary argument to support it, not even that of prior usage.[192]

One of the first times Bloomer officially endorsed the outfit was when discussing the Great Exhibition that was soon to take place in London starting in May 1851. The Exhibition included a demonstration on improvements in women's attire. She suggested that women should implement this new style and get rid of their heavy corsets and petticoats. Her endorsement was in itself a form of protest, showing her to be an advocate for dress reform, while at the same time gaining nationwide attention for herself and her paper. Following in her footsteps, and after being introduced to the new outfit by her journal, several other women's rights leaders began to wear the outfit, which would cause it to be forever associated in the public mind with feminism.[193] According to Smith and

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[189] *Ibid*, 54.
[190] Gattey, *Bloomer Girls*, 54.
[191] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1851-05-01.
[192] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1851-05-01.
[193] Kesselman, *Freedom Suit*, 498.

Greig "the controversy over dress reform exploded in the summer of 1851 after an article by editor and activist Amelia Bloomer encouraged women to adopt a costume consisting of a short skirt and trousers."[194]

This explosion was apparently far reaching. An article was printed in the *Alta California* in 1851, showing the appeal the new dress had in the west. It stated that a new dress shop had opened in July of that year on San Francisco's Clay Street and was attracting a lot of attention, due to a female model dressed in Bloomers in the window. It created a spectacle with crowds of men frequently being seen standing around the door and window trying to get a view of the lady in Bloomers. The story of Mrs. Cole's shop was picked up by the *New York Tribune*, under the headline "Bloomerism in California." Within a week, the costume would be worn out in public by numerous women on the streets of San Francisco.[195]

In *Bloomerism Comes to California*, Marion Tinling writes that, "the bloomer did not originate in the west but in rural New York state, and considering that Amelia Bloomer, whose name became attached to the costume, began to wear the "shorts" no sooner than March 1851, its transference to the west coast, complete with patterns, was remarkably rapid."[196] Fashion magazines would comment on the dress, and women began to write to the *Lily* for patterns. "By the summer of 1851 the style had migrated not only to California but to London and Paris. 'Sightings' were noted in Milwaukee, Battle

[194] Smith and Greig, *Women in Pants*, 10.
[195] Marion Tinling, "Bloomerism Comes to California", *California History*, vol. 61, no. 1 (Spring, 1982), 18-19.
[196] *Ibid*, 19.

Creek, Florida, Washington, and throughout New England."[197]

According to Tinling, it made sense that bloomers became so popular in the west, as in San Francisco, in 1851, only one street was planked and women often had to walk through streets covered in mud, dust, trash, garbage, and tobacco juice. This dirt and refuse would catch on the bottoms of their long skirts, making them filthy. In addition, the practicality of this trouser-like outfit for working-class women that lived in the country or mining camps and had to do outdoor work could not be denied. They would often be seen travelling to, or working in, the mines in trousers.[198] This shows that bloomers appealed to women of all social classes. They were also practical for women who were travelling, with one observer stating in 1853, "Bloomerism has done wonders for Oregon. All the women emigrants, who cross the plains, dress in that style."[199] As late as 1860 a traveler reported that "the bloomer costume is considerably in vogue, and appears peculiarly adapted to overland travel."[200]

Demonstrating the popularity of the Bloomer, July 15, 1853 edition of the *Lily* there was an advertisement for a book about bloomers under the title; "Book for "Bloomers!!!" The article stated: "Which should not only be in the hands of every advocate and wearer of the *new costume*, but of every lover of truth and progress.—The *reasons for* a change in dress are plainly and concisely given, while *objections to it* are fully considered and obviated."[201]

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[197] *Ibid*, 21.
[198] Tingling, *Bloomerism*, 22.
[199] "The Oregon and California Letters of Bradford Ripley Alden," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 28 (September 1949), as quoted in Tinling, *Bloomerism Comes*, 23.
[200] Louise Barry, "Albert D. Richardson's Letters on the Pike's Peak Gold Region," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 12 (1943), as quoted in Tinling, *Bloomerism Comes*, 23.
[201] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1853-07-15.

The new style did create its share of objections, controversy and resistance. Part of this came from the nineteenth-century belief that "men will lose their manliness when women lose their womanliness."[202] In May 1851, the *Lily* printed a column discussing comments made popular by American author T.S. Arthur. According to him, women who freed themselves of "long, heavy skirts, and long, tight waists, and substituted the comfortable short dress and trousers, are those who claim an equality of the sexes–who believe that woman was created equal in intellect to man." Clearly offended, Bloomer went on to say that it was generally well-known that T. S. Arthur did not see this as being true. She states,

> He believes that the being whom God gave to his help-mate and companion, belongs to an order inferior to himself, and he lets no opportunity slip to impress this belief upon the minds of his readers. We cannot even change the fashion of our dress, but he must endeavor to create a prejudice against it–no matter how proper and becoming its style, by sneering that the "leaders" in bringing about the "change" are advocates for "women's rights" and claim an equality with man! Doubtless, this remark was aimed directly at ourself, and we thank Mr. Arthur for having honored us so highly as to tell his readers that we claim to be an intelligent woman, and that we insist that woman possess an intellect which only needs cultivation to make her man's *equal* if not his *superior*.
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> If this dress is to be the distinguishing mark between those who claim to be man's equal, and those who are willing to yield to his claim of superiority, we shall soon see a large majority of women supporting the short dress and trowsers; for there are very many who, though they may not admire this style, would yet don it, however distasteful to themselves, rather than yield the point of equality. One thing we suppose is certain, that whoever else may adopt it, the wife of T.S. Arthur will not, for should she do so, it would be claiming equality with her master–a thing which he can never tolerate.[203]

This is an example of the resistance many people felt towards the new style of

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[202] Frederick Saunders, *About Woman, Love and Marriage* (G. W. Carleton and Company: New York, 1868) as quoted in Nelson, *Dress Reform*, 23.

[203] The *Lily*, June 1851, vol. 3, no. 7, col. 2, 53.

dress, as, like T.S. Arthur, they made the obvious connection between this clothing and the whole issue of women's rights.

Sarah Josepha Hale, the editor of a popular fashion magazine, *Godey's Lady Book*, gave her opinion of the bloomer costume. Voicing her dislike, she wrote: "Let no criminal indolence or selfish indifference divert her from making the necessary exertions. Let her not weary of taking the trouble to look as agreeable as possible in her own house…the true lady at home is the real lady elsewhere."[204]

In October of 1851 the *Lily* received a letter from a lady at a woman's college in the west who was concerned about the "fervor" that was overtaking the students who wanted to convert to this new way of dressing. She had heard that the *Lily* was withdrawing its support of the new form of dress, and that if that was true that they should do so consistently, so it would help to contain the spread of "Bloomerism." The response from Bloomer was to confirm that they were one hundred percent behind the new dress, and that there was no chance that they would be withdrawing their support or endorsement of the new style. The article from October 20, 1851 stated, in part:

> We have not a dress more than four or five inches below the knee since last spring, and with the exception of a double gown, have not a long dress in our wardrobe…Could we have foreseen what we should have to encounter, not only throughout our own country, but the whole civilized world—we might have been deterred from the course we have taken. Our weak nerves could not have been sufficiently braced for us to have deliberately engaged in such an encounter. But all unconscious of the storm which was gathering above our head, we innocently but earnestly enlisted in a reform which we felt to not only be important but to be absolutely necessary. Without thought or desire of being a leader of fashion, we adopted the short dress and trowsers as an experiment, and were so well pleased with our new attire that we at once proceeded to amputate our entire wardrobe. Not since we were a child have we

[204] *Godey's Lady's Book*, April 1875, 370 as quoted in Endres and Lueck, *Women's Periodicals*, 180.

> been so comfortably dressed; and *never for a moment*—notwithstanding the furor we have raised—*have we regretted our emancipation from long petticoats, or felt a desire to return to their bondage*.[205]

This reference to clothing and bondage shows that many women felt constrained by their attire, but it went deeper than that. By wearing the bloomer outfit women made a statement and stood up for their independence: loosening the oppression they felt because they had no rights. Wearing the bloomer outfit was one way such women could actively take a stand, and the controversy that surrounded the apparel shows that it worked. As noted by Fischer, while fashion reform did not succeed in getting most women to wear pantaloons, "they did manage to make women and men aware that clothing was not merely a covering for the body but a cultural symbol that showed the constraints applied to women."[206]

In *Women's Clothes and Women's Rights*, Robert Riegel discusses a similar issue. He states that some feminists believed that "feminine apparel was designed consciously to hamper women's movements and thus prevent them from earning their livings except through Marriage;" thus forcing women to be dependent on males.[207] He argues: "these feminists speculated that women's clothes were the result of a male conspiracy to make women subservient by cultivating in them a slave psychology."[208] Elizabeth Cady Stanton believed that there was no way women could possibly make equal earnings to males in the current style of dress. It seemed as though previously women were slaves to

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[205] The *Lily*, October, 20, 1851, vol. 13, no. 10, col. 1, 87.
[206] Gayle V. Fischer, *Pantaloons and Power, A Nineteenth-Century Dress Reform in the United States* (Kent State University Press: Kent, Ohio and London, 2001), 4.
[207] Robert E. Riegel, "Women's Clothes and Women's Rights," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn, 1963), 391.
[208] Riegel, *Women's Clothes*, 391.

their clothing, but with the invention of the bloomer costume, a whole new world opened up to them. Riegel explained that "Reformed dress would change the whole position of women. Women could earn their own livings and not be forced to marry merely to stay alive. They could pick their husbands, not on the basis of economic prosperity, but according to the traits they desired in the father of their children. "[209]

Bloomer invited commentary on this foray into dress reform movement, and many responded with critiques. *The New York Herald* prophesized that the leaders of the movement would "very likely soon end their career in the lunatic asylum, or perchance, in the State Prison."[210] *The New York Times* responded with:

> We regret to see how obstinately our American women are bent on appropriating more than their fair share of Constitutional privileges. Not that the efforts ever amount to anything than the re-affirmation of certain errant heresies…the propriety of endowing their delicate forms with the apparel, appurtenances, and insignia of "manhood." But there is an obvious tendency to encroach upon masculine manners manifested even in trifles, which cannot be too severely rebuked or too speedily repressed.[211]

According to Kesselman, "the reform dress became a symbol of everything that was threatening about feminism: women shaping their lives in accordance with their own needs, women declaring dependence from male approval, women doing or wearing what had been traditionally reserved for men."[212] The hostility towards the outfit would increase, with satirical cartoons and comments becoming common, and some harassment of the women who wore the outfit in public.[213] The London magazine *Punch* printed

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[209] *Ibid*, 391.
[210] *New York Herald*, May 21, 1851 as quoted in Endres and Lueck, *Women's Periodicals*, 180.
[211] Jeanette C Lauer and Robert H. Lauer. "The Battle of the Sexes: Fashion in 19th Century America," *Journal of Popular Culture* 13 (Spring 1980): 581-89, as quoted in Nelson, *Dress Reform*, 24.
[212] Kesselman, *Freedom Suit*, 501.
[213] *Ibid*, 500.

various satirical cartoons such as the one included below by artist John Leech (Figure 2). These were re-printed across the United States, and played a hand in the anti-bloomer campaign. Critics were afraid that the bloomer costume would lead to the "unsexing" of women.[214] Riegel stated that "various commentators gibed that women who had formerly only worn the pants of the family while at home were now advertising proclivities publicly, while others contended that Bloomers were adopted only by the homely to attract male attention."[215]

There was also a fear that the clothing would make men appear feminine; and a year after bloomers were introduced, cartoons began to appear depicting just this. It was believed that if women wore pants, it would follow that men would wear dresses, and become the dependent ones, a confirmation of the extent to which clothing at this time was gender specific.[216].

In 1852, *Godey's Lady's Book* suggested that dress could affect a woman's personality, and that by wearing the "masculine" bloomers, a woman would adopt a man's mannerisms and characteristics. "If a woman put on a short skirt, trousers, and a jacket, she would probably thrust her hands into the pockets, speak coarsely, and with a loud laugh. Dressed as a male, a woman could not help but behave like one – in all his vulgarity."[217]

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[214] *Ibid*, 501.
[215] Riegel, *Women's Clothes*, 393.
[216] Gayle V. Fischer, "'Pantalets' and 'Turkish Trowsers': Designing Freedom in the Mid-Nineteenth Century United States," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring, 1997), 113.
[217] Godey's Lady's Book, as quoted in Fischer, "Designing Freedom," 100-101.

Figure 2 "Bloomerism" *Punch* Cartoon[218]

BLOOMERISM—AN AMERICAN CUSTOM.

To comments such as these, Bloomer defended this belief with her argument that the new dress was not masculine. In a *Lily* article from September, 1851 she said:

> The dress need have no masculine characteristics about it. The costume of the Polish ladies and the out-door dress of the Russians, which—resembling each other very much, I should take as the proper type for our ladies to model theirs upon—has surely never been obnoxious to such a charge; whilst the Turkish women have always been considered in physique and in costume as the embodiment of all that is effeminate. Between these, the out-door horseback dress of the Peruvian ladies—a suitable type for a summer dress with us—gives no suggestions to "masculinity," even when each heel of the wearer is armed with a half-pound spur.—These peculiarities of the new dress, in which its advantages consist, do not effect the clothing of the chest at all, by no means require as essential to is perfection a waistcoat, standing dickey, cravat and sack, as many think; at least is not the costume we argue for.[219]

In the same article from September, 1851, she went on to say, "now for *the* advantages of this costume, and our reasons why we fly in the face of prejudice and dare

[218] John-Leech-Cartoons-Punch-1851.09.27.141.tif, http://punch.co.uk/.
[219] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1851-09-01.

run counter to the time-confirmed notions until now everywhere accepted, with regard to the proprieties of woman's dress."[220] One of the benefits she listed was cost; the new outfit was cheaper, as the amount of material required was considerably less than the traditional dress. In addition, it would stay newer longer, as the part that dragged in the mud and got ruined would no longer be there to do so. Convenience was also an important factor, as, according to Bloomer, "*the* motions of *the* wearer would be less constrained. Foul weather, with its rain and mud, would incommode them less, and changes to meet it not be so necessary; or at least not to such an extent. And also, as a consideration under this head, *the* wardrobe need not be so bulky." Finally, she listed health as an important consideration, saying "It would be more healthy, particularly if the reform were carried a step further, and a dress for the waist adopted, in which a lady could pick cherries without splitting a sleeve off, and play at battledoor without an expenditure of hooks and eyes."[221] She also mentioned the dangers that were a part of wearing the old costume, due to the extra weight a woman had to carry around, ranging from 10-12 pounds. To this, she says:

> All this weight is supported by *the* hips alone, producing two serious evils: First, *the* drawing strings around *the* waist have to be very tight, to prevent *the* skirts from slipping down: and thus a compression is produced and continually kept up, which must embarrass *the* organs within *the* exercise of their functions. But besides this source of trouble, *the* weight of *the* skirt is continually operating to force downwards *the* organs within, only covered by partially resistant but pliant walls of *the* abdomen.[222]

She said that because of this, women were aging prematurely and in some cases,

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[220] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1851-09-01.
[221] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1851-09-01.
[222] *Ibid*.

"entail on many an existence to which death would be preferable."[223] In an August 1852 edition, *Lily* subscriber, Mary F. Thomas, wrote a letter stating why she was a fervent believer in the new outfit. She said "I hope that you will continue to devote a part of the paper to the reform in dress. This is too intimately connected with the elevation of women to be neglected." She went on to say "A short time ago a lady, evidently suffering the penalty of the slave of fashion, said on my remonstrating on her course; that she "could not change; for she had worn stiff whalebones so long that she could not support her body in an upright position without them."[224]

Due to reasons such as these, and despite the controversy her endorsement of the costume created, Bloomer would continue to support the outfit, and in the July 1852 edition of the *Lily* she stated, "Having experienced the blessings of freedom, we cannot rivet the chains upon ourself again, even to gain the good will, or to avoid the frowns of slavish conservation."[225] In the September 1852 edition of the *Lily*, under the heading "Dress Reform," Bloomer stated, "We receive a great many letters similar to the following, and had we room should be glad to place them oftener before our readers. Where ever the reform dress has been adopted from principle, there it is still worn, and will continue to be, despite the opposition which may be felt to it." The letter began as follows:

> Mrs. Bloomer:--
> I hope you will continue to devote a part of the paper to the reform in dress. This is too intimately connected with the elevation of woman to be neglected. –for in order that we may have sound minds in sound bodies, our dress must be such as to allow the full expansion of the

[223] *Ibid*.
[224] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1852-08-01.
[225] The *Lily*, July 1852 as quoted in Kesselman, *Freedom Suit*, 500.

> chest, and the most perfect muscular development of the whole body. It is to be hoped that those women who have emancipated themselves from the thraldom of Parisian fashions, and braved the consequent censure of a wickedly depraved public sentiment, will continue in the way that leads to health and life.[226]

Another reader from Brownhelm, Ohio was determined to continue wearing the costume, despite any resistance encountered. She stated that she had been wearing the costume for over twelve months, and that although she knew that many people had stopped wearing it because of ridicule, from newspaper publishers and the general public, it did not matter to her or others in her town.[227] As she explained:

> In adopting this new style of dress, we are aware that we subject ourselves somewhat to ridicule, but we are also aware that a great life-problem is before us, which in some way or another must be solved. Every individual interested must decide whether, on the one hand, health, safety, and genuine decency, are to be regarded, or whether the hoots and jeers of vulgar blackguards are to be listened to and revered. As for me, let me live the life of a Bloomer, and forever acknowledge my gratitude and heartfelt thanks to her who has introduced this neat and comfortable costume.[228]

Initially, the controversy surrounding the outfit was beneficial to the women's rights cause, resulting in increased subscriptions for the *Lily* and much larger turnouts at women's rights conferences, where Bloomer and other leaders would speak on the advancement of women's status. Said Bloomer, "My subscription list ran up amazingly into the thousands and the good woman's-rights doctrines were thus scattered from Canada to Florida and from Maine to California. I had gotten myself into a position from which I could not recede if I desired to do so."[229] She would continue to wear the outfit

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[226] The *Lily*, September, 1852, vol. 4, no. 8, col. 2, 70.
[227] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1852-10-01.
[228] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1852-10-01.
[229] Bloomer, *Life*, 68-69.

for the following six to eight years, stating "I found the dress comfortable, light, easy and convenient, and well adapted to the needs of my busy life. I was pleased with it and had no desire to lay it aside, and so would not let ridicule or censure of the press move me."[230]

Eventually, though, the continued ridicule and attention the outfit received became too much, resulting in many feminists returning to wearing their usual longer dresses. Despite its obvious benefits, eventually fashion would force most women to stick to their longer skirts, leaving the reform dress to activists and health faddists.[231] Bloomer wrote "we all felt that the dress was drawing attention from what we thought to be of far greater importance—the question of woman's rights to better education, to a wider field of employment, to better remuneration for her labor, and to the ballot for the protection of her rights."[232] D.C. Bloomer, in his biography of Amelia Bloomer, offers another explanation as to why she stopped wearing the dress, stating that after retiring from public life, she frequently felt the desire to wear long skirts when going to parties, etc., and was bothered by the wind when she went out in the shorter skirt. She was "greatly annoyed and mortified by having my skirts turned over my head and shoulders on the street." Once hoops came out, she began wearing those more frequently, but noted that the Bloomer costume was "convenient and comfortable at all times, and especially so for a working dress." [233]

In the *History of Women Suffrage,* Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony

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[230] Ibid, 69.
[231] Tinling, *Bloomerism Comes*, 24-25.
[232] Nelson, 24, as quoted in Charles Neilson Gattey, *The Bloomer Girls* (Coward-McCann, Inc: New York, 1967), 113.
[233] Bloomer, *Life*, 72-73.

gave as their reason for giving up the outfit that "no sooner did a few brave conscientious women adopt the bifurcated costume, an imitation in part of the Turkish style, that the press at once turned its guns on "the costume."[234] Fischer explains that the use of a near Eastern dress may have had something to do with the general disapproval of the bloomer dress. The freedom dress's "Turkish connotations" precipitated negative repercussions. She stated that "some critics branded the costumes heathenish because of their association with Islam."[235] She added that while there were those who disliked the dress based on its Eastern origins, the majority disliked it because it made women look like men and that "in the case of women's rights dress reformers, the original intention of their reform was lost and reshaped by public reaction to it."[236] In a letter to Stanton in 1854 Anthony was quoted as saying that the "costume had begun to be an intellectual slavery; one never could get rid of thinking of herself, and the important thing is to forget self. The attention of my audiences was fixed on my clothes instead of my words."[237]

Regardless, a dent had been placed in the rigidity of nineteenth-century attitudes towards women. The attention the new outfit brought to the issue of women's rights and the *Lily* itself cannot be underestimated. The controversy gave Bloomer, as well as the periodical, notoriety, which increased the numbers of people the *Lily* could potentially influence. According to the authors of *American Women Writers and the Periodical*,

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[234] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage, *History of Women Suffrage* (Charles Mann: Rochester, N.Y., 1889) as quoted in Fisher, *Pantaloons*, 128.
[235] Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (Routledge: New York, 1992), 314 as quoted in Fisher, *Pantaloons*, 128.
[236] Fischer, *Pantaloons*, 129.
[237] Kathleen Barry, *Susan B. Anthony: A Biography of a Singular Feminist* (Ballantine: New York, 1988). Quoting letter from Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Susan B. Anthony, February 19, 1854, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Library of Congress; quoting Ida Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* (Bowen-Merrill: Indianapolis, 1910), vol. 1, 117 as quoted in Anne C. Coon, *Hear Me Patiently, The Reform Speeches of Amelia Jenks Bloomer* (Greenwood Press: Westport, Connecticut and London, 1994), 13.

"although often ridiculed in the press, especially for appearing in the costume that derisively bore her name, Bloomer was not deterred from her radical thinking about woman's place, woman's work, and woman's rights."[238] The Bloomer controversy and her endorsement of the "radical" new outfit is just another example of how Bloomer succeeded in using a variety of forms of protest and in employing shock value to get her points across.

While the outfit did not create a permanent change at the time, it did pave the way for future debates and set the wheels in motion for continued change. Bloomer's initial endorsement of the outfit and the ensuing controversy was the catalyst for dress reform that would continue throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, with Lydia Sayer, editor of *The Sibyl*, being the next to tackle this issue in 1856 in Middletown, New York. A letter to *The Sibyl* from 1863 exemplifies the continued interest in the dress reform movement. The letter said, in part, "Everywhere woman is considered to be, and described as, the inferior of man. Society is based upon this on a fundamental position. The Church proceeds…on this ground, and the State places her lower than either the Church or common society…As a creature holding a position of inferiority, it is necessary that she should be symbolized as such. Her dress is that symbol."[239] Sayer would criticize the early founders of the bloomer movement for deserting the dress reform cause, (referring to Bloomer and other reformers).[240] After Sayer ceased to publicize *The Sibyl* after 1864, she ventured into hydropathy, but continued to wear

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[238] Aleta Feinsod Cane and Susan Alves, *"The Only Efficient Instrument" American Women Writers & The Periodicals, 1837-1916* (University of Iowa Press: Iowa City, 2001), 7.
[239] *The Sibyl* (March 1863), 1130, as printed in Smith & Greig, *Women in Pants*, 27.
[240] Tinling, *Bloomerism Comes*, 23.

bloomers until her death in 1910.[241]

During the Civil War dress reform would go on a hiatus, but it became an important issue again in the 1870s through two feminist organizations: The National Woman Suffrage Association, headed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton who would publish *The Revolution*, as well as, The American Woman Suffrage Association, dominated by Lucy Stone who published *The Woman's Journal*. Both journals gave significant exposure to dress reform, although neither woman took on one particular outfit as Bloomer did, and neither created the worldwide controversy that she did. According to Riegel, the last quarter of the nineteenth-century would see feminists using the same arguments as their predecessors did about dress, the popular consensus being that:

> Traditional dress was that of the female slave who served and pampered her male master, and who catered to his sensual grossness titillating his passions. Only with rational dress could pure womanhood free herself from thralldom, attain health and vigor and compete equally with men in all activities.[242]

Some women took matters into their own hands by wearing men's clothing out in public. A few women were actually picked up by the police for doing just this, but judges would ultimately free them, as there were no laws prohibiting impersonation of males unless combined with an actual offence such as fraud.[243] This would very rarely involve a woman of any social standing, although it did occur with Dr. Mary E. Walker, who said "she had worn men's clothes from the age of sixteen. As an assistant surgeon during the Civil War she dressed like her male fellow officers. Her basic argument was that the wearing of draperies injured women psychologically."

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[241] Riegel, *Women's Clothes*, 395.
[242] *Ibid*, 395.
[243] Riegel, *Women's Clothes*, 397.

Clubs would be formed, such as the Dress Reform Club of Boston; but feminists began to moderate their opinions on dress reform, although still making the argument that cumbersome skirts were part of a male effort to enslave women. They began to concentrate on simpler things such as improved underwear or not wearing any corsets.[244] The dress reform movement would decline, with the leaders, similar to Bloomer, losing their enthusiasm as they concluded dress reform took away from more important women's rights issues. By the 1900s they could not make the argument that improved dress would mean improvement in other areas, as by this time women had expanded their positions considerably; they could now go to college or graduate school, their employment prospects were much greater, property rights for married women were significantly improved, and many states gave women the right to vote.[245]

After the Bloomer controversy died down, and despite the lack of financing from the Female Temperance Society, Bloomer persevered with the publication of the *Lily* on her own and by 1852 was publishing various written pieces–all concerning developing issues in women's rights. As the journal delved more into the issue of women's rights, one popular theme that emerged was the loss of rights that accompanied a woman's marriage. The *Lily* would be one of the first popular magazines to openly discuss, and bring attention to the limited legal rights of married women. One way Bloomer brought attention to this important issue was by her use of extreme and unconventional examples, such as her frequent comparison between being a married woman and being a slave, a link that held resonance for many people due to America's tumultuous history with

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[244] *Ibid*, 398.
[245] *Ibid*, 401.

slavery. She also used her journal to suggest that there were alternatives for women outside of their traditional role as wife and mother, and that divorce should be an option for an unworkable marriage. While commonplace today, these were radical notions for the time period, and Bloomer would be one of the first American women to publish and write about such issues in a periodical.

Chapter Three

Married Women, Slavery and Divorce

Throughout the pages of the *Lily*, Bloomer used the controversial comparison of married women to slaves as a way to bring attention to married women's lack of legal rights. This link, which has a long history, was thought by many people in in mid-nineteenth century American society to be outrageous, as they believed that married women had all the rights they wanted, or needed. Novelist Eliza Woodson Farnham (1815-1864) declared in 1843 that "a 'true' woman did not desire political rights, and she remained free so long as she was not forced out of her natural domestic sphere." [246] Others thought it was a fair portrayal of a married woman's position, particularly because the denial of independent rights to married women went further under English Common Law than under any other legal system in Europe. As slaves were seen as being possessions of their overseers, wives, in a similar fashion, were often deemed to be possessions of their husbands, even though this was not strictly true at law.

Throughout the pages of the *Lily,* the comparison of married women to slaves is used frequently when discussing a woman's poor legal position once married. Bloomer and other writers took advantage of the resonance it held for many activists and the controversy it created. As this discussion makes clear, Bloomer did not invent the use of

[246] Eliza W. Farnham, "Rights of Women. Reply to Mr. Neal's lecture," *Brother Jonathan* V (June 24, 1843), 236 as quoted in Warbasse, *Changing Legal Rights*, 212.

the analogy between married women and slaves. She did, however, make frequent use of it as a way to help women bring attention to their need for greater equality and as a way to implement change.

In July of 1776 Congress produced the Declaration of Independence, a document that expressed America's desire for independence from Britain and outlined the ideals and aspirations for the new nation. The concept of liberty for the individual was of the upmost importance, as the famous opening lines made clear: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." There were, however, contradictions in the document that encompassed the ideals for the new nation as there were still two distinct groups for whom this idea of liberty fell short—women and slaves. Both groups were excluded from many aspects of society, due in part to their perceived inferior status. This commonality, could, perhaps, partially account for women's rights activist's use of the analogy between married women and slaves, although the comparison was not new when the 1776 Declaration of Independence was produced.

In 1700, British writer Mary Astell, considered one of the first British feminists, asked the famous rhetorical question in her *Reflection Upon Marriage*, "If all men are born free, how is it that all women are born slaves." [247] In 1792, in her most famous work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Ango-Irish writer and feminist Mary Wollstonecraft argued that women were not naturally inferior to men, but only

[247] Patricia Springborg, *Mary Astell, Theorist of Freedom from Domination* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005), 1.

appeared to be because they were not as educated as men. She also disputed aspects of married life. [248] One of the first works to address women's subject role in society, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* makes numerous references to married women and the image of slavery. She states:

> If men would but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives; more reasonable mothers–in a word, better citizens. We should then love them with true affection, because we should learn to respect ourselves; and the peace of mind of a worthy man would not be interrupted by the idle vanity of wife.[249]

The analogy of married women's subjection with the subjection of slaves gained particular force in the United States as the abolition movement developed and eventually triumphed. Women played key roles in this movement and through their success with the cause of abolition, as with temperance, they gained the confidence necessary to fight for and eventually gain more rights for themselves. The link between married women and slavery reached its peak by the 1830s, a time when the struggle for abolition and rights for freed black men led American women such as Sarah and Angelina Grimke, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to take a closer view of their own situation. In 1837, black and white abolitionists would gather in New York City for the first anti-slavery convention of American women. [250] Linking the question of slavery with women's rights at an anti-slavery convention, Sarah Grimke observed "it is not only the cause of the slave that we plead, but the cause of woman as a

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[248] Eleanor Flexnor, *Mary Wollstonecraft, A Biography* (Coward, McCann & Georghegan, Inc.: New York, 1972).
[249] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London, England, 1792), 89.
[250] Lynne Olson, *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970* (Rockefeller Center: New York, 2001), 28.

moral, responsible, being…Men and women are *created equal*!...whatever is right for man to do is right for woman."[251] Statements such as this would have been considered heresy by most churches, keeping in mind that the 1830s was a time when terms such as "the cult of true womanhood" were first used by ladies magazines, as well as by ministers and social conservatives.[252] According to Griffith in her biography of Stanton, *True Womanhood* was defined as domestic, maternal, religious, cultured, idle, and subservient. It sought to distinguish between ladies—the wives and daughters of the middle and upper classes—and all other women—immigrants, blacks, mill girls, and field hands." [253] As manufacturing productivity increased, women were less needed as economic partners and their lives became more constrained. Occupations that were traditionally done by women, such as midwifery, were taken over by men. The expectation was that women, would, and should, stay within their appropriate sphere, that of the home, leaving the public sphere to men.[254] The popularity of separate spheres and "true womanhood," as well as women's increased involvement in the abolitionist cause, would have all played key parts in the increased usage of the comparison of married women to slaves.

The Grimke sisters, along with Sojourner Truth, an African-American abolitionist, were especially passionate about the poor position of black slave women. Angelina Grimke, who was the daughter of a South Carolina slave holder, made her solidarity with them public in 1837 during one of her speeches, where she was calling for

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[251] *Ibid*, 28.
[252] Olson, *Freedom's Daughters*, 28; Elisabeth Griffith, *In Her Own Right, The Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 1984), 15.
[253] Griffith, *In Her Own Right*, 15.
[254] *Ibid*, 15.

the immediate abolition of slavery, by stating "they are our countrywomen, they are our *sisters*; and to us, as women, they have a right to look for sympathy for their sorrow, and effort and prayer for their rescue."[255] Both she and her sister Sarah felt that white women had a deep bond with black women, and during speeches they would often mention the horrible sexual crimes that white men committed against black women, the difficulties of being a mother while living as a slave, and would often appeal for the southern women to act on behalf of their slaves.

According to Olson in *Freedom's Daughters*, "slave women were expected to work as diligently and as long as men in the fields, but they also had to bear children, raise them, cook, sew, clean, and perform other household chores for their families. Many women were weak and in constant physical pain."[256] They also had to worry about miscarriages and still births, which were all too common due to the harsh physical conditions they had to endure, as well as because of their lack of nutrition and limited access to medical care. In addition, the fear of rape was a constant threat.[257] The Grimke sisters, who were converts to Quakerism and lived what they preached, defied convention and befriended these women. They taught in integrated schools, and implored that *all* women be given the right to vote.[258]

The *Lily* would publish material from the Grimke sisters on a number of occasions throughout its publication history, which shows both the Grimke's continued

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[255] Nancy Hoffman, "Teaching about Slavery, the Abolitionist Movement, and Women's Suffrage", *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 14, Nos. 1/2, Teaching About Women, Race, and Culture (Spring-Summer, 1986), 2.
[256] Olson, *Freedom's Daughters*, 22.
[257] *Ibid*, 22.
[258] Hoffman, "Teaching About Slavery," 2.

passion for women's rights—which sprung from their initial interest in abolitionism—as well as the *Lily's* interest and support for those who defied convention. In the October 1851 *Lily* edition, Stanton published an extract from a letter that she had received from Angelina Grimke. Said Stanton: "Dear *Lily*—there is nothing better that I can give your readers this month then the following extract from a letter I lately received from Angelina Grimke Weld—A name familiar to most American women."[259] In the letter Grimke begins by saying that conflict can be beneficial for growth, and that one should not be weary of it. Stanton questions whether or not public opinion can be right on any one subject. Grimke reminds her how at one point "public opinion once hung Quakers and witches in this country; it imprisoned, banished and whipped men and women because they held different religious views from the masses." She then asks the question: "but why can you, and I, and hundreds of others, now hold such views as we please?"[260] This exchange shows how far women had progressed since the seventeenth century Salem witch trials as they now had the option to hold their own views.

In another letter from 01 April, 1852 which Sarah Grimke wrote for the *Lily*, she discusses the importance of fighting for what one believed in. She quotes Washington, who said—with regards to the Revolution—"They are unworthy of freedom who do not strike for it." To this Grimke says:

> This truth was burned into the souls of the men and women of the Revolution, and braced their arms and nerved their hearts in the day of peril and of suffering…Is it too much to say that a greater Revolution is now pending? Shall I adopt the language of the Father of our country,

[259] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1851-10-01.
[260] *Ibid*.

> and in view of this Revolution say to the women of America, "They are unworthy of freedom who do not strike for it."! Nay, my sisters, but I do say we are unworthy of freedom if we do not labour and suffer for its attainment.[261]

According to Kerber and De Hart in *Women's America*, the Grimke sisters were the "first, and it seems likely the only, women of a slaveholding family to speak and write publicly as abolitionists.[262] They were the first women who, from within the abolitionist movement, defended their rights *as women* to free speech."[263] While the north would go on to be known as the birthplace of the women's suffrage movement, as well as the home of its national leaders, and the west would go on to be an important region for crucial victories at the beginning of the suffrage campaign, the south would become known for its resistance.[264] According to Wheeler in *New Women of the New South* "most white southerners were contemptuous of the women's right movement as yet one more unfortunate product of an inferior Northern culture, an offshoot of abolitionism led by women with the same "naïve" and dangerous belief in the equality of the sexes and disregard for vital social distinctions that characterized the abolitionists."[265]

An example of the influence *The Lily* had on one southern woman is shown by a letter that was written by *Lily* reader P. Farmer on 24 March, 1854. It was titled *A Voice From the South* and stated, in part that:

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[261] Accessible Archives: *The Lily:* 1852-04-01.
[262] According to Walter Johnson in the majority of affluent southern women supported the institution of slavery because of the elevated standing it gave them in the rigid social hierarchy of the south. It gave them greater power in society as well as in the domestic sphere, where, in theory, they were free from manual labor; Johnson, *Soul by Soul; Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 89-93.
[263] Kerber and De Hart, *Women's America*, 193.
[264] Marjorie Spruce Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1993), 4.
[265] Wheeler, *New Women*, 4-5.

> I must confess that upon *the* subject of "Woman's Rights" I have ever maintained a sort of middle position, or as politicians would say, "have been on *the* fence;" but *the* first number of your paper brought me down on *the* right side, that is among *the Lilies*, where I hope to luxuriate *the* remainder of my life. Although I slightly differ with you in some matters of taste, yet on *the* more essential points I am with you heart and hand. Notwithstanding *the* South is far behind *the* Eastern and Middle states in moral reforms, yet it is far in advance of them in extending to woman her rights; and as a matter of course, your noble struggles to throw off her yoke cannot be fully appreciated here.[266]

The author of this letter went on to give her opinion on what part of the country housed the best and least, liberal minded husbands. She also laments that the women of the south lack any desire for improvement with regards to progression for women's rights. This letter is also a good example of the regions known resistance to the women's rights movement.[267] She goes on to say:

> I have had an opportunity of observing to a considerable extent *the* disposition, manners and customs of *the* people in nearly every portion of our country, and have come to *the* conclusion that *the* worst husband-tyrants are descendants from *the* old Puritans. *The* Yankees are *the* most moral, sober, persevering, ingenious, witty and tyrannical of all *the* grades of *the* human species indigenous to America. Southerners generally give *the* women

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[266] *The Lily*, April 15, 1854 Vol. 6, No. 8, 63.

[267] According to Nancy Wheeler the south was adamant about holding on to traditional ideas when it came to relations between the sexes. Many southern politicians believed that the feminist movement was a "hostile, alien force, invading the south" and associated it with the abolitionist movement. They saw it as a way of attempting to get the southern women to abandon their ideals and to interfere in politics. There were those women who persevered in the south, and became involved with the feminist movement, and who would go on to be leaders of the suffrage movement; Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 36. According to Elna Green, this would happen later than in the North. Public expression for women suffrage in the south did not appear until the late 1860s; Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1997), 6. The women involved were generally descended from the south's social and political elite and had access to educational opportunities and travel outside their region which expanded their views on women's roles. This is not to say that all southern women who had access to education and travel were concerned with women's rights. It was still considered a radical notion that went against the southern traditional values. Astutely, the southern women who did go on to be involved with women's rights and leaders of the suffrage movement, aware of the resistance in their region, made efforts to present themselves and their causes as nonthreatening and in as feminine a manner as possible; Wheeler, *New Women*, 36-39).

> all *the* rights and privileges they can reasonably ask. True, they are not admitted to *the* polls, but in their present state, they would be of little use there, except as tools, for they know or care no more about politics or any system of improvement, than *the* man in *the* moon. Give them plenty of money to buy finery, and go pleasure-hunting, and *the* car of Progress may go backward or forward, sideways or upset for aught they care, so it does not interfere with them in their pursuit. To be admired is *the* height of their ambition; they seem to know nothing else worth caring or living for; it is their *ne plus ultra* of human happiness…. And while woman adorns herself and goes forth to seek *the* adulation of *the* gaping crowd, man goes out seeking pleasure less harmless; and this will be *the* case while African slavery exists…[268]

There were also those women who supported the cause of abolitionism, but failed to see anything wrong with their own lack of rights. An example of this is shown by another reader of the *Lily*, the wife of an editor of a religious paper in Western New York, who wrote a letter which was titled *Contentment is a Sign of Degradation* where she said in part:

> When I see her passively folding her arms and contentedly resigning herself to her present condition, and hear her boastingly assert that she has all the privileges and liberty she desires, I am always reminded of the remark made by a distinguished philanthropist to the contentment of southern slaves: "A contented slave must be a degraded man!"[269]

Around the same time the link between married women and slaves was reaching its peak—in 1837—Sarah Grimke produced *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman,* a series of fifteen letters that were published in the *New England Spectator*. According to Warbasse in *The Changing Legal Rights of Married Women*, "these letters constituted the first comprehensive American argument for

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[268] *The Lily*, April 15, 1854 vol. 6, no. 8, 63.
[269] *The Lily*, March 01, 1854, vol. 6, no. 5, 40, as quoted in Russo and Kramarae, *Radical Women's Press*, 161.

women's rights written by a woman."[270] In the section titled the "Legal Disabilities of Women," Grimke discusses the inequalities apparent in Blackstone's interpretation of the law with regards to married women. She states: "Here now, the very being of a woman, like that of a slave, is absorbed in her master. All contracts made with her, like those made by their owners, are a mere nullity. Our kind leaders have legislated away almost all our legal rights, and in the true spirit of such injustice and oppression, have kept us in ignorance of those very laws by which we are governed."[271] With regards to the husband's ability to spend his wife's money and property on drinking and gambling without her permission and his wife's inability to bring a legal action against him, Grimke observed obvious parallels with the laws respecting slaves. "A slave cannot bring a suit against his master or any other person, for an injury—his master, must bring it. So if any damages are recovered for an injury committed on a wife, the husband pockets it; in the case of the slave, the master does the same."[272]

New York City lawyer and legislator Thomas Herttell (1771-1849) worked on getting married women more legal rights; he argued that they should be able to own property. He tried to pass a bill in 1836 with its primary principle being "to preserve to *married women* the title, possession, and control of their estate, both real and personal *after* as *before* marriage;—and and that no part of it shall innure to their husbands solely by virtue of *marriage*."[273] The bill did not pass, and in 1840 he would leave the assembly.

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[270] Elizabeth Warbasse, *The Changing Legal Rights of Married Women, 1800-1861* (Garland Publishing, Inc.: New York and London, 1987), 121.
[271] Sarah M. Grimke, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Conditions of Woman* (Isaac Knapp: Boston, 1838), 75.
[272] Grimke, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes,* as quoted in Warbasse, *Changing Legal Rights of Married Women*, 122.
[273] Wellman, *Road to Seneca Falls*, 146.

Prior to this, in 1839, in *The Right of Married Women*, Herttell gave his opinion on the Common Law with regards to marriage. He stated that the husband's power over his wife meant that her "legal condition, if not bearing every mark and trait of negro slavery, approximates so near to it as to render the difference not worth noting."[274] According to Warbasse in *The Changing Legal Rights*, he was one of the first American men to draw the analogy between the position of married women and black slaves.[275]

Herttell would not be the only man to compare a married women's legal position to that of a slave. Another New York lawyer, and editor, John Neal (1793-1896), was very involved in the reform movements of the period. He felt strongly that there should be equality of natural rights for both men and woman, as outlined in the Declaration of Independence. Neal first considered the subject of women and the law "as early as 1820, during his first extemporaneous speech before a Baltimore debating society. He was talking about slavery when suddenly, 'as by a flash of lightening,' he saw the similarity between a married woman's legal position and that of a slave."[276] He brought up this comparison on various occasions, most famously at a lecture he gave on women's rights in New York on January 24, 1843. The lecture took place at the Broadway Tabernacle, before a large audience that contained many women. In his lecture he stated, with regards to the wife; "During marriage, all her personal property belongs to her husband…and she is bound to personal service, until set free by death or divorce."[277]

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[274] Thomas Herttell, *The Right of Married Women to Hold and Control Property Sustained by the Constitution of the State of New York* (New York, 1839), as quoted in Warbasse, *Changing Legal Rights of Married Women*, 107.
[275] *Ibid*, 107.
[276] Warbasse, *Changing Legal Rights of Married Women,* 208-9.
[277] John Neal, "Rights of Women," *Brother Jonathan*, V (June 17, 1843), 185 as quoted in Warbasse, *Changing Legal Rights of Married Women*, 210.

The parallels between slaves and married women, bound by personal service to a master or a husband, were clear.

Marriage was such a pivotal part of life in nineteenth-century America, as the majority of women married. The reality was that they had very limited opportunities outside of marriage and according to Chambers-Schiller in *Liberty, A Better Husband*, from 1845-1859 only approximately 8.5 percent of women never married; this went up to approximately 11 percent between the years 1865-1875.[278]

Despite this, advocates such as *Lily* contributor Elizabeth Cady Stanton encouraged women to believe that they deserved to be on a more equal footing with their male counterparts. She, along with Bloomer, opened their eyes to the notion that there were other options available to them outside of the traditional roles of wife and mother. Bringing attention to the notion that marriage was not the only option for women was an important one, due to the popular nineteenth-century separate sphere ideology which defined women as completely home focused her world the home, family and child rearing, and men were focused in the public realm; government, trade, business and law.[279]

In an 1850 *Lily* article titled *The Appropriate Sphere of Women*, the importance of a woman making a place for herself outside of marriage is discussed.

> Marriage, as a general rule, will take place, for it is a true and natural relation; but as important as it is, it is not the only sphere of woman's usefulness and happiness.—With her powers strengthened and developed by a true education, she will know that the deepest sources

[278] Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty A Better Husband, Single Women in America: The Generations of 1780-1840* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1984), 3.
[279] Ashlyn K. Kuersten, *Women and the Law, Leaders, Cases and Documents* (Library of Congress, 2003), 16.

> of enjoyment are spiritual, and within her reach, and in any situation in which it is her lot to be placed, she will find some outlets for her activities and affections, and will throw along the rugged pathways some gleams from the heaven whose light is within her spirit. The lives of such women as Harriet Martineau and Dorothy Dix, are blessings to the world, and many less conspicuous ones also, who are not called to perform the duties of wife and mother, yet not to pass on in the journey of life, making some sorry places glad, and thanking their God that to them also has been given a sphere of usefulness and great a joy. [280]

This article touches upon many important issues while still supporting those who decide to marry, which is emphasized by the sentence, "marriage, as a general rule, will take place, for it is a true and natural relation."[281] In an attempt to broaden the spectrum of options that are available for women, this article attempts to show women the importance of education, calling such a "true education", and how having one will open doors.

While women did not have access to the same educational opportunities as men in nineteenth-century America, they experienced some important advances during this century. For example, Oberlin College in Ohio would see its first four women graduate with Bachelor's Degrees in 1841.[282] The college, which was founded in 1833 by settlers led by Reverends John Jay Shipherd and Philo Penfield Stewart, was committed to co-education, abolitionism and the education of African Americans and advocated a variety of moral and social reform causes under the guidance of Christian evangelical Presbyterian minister Charles Grandison, who served as the college's second president from 1851-1866.[283] Despite this and similar advances in women's education it's clear

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[280] The *Lily*, June, 1850, vol. 2, no. 6, col. 2, 44.
[281] The *Lily*, June, 1850, vol. 2, no. 6, col. 2, 44.
[282] http://www.oberlinheritagecenter.org/researchlearn/timeline
[283] John Barnard, *From Evangelicalism to Progressivism at Oberlin College, 1866-1917* (Ohio State

that they did not have the same opportunities as their male counterparts. This disparity did not go unnoticed by Bloomer, who makes note of it in one of her reform speeches titled "Woman's Education and Employment, The Great Field of Knowledge", where she stated:

> In 1851 it was ascertained that of two hundred and fifty literary colleges, theological institutions, law schools, and medical colleges in the United States, not half a dozen, all told, and these not of the highest class, admitted women to their privileges. Things have improved a little since then, but still the course of legislation and of popular opinion is all against her, and she continues to be deprived of the necessary means for intellectual culture, so freely and liberally provided for her brother.[284]

Bloomer goes on to explain how it is unjust that the majority of higher institutions of learning are chartered by the State and receive large sums of money from the public treasury. While the property of women is taxed to sustain these schools and colleges, she is not allowed to attend them. Citing further the example of Queen Elizabeth I giving large endowments to Oxford and Cambridge while "not making any provisions for the education of the youth of her own sex."[285] Bloomer says "So great a wrong cannot be justified, whether practiced by male or female sovereigns, by monarchical or republican governments…"[286] Bloomer blamed women's intellectual inferiority on their lack of educational opportunities. In 1850 she said that if women were given the same opportunities as men, and if the doors of the colleges were opened to them, then things would be different. She felt that women should be taught that they were created for more

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University Press: Columbus, Ohio, 1969), 3.
[284] Coon, *Hear Me*, 90.
[285] Coon, *Hear Me*, 91.
[286] *Ibid*, 91.

than being a "parlor ornament" or "plaything" for a man.[287] She went on to say: "Show her that you regard her as an equal and that her opinions are entitled to consideration, in short, treat her as an intelligent, accountable being, and when all this has been done, if she prove herself not man's equal in intellect, I will yield the point and admit her inferiority."[288] Bloomer felt that women should have more options outside of marriage, and that more access to education was imperative, hence her articles regarding this issue in the *Lily*.

An article from a June 1849 issue of the *Lily* simply titled "Marriage" attempts to discourage women, in the face of societal pressures, from jumping into a marriage just for the sake of being married. Emphasizing the "misery that might attend" a woman if she was "unfortunate in her choice" of marriage partner, the author hoped that in the face of marriage proposals women will "be impressed with the consideration that it is better to live in 'single blessedness' than be the slave of a being whose feelings have been blunted by the giddy and enervating indulgence of bad passions or habits." The author concluded that, "If this precaution is observed, it cannot fail to strengthen domestic happiness." [289]

Being introduced to the notion that marriage was not the only option for women was important, but so too was the notion that once married, women needed and deserved more legal rights. It was here that the link between married women and slaves came into play. One particular area of contention for some women was their lack of property rights. In an article reprinted in the September, 1850 edition of the *Lily***,** reader Mrs. Nichols questioned the *Middlebury Register* about why married women had so few property

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[287] Bloomer, *Life*, 63.
[288] *Ibid*, 63.
[289] The *Lily*, June 01, 1849, vol. 1, no. 6, col. 2, 49.

rights. The response from the *Middlebury Register* was:

> The democrat might deem it a hackneyed argument were we to point out the view taken of this matter in the bible–about which there can be but little room for difference of opinion. We content ourselves simply with a general reference to this authority–knowing that particular passages will occur readily enough to Mrs. Nichols and our readers.[290]

Frustrated by the overuse of the Bible to justify the inferiority of the female sex, Mrs. Nichols responded to their statement with a lengthy argument questioning biblical support for the law that gave married women no rights to property. As she reflected, "what the passages are, to which our register friends refer, as authorizing the alienation of women's property rights, we have not the slightest idea. We have ransacked the bible from beginning to end and the amount of our gatherings upon the subject are six to one and half a dozen of the other."[291]

Whether wealthy or destitute, from New York or South Carolina, it is evident that the institution of marriage and the laws that governed it played a pivotal role in the lives of the majority of women throughout the history of America.[292] A few forward thinking women were not satisfied with their lack of rights in society and astutely used whatever means they could to educate others and push for equality. Bloomer used the *Lily* as an avenue to create this awareness, and was not afraid of creating controversy, helping pave the way for other reformers. This periodical would be one of the first popular magazines to openly discuss and bring attention to the limited legal rights of married women, as well as women's rights in general.

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[290] The *Lily*, September, 1850, vol. 2, no. 9, col. 1, 68.
[291] *Ibid*, 68.
[292] Cott, *Public Vows*; Hartog, *Man and Wife in America*. Basch, *In the Eyes of the Law*.

A column from the June, 1852 edition of the *Lily* titled "The Democratic Review of Woman's Rights No. 3", is very powerful in the way that it attempts to put the legal existence of a married woman in perspective. It sees her state as being even more hopeless than a convict who has a life sentence, and serves as another example of her use of the analogy which compared married women to slaves. Here, she draws attention to the "commonalities" between a woman's rights after marriage and a slave.

> By marriage, woman loses her legal existence; her power to be, or not to be; to do, or not to do; more hopelessly than the convict for life in the penitentiary, in that she is beyond the reach of the pardoning clemency of the government. –and this legal death has no sorrows the less, nor is it like the victory of the grave, that it is one of the selfish results, of legislation and jurisprudence in resolving into practice the injunction "they twain shall be one flesh." Nor is it changed by denominating it a civil contract; for then it is the most absurd of solecisms, a contract with only one contacting party, and only one party capable of contracting.
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> As an equivalent for the deprivation of these absolute rights, daily food and clothing are enjoined; shelter from the cold and the storm; protection from personal abuse, when by the indulgence of her keeper she walks the streets; freedom from the cares of state, its profits, and honors and its personal duties incident to the administration of government. All these features are common to the slave.[293]

Commentaries such as this confirm Bloomer's use of the extreme and how she was not afraid to go against convention. It is important to remember that few people in this decade were discussing the legal disadvantages of married women, aside from a few early reformers, such as Frances Wright (1795-1852) and Robert Dale Owen (1801-1877), or those individuals who moved in legal circles and were concerned with the law.[294] According to Warbasse, the ladies' magazines of the day were still concerned

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[293] The *Lily*, June 1852, vol. 4, no. 6, col. 1, 52.
[294] Warbasse, *Changing Legal Rights*, 136.

predominantly with domestic duties, with women's problems making up a very small proportion of the social reforms the paper addressed; although they occasionally included letters from women who were interested in the legal status of married women.[295] In *Reform Periodicals* Stearns said prior to 1828 "no publication directed by a woman had attempted to regenerate erring humanity, nor had any periodical intent upon bettering the world summoned the ladies of the country to stand forth in their might against some menacing evil."[296] She explains that while the early periodicals might advocate for issues such as sensible education or health care, they were not pushing for reform or clamoring for any causes.[297]

There were exceptions, such as *The Free Enquirer*, a weekly paper published in New York which was edited by Wright and Robert Owens. It had a fairly small subscription list and ran from 1828-1835. It was dedicated to free thought and reforms of all types, including opening the eyes of "the gentler sex to the nature of their situation in society, and to exciting their attention to the discovery of some remedy for the unjust disabilities to which law and custom subjected them."[298] Or the 1792 *Ladies Magazine and Repository* which was based in Cincinnati, produced by members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and included an excerpt of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*[299]

By the 1830s, magazines were beginning to pay more attention to the question of a married women's legal status, with some believing that legal reform could make for

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[295] *Ibid*, 93.
[296] Bertha-Monica Stearns, "Reform Periodicals and Female Reformers, 1830-1860", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 37, no. 4 (July 1932), 678.
[297] *Ibid*, 678.
[298] Stearns, "Reform Periodicals," 679, as quoted from the *Free Enquirer*, August 5, 1829,
[299] Aronson, *Taking Liberties*, 49.

better wives and mothers, but this was by no means the unanimous opinion. Conservatives were afraid that marriage would disappear if men lost their power and believed that there should be no amendments made to the legal position of married women.[300] Magazines such as the *Christian Review* (1840) supported this belief. The magazine was strongly against making any changes to the existing legal order. The editors believed that with regards to the wife, "the law…protects her from the consequences of improper engagements, by putting it out of her power to bind herself by any."[301]

A forward thinking and radical viewpoint for the time period was argued in an article titled "American Women," in 1839 in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review,* a predominantly literary magazine. Warbasse said "the author believed that the handicaps under which wives suffered only proved the old rule that absolute power could not be entrusted to any human being without being abused. In her words the 'pseudo-devotion of romantic chivalry' was no recompense for the wife's enforced subservience."[302]

The unequal legal status of married women was a driving force behind the first woman's rights movement of the nineteenth-century. Collins, in *America's Women,* writes that visitors to America were often surprised at the freedom given to women before marriage, and at the complete reversal of freedom once they married. For instance, French historian Alexis De Toqueville writes, "In America, the independence of

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[300] Warbasse, *Changing Legal Rights*, 136.
[301] *Christian Review*, v (June, 1840), 286 as quoted in Warbasse, 132-133.
[302] "American Women," *United Stated Magazine and Democratic Review*, VI (August, 1839), 127-142, as quoted in Warbasse, *Changing Legal Rights*, 133-134.

woman is irrecoverably lost in the bonds of matrimony. If an unmarried woman is less constrained there than elsewhere, a wife is subjected to strict obligations. The former makes her father's house an abode of freedom and pleasure; the latter lives in the home of her husband as if she were in a cloister."[303]

A *Lily* article from April 1850 has Elizabeth Cady Stanton discussing why it was so imperative that women must vote. She compared a woman's position in society to that of a slave in marriage, in education, civilly, socially and religiously. She began by noting that it was impossible for men to represent women as they were under the mistaken belief that they were so different from themselves: "Men, so far from viewing us like themselves, from their legislation, seem to think us their moral and intellectual antipodes in everything, for whatever law they consider good for themselves, they forthwith pass its opposite for us, and express the most profound astonishment if we manifest the least dissatisfaction."[304] As evidence of this legislative habit she notes that "They tax us to build colleges, then pass a special law forbidding any women to enter there." The article stated:

> A married woman is not supposed to have any legal existence. She has no more absolute rights than a slave on a southern plantation. She takes the name of her master, she owns nothing, she can get no redress for grievances in her own name in any court of justice this side of Heaven. The principle on which she is educated is the same. The slave is taught what is considered best for him to know—which is nothing. The woman, what is best for her to know, —which is a little more than nothing —man being the judge in both cases.—She cannot follow out the impulses of her own immortal mind in her sphere, any farther than the slave can in his. Civilly, socially and religiously, she is what man chooses her to be, nothing more or less—and such is the slave, and this is slavery. It is impossible to convince man that we think and feel

[303] Collins, *America's Women*, 138.
[304] The *Lily*, April 1850, vol. 2, no. 4, col. 2-3, 38.

> exactly as he does, that we have the same sense of right and wrong, the same love of justice, freedom, and independence.[305]

As an abolitionist Stanton sympathised with the slaves, and attempts to shed light on the frustrations facing married women in nineteenth-century America by comparing the two. While she would go on to support the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution after the Civil War, which would see an end slavery in 1865, when asked if she were "willing to have the colored man enfranchised before the woman," she controversially answered "no; I would not trust him with all my rights; degraded, oppressed himself, he would be more despotic with governing powers than ever our Saxon rulers are."[306] Stanton would not be a supporter of the 1868 Fourteenth Amendment, which guaranteed everyone born in the United States citizenship and entitled them to all the "privileges and immunities" that came with that; with the franchise being restricted to men,[307] or the Fifteenth Amendment of 1870, which "forbade the states and the federal government to deny suffrage to any citizen on account of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude."[308] According to Ginzberg, Stanton did not seem to notice, or care, that an appeal to women on racist grounds would have a negative effect on the women's rights movement.[309] Stanton did not believe in giving additional legal protection and voting rights to African American men while women, both black and white, were denied that right.[310]

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[305] *Ibid*, 38.
[306] Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life*, (Hill and Wang: New York, 2009), 122.
[307] Brinkley, *Unfinished Nation,* vol. II, 405.
[308] *Ibid*, 406.
[309] *Ibid*, 122.
[310] *Ibid*, 406.

In another *Lily* article from 1850, Elizabeth Cady Stanton shows her earlier frustrations that may have served as a precursor to her negative stance against the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the constitution. She stated that it was not possible for men to continue to legislate for women, as the laws that were made for the special benefit of women were, without exception, "unjust, cruel and aggressive."[311] She also asserts that since men see women as being so different from them, that it would be very difficult for them to ascertain what women's wants and interests are, and that maybe women should play a part in making the laws that govern them.[312] Much of society considered this idea too radical, but Bloomer was not afraid to endorse it through the pages of the *Lily*.

While arguing that Bloomer's use of the comparison between married women and slaves was one of the ways she generated controversy and gained more attention for women's rights and her journal, it is important to remember that both women and slaves had a tumultuous history in America. The conditions that slaves had to endure would go through varying degrees of harshness and change over time, just as married women's legal rights would change over time. In *Many Thousands Gone*, Ira Berlin discusses and labels the varying conditions that a slave had to endure depending on when he or she was born. He states that the slaves who were part of the initial "seventeenth century charter generation" those slaves who were the first arrivals, including their children and sometimes grandchildren, would have more freedom then the later generations of slaves. They could, for example, buy their freedom, and had access to more economic

[311] The *Lily*, April 1850, vol. 2, no. 4, col. 2-3, 38.
[312]The *Lily*, April 1850, vol. 2, no. 4, col. 2-3, 38.

opportunities; with the Chesapeake slaves producing handicrafts to complement agricultural production, while others might barter their free time for wages.[313]

Those slaves who lived through the "plantation generation," which began in the late seventeenth century, were "forced to grow the great staples" which consisted of sugar, rice, tobacco, and cotton, and had to endure much more oppression than their predecessors. Their conditions would deteriorate rapidly once slaves were taken from Africa; upon their arrival in North America they would be stripped of all their ties, with the majority being treated despicably and forced to live in remote quarters.[314] According to Berlin, "confined to the plantation, African slaves faced a new harsh work regimen as planters escalated the demands they placed on those who worked the tobacco fields."[315] If they protested, there was little legal recourse for them, as the "master's authority was rarely questioned."[316] The final stage for slaves, according to Berlin, was the "revolutionary generation", those slaves who "grasped the promise of freedom and faced a resurgent slave regime."[317]

In a similar fashion, married women's rights would go through varying stages throughout the history of America; in certain periods they had more rights while in others they were significantly more oppressed. While no one could convincingly argue that they were ever as disadvantaged as slaves, their legal rights would be increasingly limited during the colonial period. Prior to 1680, some of the developing colonies such as

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[313] Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone, The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, (Belknap Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2000), 34-35.
[314] *Ibid*, 113-114.
[315] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 116.
[316] *Ibid*, 117.
[317] *Ibid*, 12.

Virginia and New York had less restrictive legal rights for married women, a result of the economic partnership which developed when men and women worked together closely.[318] While the American Revolution and America's subsequent victory over Britain would cause more women to question their own role in society and hope for some advances, this would not be the case. Once America became an independent nation, it held firm to the patriarchal legal system, the years between 1790 and 1840 being the low point for married women's rights.[319]

Married women's lack of legal rights through-out the colonial period, can be attributed to the fact that they were subject to British common law and the denial of independent rights to married women went further under British Common law than under any legal system in Europe. Marriage was considered a civil contract and was governed by the rules of "coverture", a reference to a husband's legal existence and personality "covering" or encapsulating that of his wife. As William Blackstone explained in his widely read *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: That is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything."[320] The goal of this, according to Blackstone, was to protect the women from the cruelties of the

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[318] Joan Gundersen and Gwen Victor Gampel, "Married Women's Legal Status in Eighteenth-Century New York and Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1982), 18-119; Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American* Society (Knopf: New York, 1996), 111-112.

[319] Kerber and De Hart, 58; Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property in Early America*; Carole Shammas, "English Inheritance Law and Its Transfer to the Colonies," *American Journal of Legal History* 31, no. 2 (April 1987), 158–9; Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639–1789* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1995)

[320] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England, In Four Books, Book the First* (V. & R. Stevens and G.S. Norton: London, 1854), 555.

outside world. He explained that "even the disabilities which the wife lies under are for the most part intended for her protection and benefit."[321] Unlike earlier authors and commentators, Blackstone rejected the Bible as the source of the law's treatment of married women, arguing instead that the decision to give a woman's property to her husband, for example, was "created by the law, for the purposes of civil society."[322]

Under coverture, a married woman was referred to as a 'feme covert' while a single woman was referred to as a 'feme sole.' Once a woman became a 'feme covert,' she lost her rights to her moveable property, her money, clothes and any personal possessions she might own. She also lost her rights to any land she owned, as her husband had complete control over such during his lifetime, although he was not allowed to sell it without her permission. In addition, the wife was not fully legally responsible for herself in civil law and many areas of criminal. Single women or widows could own property, enter contracts or litigate with few restrictions, but married women could do none of these things without the consent or cooperation of their husbands. No woman was able to vote, hold office or enter the ministry.[323] The husband "became the one full citizen in the household, his authority over and responsibility for his dependents contributing to his citizenship capacity."[324] This responsibility was intended to include protecting and supporting his wife and using his power diplomatically, but the records contain numerous examples of husbands abusing their power and leaving their wives in

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[321] Blackstone, *Commentaries*, 433.
[322] Blackstone, *Commentaries*, vol 1, 54-55; Tim Stretton, "Coverture and Unity of Person in Blackstone's *Commentaries*," in Wilfrid Prest ed., *Blackstone and His Commentaries*: Biography, Law, History (Hart Publishing: Oxford and Portland Oregon, 2009), 111-27.
[323] Alan Taylor, *American Colonies, The Settling of North America*, (Penguin Books: Harmondsworth, 2001), 173.
[324] Cott, *Public Vows*, 12.

perilous domestic situations.[325]

Within this patriarchal social system, the household was sometimes referred to as a "little commonwealth." The male was seen as being at the head of this commonwealth and was expected to manage everything beneath him–his wife, children, and servants. The wife was expected to manage the household affairs, and all the domestic duties that went along with that. Patriarchal structures and expectations essentially excluded women from the process of making and administering the laws.[326]

After the American Revolution and America's successful quest for independence, many women began to question their own lack of freedom and their subsequent position in society. Brinkley explained that this was in part due to "the emphasis on liberty and the "rights of man." "By the way," Abigail Adams famously wrote in 1776 to her husband John Adams, "in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors."[327] Other women, such as women's rights advocate Judith Sargent Murray, argued that women should have more access to education. Despite the desires of such women,, little changed after the revolution for married women except in a few states where it became easier for women to obtain a divorce. According to Brinkley, after the revolution "there were few advances and some setbacks - including the loss of the right of widows to regain their dowries from their husbands' estates. The Revolution, in other words, did not really challenge, but actually confirmed and strengthened, the

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[325] Cott, *Public Vows*, 92.
[326] Marlene Stein Wortman, ed. *Women in American Law, From Colonial Times to the New Deal* (Holmes and Meier: New York, 1985), 13.
[327] Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation, A Concise History of the American People: Volume I: To 1877,* (McGraw Hill: New York, 2004), 134.

patriarchal legal system."[328]

The following article from the March 1851 edition of the *Lily* compares the position of a married woman, who, it states, cannot know virtue without being independent, to that of a slave on a plantation who cannot know justice without freedom. It discusses women as being "dependent on man's bounty, the slave of his lust, forbidden by a false sentiment to appear in public, except to minister to man's sensualism" and goes on to say:

> Woman, who has no voice in church or State, but must meekly and silently bow to whatever ecclesiastical or civil laws the Nero's of her times may see fit to bind up in books which she never sees, is helpless to remedy any evil. It is as vain to talk of women attaching "social penalties" to any crime in her sphere of action, as it is to talk of the slave on a southern plantation insisting upon it, that the same moral and civil code shall govern him and his Saxon master. Before the slave can know what justice is, he must be free himself. Even so with women, before she can know what virtue is, she must be upright and independent herself. What virtue we ask, has that woman, who can marry a man merely for a home and support?—or she who consents to live year after year with a beastly drunkard, a gross licentiate, a cruel tyrant, or an unprincipled scamp? Women can never exercise her legitimate influence on society, until she stands on the same platform with man; equal in social, civil and religious rights, and enjoying all the advantage he does, for a full development of body and soul.[329]

The following poem was printed in the 15 June, 1855 edition of the *Lily* by Mrs. P. Farmer and titled *A Dream.* This poem shows Bloomer's support of abolitionism, in addition to portraying the authors desire to use the comparison of a woman's position to that of a slave as a way to shed light on their disadvantages in society.

"I had ***a dream*** which was not all ***a dream***:"
The clear sun was shining, and all the stars
Did wander, brightening in the eternal space,

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[328] Brinkley, *Unfinished Nation*, 135.
[329] The *Lily*, March, 1851, vol. 3, no. 3, col. 1, 20.

Radiant and pauseless, and the lovely earth
Swung light and trembling in the moon-lit air;
Morn came and went—and came and brought no night,
And men undid their father's work, in these
The day's of God's millennium

It goes on to say:

and souls
Were warmed with unselfish songs of praise
That *woman* was *now* free. And then I saw
The laws of ages 'gainst *equality.* The statutes all, and constitutions false,
Were burnt as heresies. And oh! the shouts
When lawyers gathered round the blazing pile,
And on their faces *once* an *honest* look.
Happy now all that dwelt upon the earth,
For woman's worth was fully recognized.
A serene joy was all the world contained.

The poem then addresses the issue of slavery, stating that in the dream:

The blackest slave
Came free and welcome, and masters, penitent,
Heaped upon the burning pile slavery's chains…
Such was the world I saw in dreamy sleep,
When slavery's heavy chains were broken,
And all humanity acknowledged FREE. [330]

It is possible that her "dream" links the two groups as a way to portray the oppression each one faced, and also serves as an example of her use of extreme examples to get attention for women's rights.

A regular column in the *Lily,* titled "Equality of Rights to Women," discussed various issues that affected women. The one printed in the November, 1851 edition of the periodical began by examining how, almost two centuries previously, women in England

[330] Accessible Archives: *The Lily*: 1855-06-15.

were being condemned to the stake for the alleged crime of witchcraft. The article mentions that Sir Matthew Hale, the highest ranking judge in England at the time, was certain that witches existed.

> He said that, "there were such creatures as, he made no doubt, for the wisdom of all nations had provided laws, against such persons, which is an argument of their confidence of such a crime. And such hath been the judgment of this Kingdom as appears by that act of parliament which hath provided punishments proportionable to the quality of the offence." [331]

The author of the column declares the absurdity of that comment, and that while the belief in witches is no longer a societal obsession; the desire to subjugate women is still prevalent. According to the author:

> The key to his delusions—the preconceived opinions of more barbarous ages, blinded him to the realities of life, as they passed before him. Science and intelligence have corrected that particular error, and even women are not now brought within the category of such an affliction; but the same cause which supported that, still operate to the continuance of others is no respect less absurd…Like the devotees of witchcraft, its advocates can now urge that the wisdom of all hath so provided laws and customs. [332]

The article then examines what is happening in the mid-nineteenth century and states that at the time the American government was being formed, the states accepted either the common or the civil law out of necessity, and that the present laws have continued out of the 'dark ages'.

> Two centuries have not yet elapsed since the same common law gave the husband the power of controlling his wife by domestic chastisement in the same manner that a man is allowed to correct his children, and the civil law extended to him the same power in a more unlimited degree. Both these systems had derived their outlines and their general

[331] The *Lily*, November, 1851, vol. 3, no. 11, col. 1, 84.
[332] *Ibid*, 84.

> principles from barbarian darkness: and hence came female disabilities, and bondage in the social compact. Like the devotees of witchcraft, its advocates can now urge that the wisdom of all nations hath so provided laws and customs…The subordination of the wife has no place in natural or revealed law. [333]

The article suggests that by allowing such out-dated laws to continue, they leave women with a diminished feeling of self-respect, and that not all men want or desire a woman who subscribes to the present laws that subjugate women in marriage, and by doing so encourage her to behave as if she is a slave.[334]

> Make individuals behave themselves as slaves, rightfully so, both by the destinies of creation and the necessities of society, and they may still display great virtues, but they will act like slaves, no matter to how great an extent they indulged in freedom of action.
> I know that it is gravely taught in high places that woman's chief power and beauty exist in her concessions to the arrangement of her obedience. In the eyes of the master, such are always the principal charm of the slave, but it is a singular connection of the words "power" and "beauty" and such qualities must be of signal dignity, that exist only in servility. It is difficult to conceive how a man, whose tastes and habits have not been vitiated by education, can see less to admire in the concessions which come, of magnanimity, than in those which blindly follow slavish obedience. And I deny that all *men* are such grovelling savages, but they cannot realize female power and beauty, unless it is masked in the abjectness peculiar to the slave. Such an order of admiration must belong to those very small men, whose patent of nobility is limited, to playing the lord over their wives, and whose line of existence would terminate with the present generation, were there no women willing to be slaves; for none others could, or would become the mothers of such a race.[335]

The March, 1854 edition of the *Lily* published a speech that Elizabeth Cady Stanton gave to the New York Legislature which listed the legal disabilities that women continued to struggle with in nineteenth-century America. To make her point Stanton

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[333] *Ibid*, 84.
[334] *Ibid*, 84.
[335] The *Lily*, March, 15, 1854, vol. 6, no.6, col. 3, 42.

explained that "the wife who inherits no property holds about the same legal position that does the slave on the southern plantation. She can own nothing, sell nothing. She has no rights even to the wages she earns; her person, her time, her services are the property of another. She cannot testify in many cases against her husband."[336] Stanton went on to say that there is nothing that the wife can do to the husband where he would not be protected by the law, but that that is not the case for the wife. As she explained, "if she has a worthless husband, a confirmed drunkard, a villain or a vagrant, he has still all the rights of a man, a husband, and a father. Though the whole support of the family be thrown upon the wife, if the wages that she earns be paid to her by her employer, the husband can receive them again." She goes on to explain the importance of the new property law in the State of New York, and how it redeems women from their "lost condition". She observed that "she is no longer a legal nonentity. The property law, if fairly construed, will overturn the whole code relating to woman and property. The rights to property implies the right to buy and sell, to will and bequeath, and herein is the dawning of a civil existence for woman, for now the "femme covert" must have the right to make contracts."[337]

Here, Stanton is referring to the 1848 New York Property Act, which allowed a woman to keep any property she owned at the time of marriage as if she were a single female. The act stated, in part, "it shall be lawful for any married female to receive, by gift, grant, devise or bequest, from any person other than her husband and hold to her sole and separate use, as if she were a single female, real and personal property, and the rents,

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[336] *Ibid*, 42.
[337] The *Lily*, March, 15, 1854, vol. 6, no.6, col. 3, 42.

issues and profits thereof…"[338] Despite the obvious benefits to women, according to Kerber and De Hart in *Women's America*, "the statutes were narrowly interpreted by most courts, not only in New York but in other states that established similar legislation." For example, a married woman could rarely claim any earnings that she made within the family, if she sold eggs or butter from the family farm.[339]

The struggle for equality would continue. Francis Barry was another author who was an advocate for married woman's legal rights and made a direct comparison between marriage and slavery, in a letter written in June of 1855 and published in the July 15, 1855 edition of the *Lily* under the tile "Marriage is the Slavery of Woman." She said:

> In speaking of marriage, we, of course, speak of it as it *is*, and not of a system that *might* be called marriage. My first point, then, is (and which no advocate of Woman's Rights can dispute) that marriage as it is, is such an outrage upon justice and purity, so degrading to woman, so destructive to all humanity's highest interests, that a system worthy to be embraced and cherished must be so entirely different from it, as to deserve a different name.
> Marriage is the *slavery of woman.* Marriage does not differ, in any of its essential features, from chattel slavery. The slave's earnings belong to the master; the earnings of the wife belong to the husband. The right of another to claim one's earnings, constitutes one a slave. In this respect, the essential feature of slavery, the wife and the chattel slave, stand on a level. They may wear fine clothes and "fare sumptuously every day," but in both cases, the clothes they wear and the food they eat is the property of the master, and may be changed or withheld at his pleasure. If woman is endowed with one right more sacred than another, it is the right to her own children; but the wife nor the slave mother have no such right. In either case, the legal owner of the child, as well as the mother, may separate them at will. Either the master or the husband, in his conduct, may be manly and pure; but it is, in either case, simply because he is too good to exercise the power placed in his hands. If there is any difference between chattel slavery and the popular system of marriage, that difference is incidental and not essential.[340]

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[338] Kerber and De Hart, *Women's America*, 217.
[339] *Ibid*, 217.
[340] The *Lily*, July 15, 1855, vol. 7, no. 14, 108, as quoted from Russo and Kramarae, *Radical Women's*

Barry's letter does not waver in its conviction. By placing such power in the hands of a man, whether he be a slave master or a husband, she is saying that the laws are ultimately putting the wife at a man's mercy. If he happens to be a good and kind man, he should treat the slave with some level of respect and be a good master. Similar with the wife, if he is a good and kind man, if she is fortunate to be married to someone who possesses good character traits, it may not matter so much that her rights are limited. But if this is not the case, and she happens to be married to an individual with low values and of bad character, she would be at his mercy. The laws, for the most part, did little or nothing to protect the helpless slave, in the majority of southern states they could not even marry or have any claim to their own children. Any children born "belonged" to the slave master and separation by sale or gift was a reality for many.[341] In a similar fashion, numerous women in nineteenth-century America were beginning to feel, and vocalize, that the law did too little to protect them if they married, giving too much control and power to the husband. They too, had little legal rights to their own children.

M.A. Bronson wrote a passionate letter to the *Lily* in February 1855, titled "Women Need More Courage." This letter makes several references to women's legal and social situation being no better than that of slaves, but places the blame with women themselves, as she complains that they lack the necessary courage to do anything about their situation, and that it is up to them to make any necessary changes. The letter, in part, states:

Often, very often, while reflecting on the oppression of woman, and the

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Press, 74-75.
[341] Hartog, *Man and Wife*, 93.

> thousand and one evils that she suffers, have I, in the bitterness of my heart, exclaimed—"Half of these evils might be averted, yes, *overcome*—obliterated entirely from the dark catalogue of woman's wrongs, were not *women such cowards*." True, our condition, legally and socially—is not much better than that of slaves—yes, true, we may not control the money we earn, —true we have no legal right to the children we usher into the world mid sorrow and suffering—true, we occupy but a nominal place of authority at the head of the household—true, our children may early learn, that like them, commanded, denied and restrained—true, the fields of honest industry are mostly closed against us; or when permitted to enter and toil, our wages are paid, not according to the amount of work done, but according to the sex performing it—true, no stimulus is offered to us to become learned, useful, or great.[342]

The letter would go on to complain about how women had to pay taxes for schools and colleges, despite being prevented from attending the majority of them. In addition, it reflected how any thoughts that went past the idea of the "fireside" or the "nursery" were considered to be "unwomanly." She then discussed the difficulties involved for women when it comes to money, and explains that they are put in a position where often times they either have to plead for what they want or go without and acknowledge their own lack of rights.[343]

> She knows that her sex suffers great wrongs, but she has not the moral courage to avow it… She is a slave herself, and she is not quite ready to read the declaration of human rights, at every fire-side in the land. Tis easier to be the crouching, servile slave a little longer—besides, her chains are guided now, and perchance, if she barely protested against woman's oppression, she may not affect anything, and she may very likely have her gilded fetters exchanged for old rusty ones—such as dangle at the heels of the washer woman in her kitchen—and she prefers to wear the gilded chain, although it might drag her soul down to perdition.[344]

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[342] The *Lily,* February 01, 1855, vol. 7, no. 3, col. 2, 22.
[343] *Ibid*, 22.
[344] The *Lily,* February 01, 1855, vol. 7, no. 3, col. 2, 22.

Bronson writes how much she admires Fanny Fern's courage, reflecting, "where there are so many cowards, it is pleasant to find one little brave woman. We have one in Fanny Fern."[345] Fanny Fern, a pseudonym for writer Sara Willis Parton (1811-1872), was a popular nineteenth-century newspaper columnist, whose work often appeared in the *Lily*. She wrote a regular column for the *New York Ledger*, a weekly story paper, and was also the author of *Ruth Hall*, an autobiographical book that examines the poverty she was subjected to and her struggles to survive financially on her own as a journalist after the death of her husband. She is known as the first woman columnist in the United States who was paid to write a regular column in a "man's" New York paper, as opposed to writers such as Bloomer who wrote for female newspapers.[346] Her pen name was meant to hide her identity, but her real identity was quickly discovered. In her book she is disheartened by the lack of financial help she receives from any male relatives (who did little except advise her to re-marry), after the untimely death of her first husband. In her letter to the *Lily*, Bronson went on to say, "We shall see whether Fanny will be loved less, or her book lie unread for all this. There is no hint in Ruth Hall (Fanny's book) that Uncle Tom's cabin had gone through a great many editions in America, England, Scotland, and even in Germany, but to me, nevertheless, Ruth Hall is the next book of the kind to Uncle Tom's Cabin."[347]

Ruth Hall did go on to be widely read, becoming a best-selling novel, although

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[345] *Ibid*, 22.
[346] Russo and Kramarae, *Radical Women's Press*, 76.
[347] The *Lily,* February 01, 1855, vol. 7, no. 3, 22; Uncle Tom's Cabin was Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1851 best-selling novel that revealed the cruelty of the slave trade and went on to sell half a million copies by 1857; Smith Davies, *Women Who Changed the World* (Smith-Davies Publishing Company: London, 2006), 56.

at the time Fern received criticism from critics for speaking poorly of her relatives, and for speaking in an "unwomanly manner." According to Fern's biographer, she had learned a lesson through her experience as a widow, and facing financial hardship, and was therefore critical of "the social situation that put a woman at the mercy of a husband's financial bungling. At the very least, Fern notes, a woman should pay attention to what her husband is doing with their money."[348] This led Fern to champion the rights of women to become financially independent.

A letter from a reader, Swift, re-published in the *Lily* from Ohio newspaper The *Elyra Democrat*, also compares the severe legal disadvantage of married women in the State of Ohio to that of slaves. In Swift's words, "The laws of Ohio place married women nearly on a level with the slave women of the South, and not withstanding some men are better than the laws, the condition of many of the married women of Ohio, and the widows, reduced to poverty by the State is deplorable." The editor of the paper responded by saying: "We deny that any portion of the females of the United States are degraded by our laws. It is very easy to make assertions, but stern facts sometimes spoil the argument." The editor felt that unlike married women, slave women, "labor in the fields, are half-fed, and half-clothed, whipped, and sold like beasts of burden, are forbidden to read, and are compelled to submit to the personal indignities of a brutish master." [349] Swift goes on to argue that there are "stern facts to prove that not only a portion, but all the females of the United are degraded by our laws."[350] She then states that legally the

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[348] Joyce W. Warren, *Fanny Fern, An Independent Women* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, 1992), 70.
[349] The *Lily*, August, 01, 1856, vol. 8, no. 14, col. 2, 105.
[350] *Ibid*, 105.

husband is the master of the wife, and gives examples to support this statement, such as how a husband is often found guilty of a crime committed by his wife. This happened in an Ulster County, New York Court as the judge decided that "having authority over the wife's actions, the husband is alone responsible" thereby proving that the husband is master of the wife.[351] She also criticised the way a woman could be compelled to leave her home and children, if her husband decides this is what he wants, and the laws that often reduce women to poverty, such as the law that only gives the widow one third of her husband's property upon his death.[352]

While there were those who could see the validity of comparing a married woman to a slave, there were others that thought it ludicrous. For example, the editor of the *Elyra Democrat* saw slaves as people who were sold like "beasts of burden" while women in America, he felt, were very fortunate as "there is no nation upon earth where the females enjoy more exalted privileges in all that relates to their interest, social, moral and political, than in the United States."[353] He felt that where men had more rights, for example over property, it was in the best interests of both parties. He argued that "For public policy, and the individual good of both parties, the law gives the husband control and ownership of the property which they both possess. He controls it, but she receives equally with him, the benefits of it."[354] Swift believed that many women were unaware of their limited advantages. She highlighted how "the fact that many women do not know they are enslaved; shows the extent of their degradation, and that a long train of abuses

[351] The *Lily*, August, 01, 1856, vol. 8, no. 14, col. 1, 106.
[352] *Ibid*, 106.
[353] The *Lily*, August, 01, 1856, vol. 8, no. 14, col. 3, 105.
[354] The *Lily*, August, 01, 1856, vol. 8, no. 14, col. 1, 106.

and usurpations have completed the work, and has blinded them to a sense of justice and right."[355]

By using numerous examples of the comparison between married women and slaves throughout the pages of the *Lily*, Bloomer emphasized how desperate the need for change was, and proved, perhaps, that the laws governing nineteenth-century marriage were only acceptable if a women was lucky enough to be married to a man who was "too noble to exercise the authority vested in him by the law."[356]

The comparison of married women to slaves was used by Bloomer as an effective way to bring attention to both her journal and the state of married woman's rights. While the *Lily* would cease publication in 1856, legal rights for married women would still have a long way to go, and the use of the comparison would continue. For example, Anthony used it in her argument after being indicted for voting without being lawfully allowed to do so in 1873. She argued that based on the Fifteenth Amendment to the constitution, which stated that United States Citizens should not be robbed of the right to vote on "account of race, color or previous condition of servitude" that women, in fact, should be allowed to vote as they fit under the category of "previous condition of servitude."[357] As she explained:

> I will prove to you that the class of citizen for whom I now plead are, by all the principles of our government and many of the laws of the States, included under the term "previous condition of servitude." Consider first married women and their legal status. What is servitude? "The condition of a slave" What is a slave? "A person who is robbed of the proceeds of labor; a person who is subject to the will of another."

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[355] The *Lily*, August, 01, 1856, vol. 8, no. 14, col. 2, 106.
[356] The *Lily*, August, 01, 1856, vol. 8, no. 14, col. 1, 106.
[357] *Constitutional Argument*, Susan B. Anthony, From Ida H. Harper, *Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, Vol. II. (Bowen-Merrill: Indianapolis, IN, 1898).

> By the laws of Georgia, South Carolina and all the States of the South, the negro had no right to the custody and control of his person. He belonged to his master. If he were disobedient, the master had the right to use correction. If the negro did not like the correction and ran away, the master had the right to use coercion and bring him back. By the laws of almost every State in the Union today, North as well as South, the married woman has no right to the custody and control of her person. The wife belongs to the husband; and if she refuses correction he may use moderate correction, and if she do not like his moderate correction, and leave his "bed and board," the husband may use moderate correction to bring her back. The little word "moderate," you see, is the saving clause for the wife, and would doubtless be overstepped should her offended husband administer his correction with the "cat-o-nine-tails," or accomplish his coercion with blood-hounds."[358]

The comparison of married women to slaves was one that seemed to resonate strongly with numerous individuals, as it was frequently used throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth- century by women, and some men, when lamenting the lack of rights for married women in America. While some agreed with the analogy, and others thought it was ridiculous, nevertheless, it showed that the need for change was imminent. Bloomer's blatant use of it throughout the pages of the *Lily* illustrates that she was not afraid to go against societal norms in order to get attention for causes that she believed in–in this case bringing attention to the legal disadvantages facing married women. By using such a shocking but effective analogy, she ensured that the articles printed in the *Lily* would not be written in vain, and that people couldn't help but respond.

As numerous women became more vocal about wanting more legal rights once married, there were also those who were eager to escape an unworkable marriage. Divorce, despite being legal in some circumstances in nineteenth-century America, was

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[358] *Constitutional Argument*, Susan B. Anthony, From Ida H. Harper, *Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, Vol. II. (Bowen-Merrill: Indianapolis, IN, 1898).

not socially acceptable. Griffith writes that "popular opinion assumed that only adulterers divorced. Many believed that permitting divorce was the same as licensing free love. Divorce threatened the traditional family structure; if allowed, it might rend the fabric of society. Hence the hesitation with which it was treated."[359]

While American divorce laws in the antebellum period (1789-1860) varied widely from state to state, as a general rule divorce remained very difficult to obtain. Even if divorce was an option, many women had no choice but to stay in an unhappy marriage as they could not survive financially on their own.[360] Legal historian Hartog explained that:

> Every state had a law of marriage. Every state had its legal peculiarities. Some states allowed judicially ordered separation –known as first as divorces a mensa et thoro (from bed and board). Others did not. Every state had its own changing list of what would constitute valid grounds for divorce. Some allowed divorce after five years' desertion; others required a greater or a lesser period; some allowed no divorce for desertion at all. Every state had its own changing rules about what was marital property, about what managerial authority a wife could possess over marital resources, about what protections she had, if any, against a dissolute or impecunious husband. To know the law of marriage relevant to their marriage, spouses had to know the law of marriage in the state in which they lived. [361]

In New York, from the late eighteenth century through much of the twentieth, it was possible for a married couple to obtain an absolute divorce only on the grounds of adultery, provided certain other conditions were met.[362] For example—both parties had to

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[359] Elisabeth Griffith, *In Her Own Right, The Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton* (Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 1984), 101.
[360] Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property in Early America*, xv-xvi.
[361] Hartog, *Man and Wife in America*, 12.
[362] John Henry Hubbell, *Hubbell's Legal Directory for Lawyers and Business Men* (Hubbell Publishing Company, 1891), 426 and Norma Basch, *Framing American Divorce. From the Revolutionary Generation to the Victorians,* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 2001), 8.

be residents of the state when the offence occurred, or they had to have been married in the state.[363] As declared in the New York decree from 1787, the adulterous spouse was not allowed to re-marry, unless the spouse they were unfaithful to passed away.[364] Said Blake in *The Road to Reno*, "The bill provided that it should not be lawful for the party convicted of adultery "to remarry any person whatsoever."[365]

Separation, which seldom allowed for re-marriage,[366]was referred to as "separation from bed and board forever" or for "a limited time" and could be permitted for the following reasons:1.) "The cruel and inhuman treatment of the wife by the husband. 2.) For such conduct on the part of the husband towards his wife as may render it unsafe and improper for her to cohabit with him. 3). For the abandonment of the wife by the husband, and his refusal and neglect to provide for her".[367] For women, separation could benefit them more financially. According to Basch, "In New York, where legal separation was as an alternative to divorce, it tended to provide women with far more favorable financial terms than a complete divorce."[368] She explains that because the marriage was still formally in effect, it was more likely that the husband would still be bound by his traditional obligation of supporting his wife.[369]

There were also cases where a marriage could be considered void, and as stated in a *Lily* article these occurred only in very particular circumstances. For example, if:

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[363] Hubbell, *Legal Dictionary*, 426.
[364] Nelson Manfred Blake, *The Road to Reno: A History of Divorce in the United States* (Macmillan: New York, 1962), 65-66.
[365] *Ibid*, 65.
[366] Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movement in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (Harvester Wheatsheaf: New York and London, 1993), 15.
[367] The *Lily*, August, 1852, vol. 4, no. 2, col. 1-2, 69.
[368] Norma Basch, "Relief in the Premises: Divorce as a Woman's Remedy in New York and Indiana, 1815-1870" *Law and History Review*, vol. 8, no.1 (Spring, 1990), 10.
[369] *Ibid*, 10.

> Either of the parties had not attained the legal age of consent. Where a former husband or wife of one of the living parties is still living and the marriage with such former husband or wife is still in force. Where one of the parties was an idiot or lunatic. Where the consent of one of the parties was obtained by force or fraud. Where one of the parties was physically incapable of entering into the marriage state. [370]

The article further points out that a marriage could also be voided if one of the parties was sentenced to life in the state prison, even if they were subsequently pardoned; and that, in some states, wilfully leaving a partner for a period of over two years could invalidate a marriage. The article essentially argues that drunkenness should be considered grounds for divorce, an issue that the *Lily* would return to many times throughout its publication,-- despite that the majority of society did not support this belief. Says the author: "where is the drunkard that does not cruelly and inhumanly treat his wife?" And, "where is the confirmed drunkard that does not so conduct himself towards his wife as to render it unsafe and improper for her to live with him?" thus comparing the habits of drunkards to what was considered acceptable grounds for divorce.[371]

In *In the Eyes of the Law*, Basch makes reference to a husband who, in 1827, petitioned for a divorce after arriving home from a three year whaling voyage to find his wife living with another man and their two children. He was granted a divorce by the court and released of all financial obligations.[372] She also mentions a wife who, in 1835, petitioned the court for separation from bed and board as she was being ill-treated. Basch describes how "Her husband, John, who did not appear, had no property, was of "idle and

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[370] The *Lily*, August, 1852, vol. 4, no. 2, col. 1-2, 69.
[371]The *Lily*, August, 1852, vol. 4, no.2, col. 1-2, p. 69.
[372] Basch, *In the Eyes of the Law*, 92.

dissipated habits," and was completely incapable of contributing to her maintenance. The master recommended that Elizabeth be entitled to her own future earnings and property for the support and education of their only child, of whom she should have custody in order "to preserve it from his pernicious example."[373] While the court allowed Elizabeth to free her-self from her common law disabilities, she was not allowed to ever re-marry and was expected to remain "chaste."[374]

In the April 1850 *Lily*, Stanton, in an article titled "Divorce,"- addressed a bill that was before the New York Legislature. If passed, it would grant a woman a divorce based on the grounds of drunkenness. In the article, titled "Divorce," Stanton said, in part, that:

> I see that there is a bill before the Legislature providing some new doors through which unhappy prisoners may escape from the bonds of an ill assorted marriage. Among other things, drunkenness is made a ground for divorce. I hope that bill may pass. Were public sentiment right on this question of divorce, I think too much of woman's instinctive love of what is true, good, and beautiful, to believe that she would willingly come into daily contact, with a coarse, beastly, disgusting Drunkard, and consent to be the partner of his misery and rage through a long weary life. The Legislature, so far from placing any barrier in the way of woman wishing to leave a drunkard husband, ought to pass laws, compelling her to do so. As the state has to provide homes for idiots, it certainly has a right to say how many there shall be. The Spartans had some good laws, in relation to marriage and children. Would that we of the nineteenth century had the humility to believe that lessons of wisdom might be drawn from the past. If Legislators think they have the right to regulate marriage in any particulars, would it not be better to exercise their legislative talent, on those without the "charmed circle?" Let them say who shall and who shall not be legally married. Instead of compelling a woman by law, to live with a Drunkard, they ought to pass laws forbidding Drunkards to marry. If, as

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[373] Bill of complaints, *Richard Jacob v. Jane Jacob*, April 1834, in De Peyster Chancery Papers, NYHS as quoted in Basch, *In the Eyes of the Law*, 93.

[374] Norma Basch, "Invisible Women: The Legal Fiction of Marital Unity in Nineteenth-Century America", *Feminist Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Summer, 1979), 93.

> at present, all can freely and *thoughtlessly* enter into the married stated, they should not be allowed to come as freely and *thoughtfully* out again.[375]

By printing material that discussed the issue of divorce in such a frank manner within the pages of the *Lily,* Bloomer helped bring awareness to the importance of legislatures that imposed laws that worked in tandem with the realities of life (where ending a marriage was sometimes the only option), not a legislature that imposed unrealistic constraints on those unfortunate women who ended up stuck in miserable marriages. Banner explains Stanton's views on divorce, which were that "the marriage state was to be improved first by allowing the easy termination of unsuccessful unions."[376] In nineteenth-century America the granting of a divorce was not something that was taken lightly, and such was often dependent on the whims of the individual judge overseeing the case. A judge could be sympathetic, or alternatively decide that family and the patriarch came before all else. This could be the case, even if the woman was battered or her husband was a serial cheater.[377] As explained by McMillen:

> Historians have found cases of severe physical abuse that failed to win anyone's sympathy…Success in divorce proceedings often depended less on the strength of the evidence than on a person's economic status and family connections. Few women had the resources, knowledge, or time to manoeuver the complicated channels of divorce on their own. Couples in unhappy marriages often found other ways to cope by leading separate lives.[378]

In April 1852, Stanton and woman's rights activist, Susan B. Anthony, formed

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[375] The *Lily*, April, 1850, vol. 2, no. 4, col. 3, 31.
[376] Banner, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 84.
[377] Sally G. McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement* (Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 2008), 23.
[378] *Ibid*, 23.

their own temperance organization, the New York State Women's Temperance Society, with Amelia Bloomer acting as the corresponding secretary. They did this as the longstanding New York temperance organization, the Daughters of Temperance, was too conservative for their taste and the other temperance organizations of the period did not permit female members. Anthony worked as one of the societies travelling agents, a role that Stanton could not do as she had just given birth to her fifth child and was unable to travel far from Seneca Falls. She therefore presided over the organization by proxy.[379]

In September 1852 the *Lily* published a letter in which Anthony passionately described her controversial belief that divorce should be an option for a woman married to a "confirmed" drunkard. She said, in part:

> By the way, Mrs. Bloomer, the temperance newspapers are trying to work themselves and their leaders into the belief that the position which we, as a temperance society, take, "that Confirmed Drunkenness is a just ground of Divorce," is all wrong and calculated to produce much evil in society. Now I am a firm believer in the doctrine which man is continually preaching, that woman's influence over him is all powerful; hence I argue that for man to know, that his pure minded and virtuous wife, would, should he become a confirmed Drunkard, assuredly leave him, and take with her the property and children, it would prove a powerful incentive to a correct, consistent life. As public sentiment and the laws now are, the vilest wretch of a husband knows that his wife will submit to live on in his companionship, rather than forsake him, and by so doing subject herself to the world's cold charity, and be robbed of her home and her children. Men may prate on, but we women are beginning to know that the life and happiness of a woman is of equal value with that of a man; and that for a woman to sacrifice her health, happiness and perchance her earthly existence in the hope of reclaiming a drunken, sensualized man, avails but little. In nine cases out of ten, if the man *ever* reforms, it is not until after the wife sinks into an untimely grave; or if not in her *grave*, is physically and mentally unnerved, and unfitted for any earthly enjoyment….[380]

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[379] Ellen Carol DuBois, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton Susan B. Anthony, Correspondence, Writings, Speeches* (Schocken Books: New York, 1981), 36.
[380] The *Lily*, September, 1852, vol. 4, no. 9, col. 2. 74.

Although Stanton would continue to rally for more lenient divorce laws, and despite letters such as this, she still had reservations when speaking about divorce. Stanton wrote to Anthony in 1853 "I do not know if the world is quite willing or ready to discuss the question of marriage [but] I feel in my innermost…that it in vain to look for the elevation of woman as long as she is degraded in marriage."[381] "Although she agreed with Stanton, Anthony felt that it was "premature" to talk about divorce as a remedy for women's ills as it would scare potential converts away from the women's rights movement."[382] Both Stanton and Antony were afraid that if they came across as being too radical, that they might not be taken seriously and that they could lose the attention of those newly interested in the issue of woman's rights.

Despite the controversy surrounding divorce, Stanton would persevere, and Bloomer would continue to support changes to the present rigid divorce laws and publish information about such in the *Lily*. Unable to attend the national women's rights meeting in 1854 in Philadelphia, Stanton voiced her concerns about a woman's subordinate status to the first meeting of the New York association at a state legislation session. Griffith said:

> in her address Stanton described the legal position of women in American society—as woman, wife, widow, and mother. Women were "persons," Stanton asserted, "native, free-born citizens, property-holders, taxpayers." Yet they were denied the right to vote, to hold office, to be tried by peers, to equal treatment under the criminal code. Women as wives, Stanton continued, asked that the marriage contract be subject to the laws of civil contracts, outlining its obligations and allowing suits to break it; she even wanted to limit the age of

[381] Griffith, *In Her Own Right*, 102.
[382] *Ibid*, 102.

> contracting parties. Once married, wives had to be protected from the abuse and insolvency of husbands, so married women must have the right to earn and inherit money; voting would enable women to protect this newly held property. Women as widows needed fair inheritance and tax laws and the right to serve as their husbands' executors. Women as mothers needed to share in the custody of their children, whom fathers could apprentice or bond will to other parties without the consent of the mother. Women also needed education to train their children and protection against habitual drunkards[383].

By unabashedly discussing divorce, as well as other issues that were pertinent to women's rights throughout the pages of the *Lily*, Bloomer would often be criticized by "gentlemen readers." She was thought to be too outspoken for the female sex. An article printed in the April 1850 edition and titled "Woman's Rights," gives an example of this, and shows how she was not afraid to address those who were against the material she produced. It stated, in part:

> Our readers must bear in mind that the *Lily* is a woman's paper, and one of its objects as stated in our prospectus is, *to open a medium through which woman's thoughts and aspirations might be developed.* Gentlemen have no reason to complain if women avail themselves of this medium, and here dare utter aloud their thoughts, and protest against the wrongs and grievances which have been so long heaped upon their sex. [384]

New York *Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, among others, was against making any changes to the existing laws that governed the sanctuary of marriage. Greeley's opinion on marriage and divorce was published in an editorial in *The Tribune* on March 1st, 1860, and shows a discussion between him and the more liberal minded Robert Dale Owen. Greeley states, in part:

> That many persons are badly mated it's true; but that is not the law's

[383] *Ibid*, 82-83.
[384] The *Lily*, April, 1850, vol. 2, no. 4, col. 1, 30.

> fault. The law of our State [New York] says plainly to all the unmarried, "Be very careful how you marry; for a mistake in this regard is irrevocable. The law does not constrain you to marry, does not hurry you to marry, but bids you be first *sure* that you know intimately and love devotedly the person with whom you from this irrevocable union. We rectify no mistakes; it rests with you not to make any. If you do, bear the penalty as you ought, and do not seek to transfer it to the shoulders of the community."[385]

While Greeley was supportive of various issues that elevated the status of women, he was adamant about not allowing divorce; he felt that if a couple married, that they were married for life. He believed that the law was not intended to fix personal mistakes. It was up to individuals to be sure about what they were getting into, and if they made a mistake, it was one they would have to live with. This was a stance that did not sit well with various women's rights activists, as it did nothing to protect a woman whose husband appeared to be something he wasn't before he was married. In addition, if a married woman chose to separate from an intolerable husband, and they had children, she had also to think about their fate. If she was able to leave, the law, at this time, always gave full custody rights to the father. Griffith goes so far as to suggest that "husbands legally owned wives, body, soul, children, and clothing."[386] A letter to the *Lily* from Hannah C. Longstreth in Dayton, Ohio on June, 15, 1855 shows the realities of how these laws affected certain women:

> I hear but little said on the subject of "Woman's Rights," but I need not go out of my own door-yard to know of Woman's wrongs. I often hear a neighbor of mine, a man of ungovernable passions, abusing his wife, as far as profane language and threats of violence in a way of kicking her out of the house, throwing dishes and articles of furniture at her,

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[385] Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life*, (J.B. Ford and Company Printing House Square, New York, 1868; Reprinted Mnemosyne Publishing Co. Inc.: Miami, Florida, 1969), 571.
[386] Griffith, *In Her Own Right*, 102.

> can go towards abusing her. They have one child, and were it not for this, she would leave him, and get her living by her needle, free from his continual complaints and insulting language. But, alas! She knows the law would, in case of separation, give the child to his brutal father, and for this reason she suffers on.[387]

Divorce would continue to be an issue of contention throughout the nineteenth century, with divorce laws changing from state to state. By 1861, in New York and some other states, women were able to sue for a divorce in their own names, with the cost coming out the husband's estate. This was different from the majority of the states, where the woman had to sue for divorce in someone else's name, as she often had no way to pay for the costs.[388] By 1880 onwards the rules gradually became more flexible and the number of divorces being granted jumped significantly. In 1880 there was one divorce issued for every twenty-one marriages; by 1916 this went up to one in nine, with women requesting the majority of them.[389]

Both a married woman's lack of legal rights and the right to divorce were pivotal elements of the first women's rights movement of the nineteenth century. Bloomer's controversial and unabashed discussions of these issues throughout the pages of The *Lily*, whether it was by comparing a married woman's rights to that of a slave, or frankly discussing her lack of child custody rights, were instrumental in bringing the necessary awareness to create change.

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[387] The *Lily*, June 15, 1855, vol. 7, no. 12, 90, as quoted in Russo and Kramarae, *Radical Women's Press*, 79.
[388] "Elizabeth Cady Stanton on Behalf of the Divorce Bill, (1861)," in Wortman, *Women in American Law*, 174.
[389] Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation, A Concise History of the American People, The Unfinished Nation, Volume II: From 1865*, Fourth Edition (Columbia University and McGraw Hill: New York, 2004), 563.

Conclusion

The *Lily* began publication at a crucial time, and played a pivotal role in the struggle for women's equality, helping women achieve an important step towards equality. This was especially significant in mid-nineteenth century America as women's options were very limited and a growing number were searching for avenues to voice their frustrations. While the periodical started out small, it would soon grow in popularity, reaching a national circulation of over 6,000 by 1854 with a growing influence among readers and their family members, friends and neighbours.

Editor Bloomer, with the supporting influence of Stanton and others, had the courage to push for women to have a voice and be heard, and she was not afraid of courting controversy; in fact, she seemed to welcome it. This, despite the opposition that came from women who thought they had all the rights they needed, as well as men by who did not want the existing, patriarchal, social order to be doubted. Bloomer proved herself a trail-blazer, preparing the way for the other reformers and journals that would follow.

It is clear that the *Lily* achieved a variety of important things for women throughout its six-year publication period, and influenced the burgeoning women's rights movement in a number of different ways. It was especially successful after it moved from focusing solely on temperance to looking at the bigger picture of women's rights, with

Bloomer quickly realizing that it was almost impossible to address one issue without looking at the other. She did this despite losing the support of various temperance supporters, and subscribers, who felt that the whole notion of women's rights was too radical. In addition, she provided a forum through the *Lily* where women could showcase their work as writers and editors. The *Lily* also brought women together from across the country in their common quest to learn more about women's rights, some for the first time. By doing this, the journal gave many a much needed sense of community—which resulted in a collective voice about almost all matters that were of concern to women in nineteenth-century America.

The *Lily* helped give supporters the encouragement many of them needed to push further for a legal identity of their own, one independent from that of wife and mother. Bloomer's strategic use of extreme and controversial examples helped the journal get some much needed attention that would go a long way in helping the women's rights cause. Bloomer's deliberate method of startling and affronting the readers of the *Lily* and not being afraid to incite controversy played a vital role in building the reputation it would gain as a forward thinking journal.

The *Lily*'s initial start as a temperance journal was important in helping Bloomer succeed as she delved into the subject of women's rights. The methods used in temperance literature, in particular the use of extreme examples to garner attention towards the horrific things that could occur after even a moderate consumption of alcohol as a way to deter men and women from drinking, served as a stepping stone in getting the attention needed to create the desire for change with regards to women's rights.

Bloomer's journal paved the way for similar women's rights journals that would follow in its footsteps, just as the endorsement of the Bloomer costume set the wheels in motion for the dress reform movement that would continue into the twentieth century. Similarly, her frequent use of the comparison between married women and slaves brought significant attention to the unjust laws that married women were subjected to in nineteenth-century America whilst at the same time advocating divorce for those individuals who found themselves in an unworkable union.

The method of using controversy as a way to garner interest for women's rights has been used up to today, in varying ways: for example, the 1960s female activists who pushed their way into all-male bars, restaurants and clubs as a way to protest against assumptions of "man's world/woman's place"; or the "bra-burners" who protested against the commercialization of beauty when they picketed the 1968 Miss America contest.[390] Ultimately, these events did not always have the desired effect. Similar to what happened with the Bloomer controversy, the clothing itself became the issue. The controversy created in both instances arguably took on more importance than the attention activists hoped to bring to woman's rights.[391] What these events and people all have in common is that they garnered attention for their causes by radicalizing what they said or did. People had no choice but to pay attention. Bloomer would be one of the first to use this method for her causes. Summing up the significance of the journal succinctly she once said later in her life, "The *Lily* was the first paper published and devoted to the interests of women, and, so far as I know, the first one owned, edited, and published by a

[390] Kerber and De Hart, *Women's America*, 576.
[391] Coon, *Hear Me*, 35.

woman."[392]

The Bloomers decided to move to Council Bluffs, Iowa in January, 1855, after Mr. Bloomer sold his interest in the *Western Home Visitor* to his partner.[393] After serving as editor for six years (1848 to 1854), Amelia Bloomer would sell the *Lily* and its subscription list to Mary Birdsall of Richmond, Indiana, partly because Council Bluffs was hundreds of miles away from a railroad and did not have the facilities to print and mail a paper with such a large subscription list, making continuing as editor impractical.[394] As the *Lily* reported, "Mrs. Bloomer, on account of her intended removal to the 'Far West', in a few months, has committed the interests of the *Lily* to Mrs. Mary B. Birdsall, conductor of the Ladies Department of the *Indiana Farmer*, by whom it will hereafter be published in the same form, and with the same general character as hitherto."[395]

The December 15, 1854 edition of the *Lily* explained this changeover with an article titled "A Change but not A Farewell."

> We intimated in our last number that some change was to take place in the publication of the *Lily*, and we now have the pleasure of announcing that instead of it being discontinued, as we then feared it might be, we have succeeded in making a transfer of it Mary B. Birdsall, of Richmond, Indiana, to whom its publication will be continued. Circumstances make it necessary that we should retire from its charge, but in doing so we are unwilling that our readers should be deprived of the useful information and instruction which *The Lily* chronicles for their benefit…Mrs. B is sound on the two great questions discussed in the Lily—Temperance and Woman's Rights—(questions which are really inseparable)—and they will be ably discussed in and

[392] Gattey, *Bloomer Girls*, 39.
[393] Bloomer, *Life*, 186.
[394] Russo and Kramarae, *Radical Women's Press*, 12; Bloomer, *Life*, 198.
[395] The *Lily*, December 15, 1851, vol. 6, col. 2, no. 28, 181.

defended by her in its future numbers.[396]

For the first year, Bloomer remained as corresponding editor. According to Russo and "the acknowledgements in the *Lily* indicate that after Bloomer's editorship she and many of the earlier contributors continued sending material, but the journal seemed to retreat to a more exclusive focus on temperance, with less on women's rights." Nevertheless, in 1855, it would continue to publish some material that was relevant to women's rights issues and in particular issues that were of concern to married women, such as laws that were under consideration to "protect" married women as well as continuing to publish articles such as "Mental Blindness" that addressed the belief by some that perfect submission on the part of the wife would secure domestic happiness. An article printed in the June 1, 1855 edition titled "The Marriage Institution" addressed the attention that was being given to the marriage institution in mid-nineteenth-century America, in addition to examining how important a woman's position in marriage was to her general position in society. The article said, in part:

> It is not surprising in this day of reforms that the marriage institution should undergo severe scrutiny. Twere folly to talk of woman's redemption from her present slavish position in society, without advocating some change here, for the marital laws are the ground work of very much of her abasement. That the wife's legal existence is merged in the husband is wrong, because this violates a God ordained law of her being—Woman is a unit, not a fraction…To wrest from the wife the avails of her labour, and to secure it all in the legal right of her husband, is wrong, because these laws violate a principle of natural justice—the laborer having an undeniable right to the rewards of his or her own industry. That their mutual children, ushered into the world by the mother, in much sorrow and suffering, are given in law to the father, is clearly wrong, because these laws violate a sacred higher law written by the finger of Deity in her maternal nature. All that is wrong in the marriage relation should be removed, but would that reform, or recalled

[396] *Ibid*, 181.

reform, might stop here. [397]

While there were times throughout Bloomer's six years' tenure as editor when she hinted about the possibility of ceasing publication, as we know, this would not happen under her reign. In the December 1850 edition, in an article titled "A Few Words with Our Readers," Bloomer admitted that "We have several times taken up our pen to bid you adieu, but ere the word was traced, Mrs. Swisshelm's warning, "don't you do it Mrs. Bloomer—if you do, you will rue it–mind", has rung in our ears and our pen has refused to trace the "goodbye" which trembled on our lips." She emphasized how the support from readers and words of encouragement served as an inspiration to keep the *Lily* in circulation. She then went on to say:

> Our little sheet has found a welcome in many circles where no other temperance paper would be tolerated, and thus aroused the attention of many who were indifferent as to the great evils of intemperance, and while our opinions, and those of our correspondents on the so called question of "woman's rights" may have been distasteful to some, we know that they have waked an echo in many hearts, and been an incentive to higher purposes, and nobler resolves.[398]

Ultimately, the paper would cease publication altogether in 1856, with the last issue being published on 15 December of that year. There was no warning that this was to be the last issue, in fact, readers were led to believe that the paper would be carrying on as per usual with the *Lily* stating, "in 1857, with your generous aid, friendly patrons, we expect to start with fair sail, keep before the wind with gallant speed, and close the journey with the year in nicest, fairest, trim."[399] The last issue also reported that:

Signs of progress and success greatly encourage us to redouble our

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[397] The *Lily*, June 01, 1855, vol. 7, col. 2, no. 11, 82.
[398] The *Lily*, December, 1850, vol. 2, col. 1, no. 12, 93.
[399] The *Lily*, December 15, 1856, vol. 8, col. 3, no. 24, 156.

> efforts. Already does a stricter and a more comprehensive idea of Liberty enlighten the public mind; it is permeating our literature; some of its brightest plumes have been well earned and worn by women. They are accorded to her without scruple; she wears them as her right. Woman's education and mental discipline are coming out of the dark depths, and she is weaving an armor that will put to shame all doubts of her ability and show how the world has suffered from her disfranchised, uneducated condition. In some of the states good progress has been made towards giving her, her property, her earnings, and her children! At least progress so far that men begin to ask is it right to take them from her.[400]

This shows that Birdsall was confident about the past and potential future success of the *Lily;* she was perhaps inspired by the positive developments that had been made thus far with regards to women's rights, despite her unexpected decision to cease publication of the paper after this issue. According to Amelia Bloomer "Mrs. Birdsall published it for two or three years and then suffered it to go down, from what cause I never knew."[401]

While the *Lily* would not be published after 1856, it is well known that women's rights still had a long way to go. The passage of married women's property laws were a step in the right direction, but the reality was that courts applied them only sparingly. While a married woman was said to be able to control her own earnings after 1860, New York judges decided that the money a woman earned from a household business, such as selling farm produce or renting out rooms, still belonged to her husband. Also, unless a husband and a wife had a prior agreement, any money a wife made in a job outside the home, such as a factory, still belonged to her husband.[402] Feminists could do little to

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[400] The *Lily*, December 15, 1856, vol. 8, col. 2, no. 24, 56.
[401] Bloomer, *Life,* 187.
[402] Basch, "Invisible Women", 321.

ensure that the laws were followed more stringently as the property acts were political and not legal goals, and activists therefore quickly moved on to trying to secure the vote. Women trained in law were few and far between, and there were no women in the legislature or on the bench, which meant that statutes continued to be written, as well as interpreted, exclusively by men.[403]

In 1890, many years after the last edition of the *Lily* was published, Bloomer reflected on the life of the journal, emphasizing the impact that she rightly felt it had on society. She said:

> But this much is true, it did not die of 'fun poked at it.' It had long outlived fun and ridicule and was highly respected and appreciated by its thousands of readers. It had done its work, it had scattered seed that had sprung up borne fruit a thousandfold. Its work can never die. You say rightly that the *Lily* was the pioneer journal in the northwest for Woman's enfranchisement. Other journals have taken its place, and the movement has gone steadily forward and near its final triumph.[404]

While it is evident that there was still much work to be done for women's rights, Bloomer's creation of a journal where women's equality and social reform issues could be discussed and shared in a written form was momentous. The way the *Lily* helped create and strengthen women's political voice, through her use of the extreme and controversial, led to the development of the first women's rights movement of the nineteenth-century.

It was while advocating for temperance that Amelia Bloomer and many women would gain the confidence to fight for their own rights. As they spread awareness about

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[403] *Ibid*, 355.
[404] Bloomer, *Life*, 187-188.

the dangers of an intemperate society, they came to realize the disadvantages women faced. In nineteenth-century America, temperance was a cause that many women felt compelled to advocate for, which increased their appreciation of the influence they wielded; similar to those involved in the abolition movement. Bloomer's initial use of the *Lily* as a temperance paper caused her to realize how interconnected it was with women's rights, as it highlighted, for example, the vulnerabilities of a woman married to a drunkard.

Through her endorsement of the Bloomer costume, she would shed light on the issue of dress reform and the constraints many women were facing because of their clothing, such as the real health concerns that came with the traditional style of dress, while bringing worldwide attention to both herself, and the periodical. Finally, through her use of the comparison between married women and slaves, she would bring necessary awareness to the legal disadvantages facing married women.

The three main points in this thesis are all interconnected, as they emphasize the various ways that women felt disadvantaged and held back in society. Furthermore, they also all represent the strength and foresight of women, such as Bloomer and Stanton, who astutely saw these disadvantages, but were not afraid to draw attention to them as a way to create change. They used the *Lily* as their weapon, and what a great one it was.

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