ABSTRACT

“ON THE BRINK OF A PRECIPICE”: WOMEN, MEN, AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NOVELS OF CATHARINE MARIA SEDGWICK

by Beth E. Avila

This thesis uses the novels of Catharine Maria Sedgwick, a popular author in the United States in the early nineteenth century, to consider how middle-class women from New England thought about marital options. Female writers used the relatively new genre of the novel to challenge conventional social practices and examine alternative methods of interacting with one another. This study explores Sedgwick’s arguments surrounding unsuccessful relationships, single women, and successful relationships in an effort to demonstrate what certain women were thinking regarding romantic relationships in the nineteenth century.

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Introduction

In the novels of Catharine Maria Sedgwick, several of the young female characters find themselves, literally or metaphorically, on the brink of a precipice. In Sedgwick's first novel, *A New-England Tale* (1822), the hero, Mr. Lloyd, worries that the heroine, Jane, will make the mistake of choosing to marry the villain, Edward Erskine. As the narrator explains Mr. Lloyd's dilemma, "[H]e felt as if she was on the brink of a precipice, and he had no right to warn her of the danger…Mr. Lloyd hoped—believed that Jane would not marry Edward Erskine; but he did not allow enough for the inexperience of youth, for the liability of a young lady of seventeen to fall in love; for the faith that hopes all things, and believes all things—it wishes to believe."[1] In this scene, Mr. Lloyd sees Jane as standing in a precarious position where she wavers between settling for an undesirable suitor and remaining free to marry a more desirable one. In her six novels, published between 1820 and 1860 across the United States and in England, Sedgwick often used the metaphor of a precipice to describe a romantic decision that could have disastrous results. In this case, Mr. Lloyd feels that he cannot warn Jane of the danger, but Sedgwick herself was not so reserved in giving romantic advice.

Like other novelists in the first half of the nineteenth century, Sedgwick believed that she could warn young readers away from romantic and social dangers. Gerald Roscoe, the hero of Sedgwick's novel *Clarence* (1830), refers in a letter to a similar situation: "I cannot look on, and see a creature so young, so innocent, and so lovely, on the brink of a precipice, and not stretch out my arm to rescue her from destruction."[2] Sedgwick's attitude more closely mirrored Roscoe's than Mr. Lloyd's, as she attempted to rescue her young readers from the making potentially destructive matrimonial decisions. In this manner, popular authors were able to reach a wide audience and in doing so advise young readers on romantic entanglements by providing moral guides in the form of fictional characters. Based on the reviews of Sedgwick's work, she was an extremely popular author. In her 1838 review "Miss Sedgwick's Works," Harriet Martineau, a British author, explains that she bypassed Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper in her search for "a thorough-bred popular American writer" and instead chose Sedgwick

[1] Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *A New-England Tale; or, Sketches of New-England Character and Manners,* ed. Victoria Clements (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 76.
[2] Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Clarence; or, A Tale of Our Own Times* (Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1830): 1:234, Sabine Americana 1500-1926, http://galenet.galegroup.com (accessed August 25, 2009).

because "[s]he is the most popular writer, we believe, in the United States. Her later works have met the national mind, and warmed the national heart…she is thoroughly American in her principles, her intellectual and moral associations, and in her more recent productions."[3] In addition to demonstrating the widespread popularity of Sedgwick's work, Martineau's review also indicates the transatlantic conversation that was taking place among nineteenth-century authors about the contents and origins of particular pieces of fiction.

One of the concerns regarding contents of fiction involved a shift that was occurring in nineteenth-century romantic relations. In *Between Women*, Sharon Marcus explains that novels which revolved around companionate marriage "assumed that parents could no longer legitimately choose husbands for their daughters."[4] Formerly, a woman would not be found on the brink of a precipice because her parents would choose a husband for her, in the best interests of the family, and there would be no danger of her making a poor decision on her own. As changes took place in the Anglo-American institutions of marriage and family, many women gained the agency to choose their husbands, which led to the possibility of tumbling over a precipice as the result of a poor decision.

In order to engage in a discussion of what exactly constituted a poor decision, women turned to novels, which Cathy Davidson states, due to their popularity "became a form of education, especially for women."[5] As women, they had few options available for making their voices heard, and so they chose to argue using the relatively new genre of the novel, where they could speak to a wide audience and ostensibly focus on issues that were socially acceptable for women while actually engaging in a much broader social commentary. In *Novel Relations*, Ruth Perry asserts that literary examples should not be taken as examples of lifelike or "realistic" situations, and she adds, "But I do think they represent the foci – the obsessions – of the culture, and that in their issues one can see the working out of the particular problems facing this society at that time. For literature is one way to think about life, to cope with problems that have no

[3] H. M. [Harriet Martineau], "Miss Sedgwick's Works," *The Westminster Review* (October 1838): 42-65, quoted in *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives,* ed. Lucinda L. Damon-Bach and Victoria Clements (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 155.
[4] Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 85.
[5] Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 10.

solution."[6] Novels presented a method for exploring problems, examining potential scenarios, and if necessary, challenging existing systems. They cannot provide glimpses into the lives of actual nineteenth-century individuals, but they can convey the issues that individuals in the nineteenth century were attempting to work out. According to Sedgwick in the preface to her novel *Redwood* (1824), "It is the peculiar province of that department [of fictitious narratives] to denote the passing character and manners of the present time and place."[7] By her own admission, Sedgwick was attempting to illustrate the character of the times. She was not trying to draw accurate illustrations of real people, but instead to convey the character of nineteenth-century New England, which included social, political, and individual struggles. In *Learning to Stand and Speak*, Mary Kelley has stated that many of the women writing during the early nineteenth century believed that authors could use the past to shape the present by depicting characters that their readers could use as models for their behavior.[8] During this time, literature served a dual purpose of providing entertainment and moral guidelines for readers.[9] Novelists could imagine fictional scenarios and the potential consequences of various social decisions, including matrimonial options. At the same time, readers could obtain advice on how to make these decisions, guided by the novelists.

But the precipice represents more than just the misfortunes of a poorly chosen marriage partner. By rejecting certain suitors, or walking away from certain precipices, Sedgwick's heroines also refuse to fall into the patterns of traditional patriarchal society. In *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy*, Cindy Weinstein describes a paradigm shift, in which sentimental fiction interrogated and reconfigured what constituted the family, that was occurring in nineteenth-century America. She explains, "Although sentimental fictions longingly look back to a time when families were understood as consanguineous units, novel after novel is engaged in ridding itself of the paternalism of consanguinity by replacing it with a family that is based on affection and organized according to a paradigm of contract, by which I mean that individual family members have rights that must be guaranteed and protected and that these rights increasingly

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[6] Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5.
[7] Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Redwood; A Tale* (New York: Garrett Press, Inc., 1969), vii.
[8] Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 230.
[9] Mary Kelley, "Introduction" in Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* edited by Mary Kelley (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1987), xiii.

come to be understood in affective terms."[10] As one of the novelists who wrote during this shift from consanguinity to contract, Sedgwick used the relationships among individual characters to explore possible redefinitions of the paternal family structure, and by extension, the gender hierarchy, which was being questioned and reinscribed onto the capitalist society of nineteenth-century America. Despite the rhetoric of individuality and liberty found in the American Revolution, many of power structures were being reinstituted in similar forms with different justifications for the same hierarchies. According to Perry, "In addition to all the other crucial purposes that literary critics have ascribed to the eighteenth-century novel in recent years, I believe it functioned to explore and work through the changing kinship arrangements which regulated domestic life and intergenerational relationships in a world rapidly being transformed by market forces, urban anonymity, and the spread of literacy."[11] Although Perry is concerned with British literature, her statement is just as applicable to America after the Revolution, which was also being transformed, perhaps to an even greater extent, by these same forces. The newly created United States was based on different political and economic principles than its predecessors, and these changes impacted social institutions, altering how people thought of themselves, their families, and their matrimonial options. Perry traces the same shift as Weinsten, away from an emphasis on consanguineal or biological family and toward conjugal ties chosen through marriage.[12] This shift undermined patriarchal authority and allowed for a redefinition in which women could gain autonomy within socially acceptable parameters.

Sedgwick, along with other female authors in the nineteenth century, saw the opportunity to reshape these power hierarchies. Weinstein explains the broader pattern: "Not only are sentimental fictions similarly absorbed in this project of redefinition [of the family,] but the novels are intimately connected to the larger cultural conversation about domestic reform. Although we may be accustomed to thinking about these novels as conservative exempla of bourgeois ideology, many of them fiercely challenge the patriarchal regime of the biological family[.]"[13] Cathy Davidson echoes this idea when she raises the issue that many people were hostile to novels when the genre first appeared because novels were a method of calling into

[10] Cindy Weinstein, *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9.
[11] Perry, *Novel Relations*, 7.
[12] Ibid, 2.
[13] Weinstein, *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy*, 9.

question the existing social order.[14] In nearly all of the prefaces to her novels, Sedgwick echoed the idea that her fiction had practical applications in terms of contemporary social problems, such as when she states that young friends "will receive the fruits of her [the author's] observation of the defects and wants of our social life with ingenuousness, and perhaps with some profit" in her preface to *Married or Single?* (1857).[15] She believed that her young readers could profit from her observations, which would sketch the existing social structures by reading her novels. Beyond the immediate goal, her novels also explored, through the choices of individual characters, the options available for renegotiation of the gender hierarchies in nineteenth-century society.

Sedgwick presented a world in which a young woman who stood on the brink of a precipice could not only avoid the romantic danger it represented, but also play a role in reshaping the gender hierarchy in such a way that she would be allowed some measure of autonomy while still being provided with protection. According to Martha Vicinus in *Independent Women*, "Middle-class single women had the education, economic opportunities, and personal confidence to take advantage of larger social changes."[16] Sedgwick was in an ideal position to take advantage of changing social roles. A member of a wealthy New England family, Sedgwick had been educated primarily at home and resided with various members of her family throughout adulthood, providing her with the economic stability necessary to pursue a career as a writer. She remained single, devoting herself to her writing and the families of her brothers rather than raising a family of her own. Sedgwick's fiction reflects her middle-class background by presenting characters who can move between different stations in life and emphasizing moral character over status and wealth. In her article "Catharine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History," Carolyn Karcher argues that even Sedgwick's narrative style of allowing multiple characters to have their own voice "serves to affect formally the democratization of American society that these novels seek to advance through their plots."[17] In her novels, Sedgwick presented her universally applied concept of a world where class lines were fluid and gender categories became less well-defined.

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[14] Davidson, *Revolution*, 39-40.
[15] Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Married or Single?* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857): v, Sabine Americana 1500-1926, http://galenet.galegroup.com (accessed August 25, 2009).
[16] Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press,1985), 6.
[17] Carolyn L. Karcher, "Catharine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History," in *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives,* 10.

Within her fictitiously reshaped world, Sedgwick clearly rejects an older world which she perceived to be dominated by patriarchy and corruption. In her novels, this connection was often represented by villains associated with Europe. But in *The Linwoods* (1835), Sedgwick's historical novel set during the American Revolution, the hero, a patriot, asks, "[H]ow long before we may look out upon this avenue to the ocean as the entrance to our independent homes, and open or shut it, as pleases, to the commerce and friendship of the world!"[18] This passage sets the United States apart with a door that can be closed on the rest of the world. According to Karcher, Sedgwick attempted to create a "native" American literature unlike British and European models by presenting "daily life in her own country with close attention to the values, mores, and social gradations that differentiate her compatriots form other peoples."[19] Clearly, Sedgwick viewed Americans as unique when the narrator of *The Linwoods* explains that the heroine, who will eventually switch allegiance from Britain to America, "for the first time perceived the folly of measuring American society by a European standard—of casting it in an old and worn mould—of permitting its vigourous youth to be cramped and impaired by transmitted manacles and shackles."[20] Sedgwick both illustrated and rejected what she perceived to be a dysfunctional and corrupt world by creating villains who represented individuals stuck in power structures that did not function properly in nineteenth-century American society. These villains destroy themselves or are destroyed by their victims, demonstrating the need for change before society self-destructs in a similar manner.

In their place, Sedgwick proposes negotiated relationships, which required women, married or single, to have some autonomy in order to be "useful" even if that required challenging a male authority figure when she believed he was wrong. Vicinus describes the practical applications of this desire for usefulness, "Perhaps most important of all, like their male counterparts, they [women] believed passionately in the morally redeeming power of work; paid public work would give them dignity and independence."[21] For Sedgwick, work did not have to be paid or public to be redeeming, but it was still a necessary component of her heroines lives.

Despite her desire for female independence, Sedgwick was far from advocating an inverted power structure with women in the position of authority. Instead, Sedgwick wrote in her

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[18] Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *The Linwoods; or, "Sixty Years Since" in America* edited by Maria Karafilis (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2002), 1:118.
[19] Karcher, "Catharine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History," in *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives*, 6.
[20] Sedgwick, *The Linwoods*, 1:129.
[21] Vicinus, *Independent Women*, 6.

preface to her final novel, *Married or Single?*, "Aside from the great tasks of humanity, for which masculine capacities are best fitted, we believe she [a woman] has an independent power to shape her own course, and to force her separate sovereign way."[22] This passage does not confine the application of this idea to marriage alone. It urges women to acquire agency in a world where patriarchy has been called into question and directs them to shape their own courses by walking away from whatever precipices, romantic or otherwise, they find in their lives. To reinforce this idea, Sedgwick provided illustrations of heroines who, guided by their own moral compasses, challenged or directly opposed the established authority with few or no consequences to themselves. This limited autonomy demonstrated that women should have more independence and a slightly different role in their society, one which was not always clearly defined, but which shifted with the situation by adopting masculine or feminine traits as needed and proving women capable of shaping their own course in many different interactions and situations both inside and outside of the home.

With regard to marriage, Sedgwick self-avowedly reaffirms the heterosexual marriage norm although she admits reluctance in her preface to *Married or Single?*: "We have given (we confess, after some disposition to rebel), the most practical proof of our allegiance to the ancient laws of romance, by making our hero and heroine man and wife, duly and truly."[23] But Sedgwick argued that being married did not excuse any individual, male or female, from devoting his or her life to others. Sedgwick's heroes and heroines who choose to marry still aid others through legal, religious, monetary, or charitable means. Although she throws her support on the side of "married" in answer to the dilemma of "married or single?," Sedgwick's next sentence calls into question how firm that conviction was: "But we raise our voice with all our might against the miserable cant that matrimony is essential to the feebler sex—that a woman's single life must be useless or undignified—that she is but an adjunct of man—in her best estate a helm merely to guide the nobler vessel."[24] Even though Sedgwick claimed marriage as the best option for her fictional heroines, she demonstrated remaining single to be just as valid of a choice for a woman through her other characters, some of whom make a conscious decision to remain single, and through the example of her own life. A woman did not have to walk away from one precipice only to fall over the edge of another. Sedgwick argued that a woman who remained single could

[22] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, vi.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

reach more people and have more of an impact on society than a woman who was restricted by ties to her husband and family. Of these single women, Sedgwick stated, "Their smiles brighten the world," and she elaborated, "But in every sphere of woman…maidens have a mission to fulfil as serious and as honorable as those of a wife's devotion, or a mother's care—a mission of wider and more various range."[25] A single woman would remain free to devote herself as needed, whereas a married woman had responsibilities to the household and the family. Taken as a whole, Sedgwick's novels present a variety of options for negotiating new relationships between individuals, both within and outside of marriage.

By illustrating various scenarios, Sedgwick demonstrated that she took issue not with the institution of marriage itself, but with the imbalance of power between husbands and wives. In order to hope to accomplish any changes within her own society, Sedgwick had to direct her argument at men just as much as women. Since men held the authority in the power structures in early American society, the only way women could hope to achieve their own socially-sanctioned autonomy was to convince men to listen to them and relinquish some of their power. It would take men like Mr. Lloyd in *A New-England Tale*, who feels he cannot warn Jane away from the danger of the precipice, to step back and let women make their own choices. In all of her novels, Sedgwick illustrated this idea by creating heroes who were willing to solicit the help of the women in their lives, and if need be, to follow their lead. The heroes listen to the women and choose altruistic over materialistic traits in marriage, just as the heroines agree to marry hard-working men who value them for more than their beauty or wealth. Sedgwick argued for reform, believing that each individual, male or female, needed to shape a course that would allow her or him to do the most good for others. Through the experiences of her fictional characters, she added to the argument that women could and should become productive members of the still not clearly-defined American society alongside their male counterparts. According to Sedgwick's vision, echoed by other female writers, it would take both men and women, negotiating and working together, to rescue society from the brink of the precipice, to right the wrongs of the novel and bring about a happy ending that envisioned a reshaping of the power structures in place in nineteenth-century America.

[25] Ibid, vi-vii.

Chapter One: "The Bankruptcies in Married Life"

In Sedgwick's final novel, *Married or Single?*, the heroine, Grace Herbert, discusses marital options with her friend's mother, Mrs. Clifford. Grace argues that a woman should choose single life over an unsatisfactory marriage. Mrs. Clifford responds to Grace's resolute statement, "Oh, my dear child, what is quite satisfactory in life? it's all a compromise." To the assertion that she should compromise and accept an unsatisfactory marriage, Grace answers, "I hate compromises, Mrs. Clifford."[1] Grace argues against compromise, but within her argument can be found a rejection of the patriarchal system, which would not allow a woman to choose whether or not she should relinquish her personal preference for financial security. If a father chose his daughter's husband based on alliance or wealth, she would not be able to oppose his decision. But Grace's argument allows women the freedom to function as autonomous individuals, at least in terms of marriage, choosing with whom they will enter a matrimonial contract. They also demonstrate the importance of affection within nineteenth-century relationships. Without mutual affection, a match would be considered a compromise. In order to take Grace's advice, women had to work with men to achieve mutually satisfactory matches. In *Making the American Self*, Daniel Walker Howe quotes the mid-nineteenth century writer, Margaret Fuller, as stating, "Man and woman were 'the two halves of one thought…The development of the one cannot be effected without the other," to which Howe adds, "The heroic ideal had both male and female sides."[2] In addition to reinforcing heterosexual marital practices, this passage reinforces the need for both women and men in order to renegotiate these power structures. In order to have the most fulfilling relationship, women and men needed to work together in a complementary manner, rather than compromising in their marriage, only to "trudge on through life together."[3] To compromise would be to return to the dysfunctional systems of the old world, sometimes represented in the novels by European villains. But equally dangerous according to Sedgwick were those who converted European practices into American power structures, repeating the mistakes of the old world.

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[1] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:215.
[2] Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 232.
[3] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:214.

Guilty Destroyers

The villains of the novels illustrate the anxieties of the society that created them. In Sedgwick's novels, the worst of the villains are the older men who attempt to kidnap and force young women to marry them. Under the system of alliance marriages, these men could be good matches in terms of wealth or standing in the community, but when evaluated for their character, their behavior is found to be unacceptable and they are subjected to the most violent punishments. This type of villain was not unique to Sedgwick's work. In *Sex Among the Rabble*, Clare Lyons writes that these stock villains were often used in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature either to deliberately condemn predatory sexual behavior or to inadvertently reinforce the idea that a man could not control his sexual urges. She adds that presenting the man as a sexual predator causes the woman to become the sexual victim.[4] Discussing nineteenth-century seduction tales, Hessinger echoes the idea that these fictional accounts reinforced the vulnerability of women and illustrated men as less responsible for their own behavior.[5] Lyons adds that a typical end for seduced women, the victims of these villains, was to die alone and diseased.[6] Sedgwick's novels presented a different perspective on this established scenario because none of her villains who attempted to abduct female characters succeeded. Instead, they were thwarted by chance, or more often, by the heroine. Sedgwick's heroines do not allow themselves or their friends to become victims, and in doing so, they presented her readers with positive examples of female agency. Even though they fail to accomplish their predatory goals, all of the kidnappers are punished severely, demonstrating that men are responsible for their actions and will receive justice accordingly. In Sedgwick's novels, whether their actions are positive or negative, individuals are evaluated as individuals, receiving punishment or reward based on their own merit. Additionally, other male characters who practice sexual restraint serve to illustrate the idea that men can control themselves, and it is they who are rewarded by marrying the desirable women. Sedgwick introduces these villains as a warning to her readers about the dangers of archaic systems and lack of control, but does not allow them to succeed, in

[4] Clare A. Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender & Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 316-317. Lyons cites Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word* for the idea that these villains were used to condemn predatory sexual behavior.
[5] Rodney Hessinger, *Seduced, Abandoned, and Reborn: Visions of Youth in Middle-Class America, 1780-1850* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 29.
[6] Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 316.

order to demonstrate that women do not have to be the victims of these predators, because they have the agency to make their choices and can resist being coerced by force.

Three of Sedgwick's villains fit this model of attempting to force women to marry them when the woman has clearly indicated a preference for another man. Sir Philip Gardiner, one of these villains, is the primary antagonist in the 1827 novel *Hope Leslie*, which is set in colonial Massachusetts in the 1640s. He arrives from England partway into the novel, and unlike the other characters, Sir Philip is constantly associated with his title or simply called "the knight." Both details demonstrate the importance he places on prestige of rank. Sir Philip is undoubtedly linked to England and the distinct class hierarchy associated with Europe. To all outward appearances, Sir Philip is a Puritan, but he reveals in a letter to his friend that he is actually Catholic. Sir Philip has assumed Puritan habit and dress to pass unnoticed among the "driveling, canting, preaching, praying, liberty-loving, lecture-going, *pilgrims!*"[7] In terms of religion, Sir Philip is a hypocrite, pretending to subscribe to a religion in which he does not believe in order to fit in among the Puritans of Boston. In addition to his other shortcomings, Sir Philip keeps a mistress, Rosa, the child of an English nobleman and a French actress, who is introduced into the novel as Roslin, Sir Philip's male page. This disguise allows Sir Philip to avoid accusations of sinfulness in Puritan society. Aside from being morally corrupt and deceptive, Sir Philip "had formerly some acquaintance with…a desperate fellow [who] had once been in confederacy with the bucaniers of Tortuga—the self-styled 'brothers of the coast,'"[8] meaning that this group was currently or had been pirates. It is this collection of desperate fellows that Sir Philip employs to help him kidnap Hope Leslie, the heroine of the novel.

Having fallen in love with Hope (or her inheritance), Sir Philip decides that he must marry her. Sir Philip follows the tradition of endogamous marriage in which one marries within one's family or class for economic reasons rather than romantic ones. In a letter to a friend back in England, Sir Philip writes that Hope is her father's sole heir. Throughout the letter, he refers to Hope as "the Leslie."[9] Clearly, Sir Philip is less concerned with Hope herself than with her father's money, even to the extent that he omits the part of her name that is her own, referring to her only as an extension of her father. This reference also has connections to the alliance system

[7] Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts,* ed. Carolyn L. Karcher (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 208. Hereafter citations from the text of *Hope Leslie* refer to this edition.
[8] Ibid, 334.
[9] Ibid, 208-209.

of marriage because Sir Philip views marriage to Hope as a method for aligning himself with her father, and thus, his money. Later, he implies that he would simply take what he wanted from Hope, except that her father's family still controlled her fortune. This explanation for his actions indicates that if Sir Philip wants access to Hope's fortune, he needs her to agree to marry him.[10] In Sir Philip's eyes, Hope is a means to an end, not an individual in her own right. True to the nature of the pirates that he will employ at the end of the novel, Sir Philip does not want to do anything that will jeopardize his chance of increasing his fortune. When he is unable to win Hope's affection by flattery or reuniting her with her sister, Sir Philip resorts to force. He plans to kidnap Hope and to convince her on the voyage to England by any means necessary to marry him. "After their arrival in England," the narrator explains, "he meant to abandon himself to the disposal of fortune[.]"[11] His focus remains on Hope's fortune, rather than possession of her as his wife. Sir Philip has no redeeming qualities—he lies about his religion, manipulates events to his own ends, lives out of wedlock with a woman, and resorts to kidnapping to acquire a wife and her fortune. He is also continuously connected to England, and with it, to traditional marriage practices. These are presented in a negative light because they convert individuals into economic entities to be obtained or lost.

Only a chance coincidence results in the kidnapping of the wrong woman and saves Hope from her unhappy fate. Rosa, believing that the woman Sir Philip has captured is Hope, cries, "I would give my poor life, and a thousand more, if I had them, to save Hope Leslie[.]"[12] Not wanting Hope to fall into a degraded situation of social rejection similar to her own, Rosa throws a lamp into a barrel of gunpowder and blows up the ship, along with herself, Sir Philip, and most of its crew. After the explosion, the narrator labels Sir Philip as Rosa's "guilty destroyer," indicating that he brought about her demise even though she was the one who acted to destroy them both.[13] Although this statement presents Rosa as a victim, she is different from the traditional victims of seduction novels in that she does not die quietly and repentant after realizing the enormity of her sins. Instead, she takes matters into her hands and destroys the man who destroyed her. In *Revolution and the Word*, Davidson states that the seduction plot had more or less disappeared from sentimental novels by 1818, with the "fallen woman" no longer playing

[10] Ibid, 334.
[11] Ibid, 334-335.
[12] Ibid, 339.
[13] Ibid, 342.

a prominent role in American fiction.[14] Perhaps Rosa serves as an example of a new attitude toward fallen women, which still does not provide them with a place in society, but does allow them some agency and frees them from being victims. Although Rosa presents a warning of what could happen if a young woman did fall for the flattery and promises of such a man, she also demonstrates that the woman does not need to remain a victim. Sedgwick's society was far from condoning living arrangements such as Rosa's, demonstrating that everything did not need to change as elements of society were reshaped. Although rejoining society is no longer an option, Rosa does have some choice about how she leaves it. In addition to being a woman with agency, Rosa acts as the destroyer of Sir Philip, who represents England and the traditional system of marriage based on alliances and guided by patriarchal power. Just as Sedgwick saw women as playing a key role in reshaping the nineteenth-century institution of marriage into a power structure that allowed agency to both women and men, in the novel it is a woman who eradicates Sir Philip and all he represents from the plot.

In her 1830 novel, *Clarence*, Sedgwick provided a similar villain. Introduced into the novel by two other characters discussing his merits, or lack thereof, as a suitor for Emilie Layton, Henriques Pedrillo is "a foreigner, unknown, and twice Miss Layton's age," but he is also "rich…a devilish genteel fellow, handsome enough, and has a very insinuating address."[15] Like Sir Philip, Pedrillo is viewed as a wealthy foreigner, although his connections are Spanish while Sir Philip's are English. In his initial introduction Pedrillo seems to have an equal number of positive and negative qualities. As the novel progresses, however, the characters learn that Pedrillo is suspected of being involved with "a desperate band of men on the South American coast," a fact which is confirmed when a letter informs Pedrillo that documents are about to be forwarded to officials "proving his participation in a noted piratical affair, in which some of the noble young men of our [American] navy had suffered."[16] Like Sir Philip of *Hope Leslie*, Pedrillo conceals his criminal connections and his true nature from the other characters in the novel, convincing many of them by his show of wealth and manners that he is worthy of marrying Emilie. Those characters who adhere to the old order of fathers choosing husbands for their daughters take Pedrillo at face value while the characters who place more weight on individual morals are not so easily convinced.

[14] Davidson, *Revolution*, 135.
[15] Sedgwick, *Clarence,* 1:145.
[16] Ibid, 2:10, 2:212.

In addition to his history of involvement with pirates and desperate men, Pedrillo's actions in the novel are self-serving and less than heroic. When Emilie Layton becomes trapped on the edge of a cliff because she ran from Pedrillo, both Pedrillo and Randolph Marion attempt to save her. Pedrillo sprains his ankle and must crawl back to safety while Marion, heedless of danger, saves Emilie.[17] When the narrator describes the incident, "Pedrillo's attention to his own safety" is contrasted to "Marion's devotion to the single object of Emilie's preservation."[18] Not only does Pedrillo fail to save the woman he claims to love, but he places his own safety above hers. When contrasted with Marion's selfless rescue, which succeeds where Pedrillo fails, Pedrillo seems self-serving and even less heroic.

This incident sets a pattern for the rest of the novel. Even though throughout the novel Pedrillo clearly hates Gerald Roscoe, the hero, he never confronts Roscoe directly. At one point, Pedrillo convinces Mr. Layton, Emilie's father, to challenge Roscoe to a duel. Roscoe ignores the challenge, but when they meet on the street, Layton attacks Roscoe with his cane. When Roscoe wrestles the cane away and refuses to fight, Pedrillo gives Layton his own cane which contains a concealed blade, allowing him to stab Roscoe.[19] This exchange demonstrates both Pedrillo's willingness to fight unfairly and his preference to goad others into fighting for him, rather than taking a stand himself. Beyond the demonstration of character, the duel that Roscoe refuses to allow to take place represents a shift away from traditional practices, such as satisfying honor through a duel. Although Pedrillo's selfishness and cowardliness are not criminal, they are still elements that would make him an unsatisfactory match for Emilie.

Unlike Sir Philip, Pedrillo does not have a disguised mistress, but he does have a previous love affair, which demonstrates his insincere attitude toward Emilie. While he is supposed to be courting Emilie, Pedrillo attempts to convince the daughter of Roscoe's French neighbor to run off with him. Only Roscoe's timely intervention prevents her from agreeing, and Roscoe's reminder of her duty to her father causes her to shudder "at the precipice from which she had escaped."[20] Even while Pedrillo attempts to win Emilie and her parents over, he is pursuing another woman, illustrating another aspect of his deceitful nature. This incident demonstrates the amount of power that men held with regard to romantic relations. It takes

[17] Ibid, 1:289.
[18] Ibid, 1:294.
[19] Ibid, 2:35-36.
[20] Ibid, 1:209.

another man intervening to save the woman from being seduced. Therefore, the novel implies men need to play a role in the reshaping of these power structures. Roscoe reminds the young woman of her duty to her father, shifting the balance of power between Pedrillo and the young woman and giving her the authority to refuse to run off if Pedrillo should renew his efforts.

Although Emilie clearly indicates her preference for Randolph Marion over Pedrillo, Pedrillo will not give her up. He writes to a friend in the West Indies, "But I will not lose her! Did I ever relinquish any thing, on which I had fixed my grasp?"[21] Pedrillo had begun by lending Emilie's father, Layton, large sums of money in order to obtain power over him.[22] After catching Layton cheating at gambling, Pedrillo blackmails Layton with debts and his reputation in exchange for his daughter. Emilie becomes a possession to be exchanged to solve an economic crisis. Layton agrees, even though he will have to force his daughter to marry a man that she hates.[23] This scenario parallels the marriage of Sedgwick's older sister, Frances. In *The Sedgwicks in Love*, Timothy Kenslea explains, "Frances [had] left behind a man she loved passionately and married a man she disliked, at her father's insistence."[24] Like the fictional Emilie, Frances was compelled by her father to give up the man that she loved for another that she did not. The parallels diverge when Emilie manages to escape from her less than ideal marriage while Frances remained married an abusive husband. Sedgwick used a real-life scenario, but altered the ending to explore changes that would allow young women to have more agency in choosing their husbands rather than being subject to the whims of their fathers.

When Gertrude Clarence, the heroine, intervenes, offering to pay Layton's debt and thereby free Emilie to marry the man that she loves, Layton writes to Pedrillo to break off the engagement. It is a woman who frees Emilie from the traditional position of being a possession to be exchanged. In the letter, Layton mentions his cheating at gambling, providing Pedrillo with the proof to expose his dishonesty and ruin his reputation and allowing him to blackmail Layton again.[25] This time, Pedrillo is not content with agreeing to an engagement. Instead, he arranges to take Emilie to his ship, where he will sail with her to Cuba (because he has to leave the country to escape justice for his criminal activity as a pirate), but he assures Layton that he will have a

[21] Ibid, 2:15.
[22] Ibid, 1:216.
[23] Ibid, 1:221.
[24] Timothy Kenslea, *The Sedgwicks in Love: Courtship, Engagement, and Marriage in the Early Republic* (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 2006), 37.
[25] Sedgwick, *Clarence*, 2:204.

marriage ceremony performed on the ship.[26] With this new arrangement, Pedrillo is linked to the traditional institution of marriage. Although Pedrillo has not yet escalated to kidnapping, his arrangements for his departure and marriage to Emilie are similar to Sir Philip's plans to kidnap and marry Hope Leslie. Pedrillo, however, has the reluctant agreement of the young woman's father, while Sir Philip acts entirely on his own.

Pedrillo might not have initially resorted to kidnapping, but when Gertrude Clarence and Randolph Marion thwart his carefully orchestrated elopement plan, he chases after them with the intention of abducting Emilie. Like Sir Philip, Pedrillo resorts to kidnapping to force the woman he "loves" to marry him. A fight breaks out when Pedrillo and his two crewmen catch up with Gertrude, Emilie, and Marion in the place where they have stopped for the night. While the conflict continues, they are joined by a group led by Gerald Roscoe. During the fight, Pedrillo orders his men, "Ha!—stab them—shoot them down—spare none!"[27] Already established as leading a violent lifestyle, Pedrillo clearly does not care who is killed as long as he obtains his prize. This exchange provides an example of an out-of-control patriarchal society in which the men physically fight over women they wish to marry.

When one of his men is about to strike down an old man, Pedrillo stops him, revealing that the man is his father. Instead of killing the old man, Pedrillo stabs himself in the chest.[28] Despite his appearance, Pedrillo is not really a foreigner, but an American who left the country and returned in the guise of a wealthy Spanish man. Even though Sedgwick made an effort to associate her villains, such as Sir Philip, with Europe, Pedrillo illustrates that the same dangers of the abuse of patriarchal authority existed in America as well. Sedgwick might have traced their roots to Europe, but it was in America that she was arguing for change.

Pedrillo does not die right away. His final act is to cut the throat of his dog, so he "shall never be kicked or caressed by another master—bury us in the same grave[.]"[29] Pedrillo is so possessive that he refuses to allow his dog to be cared for by someone else after his death. He dies calling out for God's mercy.[30] In this case, it is the villain who dies repentant, destroyed by his own scheming and criminal acts. Sedgwick presented an interesting shift away from the typical ending where the young woman dies regretting her sins while the villain disappears

[26] Ibid, 2:216-217.
[27] Ibid, 2:263.
[28] Ibid, 2:264.
[29] Ibid, 2:266.
[30] Ibid, 2:267.

without receiving justice. With both Sir Philip and Pedrillo, who were religiously hypocritical and connected with criminals, Sedgwick altered the traditional narrative. Willing to abduct a young woman in order to obtain a wife, neither villain survives the novel unscathed. Instead, they are brought to justice and destroyed, either by their own hand or the hand of those that they wronged. These men provided two violent examples of the self-destruction that could happen in society that attempted to maintain the old system of marriage based on alliances and patriarchal authority.

Sedgwick presented a third character that fits this pattern who is slightly different in terms of his ultimate punishment—Reuben Harrington from her 1824 novel, *Redwood*. Harrington, an elder in the Shaker community, is initially described by another character as the "master-devil." To this, the narrator adds, "He seemed to have arrived at that age, which the poet had characterized as the period of self-indulgence; and certainly he bore no marks of having disobeyed the instincts of nature by any mortification of the flesh."[31] Like Sir Philip and Pedrillo, Harrington focuses on himself over others. Harrington decides that Emily Allen, the niece of one of the elder sisters in his Shaker community, should marry him. His elopement plan involves hiding it from his brothers and sisters among the Shakers and departing secretly at night.[32] As with the other villains, Harrington is not honest in his thoughts or his actions.

After Harrington learns that Emily loves another man, he devises a more elaborate plan, which uses her sick grandmother and affection for her lover against her, to trick her into leaving the Shaker community with him. By the time Emily realized what happened, her reputation would already be ruined by her supposed elopement with Harrington, which would leave her no choice but to marry him.[33] Needing money, Harrington leaves her with an Indian, paying him with a jug of alcohol to watch her.[34]Although Harrington does not have an economic motive for marriage, his desire for money does figure into his reasoning for leaving the Shakers, presenting him with the opportunity to kidnap Emily. Earlier when Harrington finds a note that Emily dropped, the narrator states, "Never did a vulture fasten his talons around his victim with more exultation than Harrington thrust poor little Emily's lost talisman into his pocket."[35] Although the passage labels Emily his victim, as with Hope Leslie and Emilie Layton, she does not remain

[31] Sedgwick, *Redwood*, 1:94-95.
[32] Ibid, 2:48.
[33] Ibid, 2:67.
[34] Ibid, 2:70.
[35] Ibid, 2:59.

in his captivity. The Indian watching her conveniently dies, and Ellen Bruce, the heroine, along with her friend Deborah, finds Emily before Harrington can return.[36] Once again, it is the female characters who break the cycle of marriage associated with economic opportunities, allowing Emily to escape the villain's clutches and avoid becoming his victim.

Likewise, Harrington does not evade punishment. He cannot obtain money from the Shaker society's fund in an Albany bank because he needs the signature of another elder. Even with this obstacle, Harrington does not give up his plan because "he had so long flattered himself with the possession of this young creature, he so thirsted for revenge against Susan [Emily's aunt]."[37] Harrington's determination to "possess" Emily regardless of inconveniences proves to be his own undoing. Even though he is not kidnapping and marrying her for economic reasons, the rhetoric of his desire is still connected to concern over possessions. Returning to where he left her, Harrington finds Emily had escaped, and he is captured by some men who recognized him as they were on their way to dispose of the Indian's body. The men return Harrington to the Shaker community. A council is called, and Harrington is "dispossessed of everything he held belonging to the society but the clothes that covered him, and sent out to wander upon the earth, despised and avoided, enduring all the misery of unsuccessful and unrepented guilt."[38] Harrington does not suffer a violent death like Sedgwick's other kidnapping villains, but he does lose everything he possesses, including his wealth and reputation, which still provides justice, just not in the same manner as with the other villains. For a character focused on self-indulgence and wealth, this punishment would perhaps be worse than death, and he is denied the very possessions and wealth that he sought to increase by his scheme.

Just like the villains commonly found in novels, Sir Philip, Pedrillo, and Harrington are the worst kind of men—dishonest, hypocritical, and criminal. Each will do anything to obtain what he wants, even kidnap a woman in order to posses her as his wife. None of them succeed. They fail because the female characters refuse to be victims; they do not adhere to the old system of patriarchal authority in marriage. Instead, they thwart the villains and allow the potential "victims" to marry men who would allow them to negotiate some independence within their marriage. Sir Philip abducts the wrong woman because Hope Leslie is elsewhere executing a jailbreak with the help of the novel's hero. Ultimately, Rosa, who initially appears as Sir Philip's

[36] Ibid, 2:121.
[37] Ibid, 2:127.
[38] Ibid, 2:127-128.

victim, destroys the villain and his plot. Pedrillo fails to capture Emilie due to a plan devised by Gertrude Clarence and the physical intervention of her and her friends. Reuben Harrington's attempted kidnapping is unsuccessful because Deborah and Ellen find and rescue Emily before he can return. Although some of the women in the novels fall under the spell of the villain and serve as a warning for readers who might become similarly entrapped, these unrestrained men are unsuccessful in their abductions. By causing the villains to fail because of the actions of the female characters, Sedgwick provided an argument for the agency of women in her patriarchal society. Since all of the villains were punished, either by death or loss of property, Sedgwick also presented the dangers of unrestrained behavior for men. Hessinger claims that fiction writers often sent an appeal to potential seducers through a message of fear, showing the consequences of deviant behavior as a deterrent.[39] Illustrating this message with more permanent results than merely being plagued by a guilty conscience, Sedgwick did not allow the villains in her novels to disappear from their pages unpunished, demonstrating that actions had consequences, even if the individual had status and wealth, and was a man.

The Matrimonial Lottery of Fashionable Life

More frequently, Sedgwick presented less deviant villains, both men and women, who were interested in marriage for the wrong reasons and often pursued several individuals before marrying someone similar to themselves. In many ways similar to the kidnapping villains of the previous section, Sedgwick's libertine characters chased after multiple women, failed to seduce the women they wanted to marry, and were punished—not with death or property loss, but with a wife as selfish and superficial as themselves. These characters did not attempt to physically force women to love them, but rather attempted to seduce them through charm and professions of love. In a society based on contract, it was necessary to convince a woman to marry rather than to just use society-sanctioned authority to force her into marriage. The libertine, a man not governed by morals in his relations with women, was a stock character in literature dating back to the late sixteenth century.[40] As with the previous set of villains, the libertines' seduction efforts do not succeed, not through any failure on their parts, but because the women they are attempting to seduce realize their true nature and decide not to marry them. In *Liberty, A Better Husband*, as

[39] Hessinger, *Seduced*, 31.
[40] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Libertine," http://dictionary.oed.com (accessed Nov. 8, 2009).

part of her argument for why increasing numbers of women chose to remain single during the early nineteenth century, Chambers-Schiller argues that female autonomy was at stake because marriage demanded that a wife mold herself to her husband.[41] The women who reject these libertines are not willing to conform to this model. Even though Sedgwick herself chose to remain single, she argued through her characters for a woman's autonomy, even in marriage. When these men are denied the women they want, they turn to the women who have been chasing them throughout the novel, women who have motives for marriage just as worldly as themselves. In these matches, neither individual is presented as ideal. Although Sedgwick argued for female autonomy, she placed female characters with too much autonomy in a negative light. Sedgwick's novels illustrated the dangers of too much and too little autonomy. She wanted to negotiate a place for autonomy for women in marriage, but not to replace the nineteenth-century patriarchal society with one based on female authority.

Sedgwick's final novel, *Married or Single?*, written in 1857, contains the most deviant libertine character, Horace Copley. Shortly after Copley's arrival in the novel, Archibald Lisle, the hero, describes him in a letter as "an idle young man, with an immense inherited fortune, and I am told, is reckoned the first prize in the matrimonial lottery of fashionable life here."[42] Unlike Lisle, the son of a mechanic and a lawyer himself, Copley inherited his fortune, allowing him to be idle. Copley describes himself in a similar manner: "I was left at nineteen, when the appetites are keenest, and the love of pleasure uncontrollable, heir of a large fortune, and master of myself."[43] Although Copley is attempting to justify his actions to his concerned cousin, his description of himself is fairly similar to Lisle's. In *The Bonds of Womanhood*, Nancy Cott quotes Mary Tucker, a woman living in the early eighteenth century, as saying, "[B]ut if beauty alone seduces, or gold allures, [marriage] will 'prove that plague of iron' which the poet sings."[44] This passage illustrates the idea that gold, or a large inherited fortune in the case of Copley, would not be sufficient to make him a decent husband. His inherited fortune also links him to endogamous marriage practices, in which inherited wealth was the primary reason for marrying within a social group. Despite his shortcomings, Copley is "first prize" in terms of eligible young

[41] Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, A Better Husband: Single Women in America: The Generations of 1780-1840* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 51.
[42] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 1:54.
[43] Ibid, 2:33.
[44] Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 77.

men because the fashionable life in the novel is still operating on the principles of alliance marriage, where wealth and reputation win over character. Lisle's reasons for disliking Copley, which include the attentions he gives to many women, including "pretty married ladies, who are supposed to wear their bonds lightly," allude to his actions later in the novel.[45]

During the novel, Copley has at least one affair, which he breaks off after the young woman, Jessie, becomes pregnant. Copley does provide minimally for her and her child, but she ultimately rejects his money and dies. The narrator explains, "Here, in the deep shadows of obscurity, lay this victim of a man of the world, degraded—*not corrupted*—a beautiful flower ruthlessly crushed, God's gracious gifts thrown away, and the good purposes of his providence contravened."[46] Sedgwick emphasizes that Jessie is not corrupted; instead, she lays the blame entirely at the feet of the man who seduced her. It was the fault of the system which allowed men such as Copley to go unpunished, and not the fault of the young women who were not considered independent agents in this society. Copley himself demonstrates his attitude toward women in a letter to a friend when he writes that he could marry any one of several pretty women, "or, better still, have without the cost, and risks, and tedium of marriage."[47] Copley would rather seduce the women whom he fancies, because he loses little through his actions and thereby avoids being confined by marriage to one woman. As a man, Copley can operate as an independent agent, but with the shift to contract marriage, women have lost the protection of their families, which could have prevented them from falling under a libertine's spell. In *Novel Relations*, Ruth Perry explains this shift: "The transfer at marriage of [women's] subordination from fathers to husbands, the movement from father patriarchy to husband patriarchy, the weakening of their ties with their brothers, and the increasingly child-centered nature of the family, probably resulted in a net loss of social power for women…The strengthening of conjugal bonds and the weakening of ties of filiation…reduced the responsibility of parents for their daughters…"[48] As women gained the power to choose their husbands, they also gained the responsibility to choose wisely, and relatives had less of a responsibility to guide them in their choices.

In the same letter, Copley explains that he is willing to relinquish this freedom and marry Grace Herbert, the heroine, because six years previously he made a bet with his friend that he

[45] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 1:54.
[46] Ibid, 2:26.
[47] Ibid, 2:28.
[48] Perry, *Novel Relations*, 34.

would marry Grace. He adds, "When I was a boy, if I set my wishes on a particular apple, on a particular tree, I would break my neck but I got it."[49] Copley's determination to obtain something—or someone—because that is what he has set out to do mirrors Pedrillo's determination to marry Emilie. In both cases, the object to be won is a woman. As with the previous section where women were used as objects of economic exchange, these women become possessions more than individuals. Eventually, Copley's immoral behavior causes him to lose his chance with Grace because Grace discovers that while Copley was courting her, he was also attempting to seduce her married friend, Mrs. Tallis.

Copley's actions prevent him from obtaining the wife he wants as well as presumably (and perhaps of greater concern for him) causing him to lose the bet. Even though Grace escapes marriage to him, Copley does not walk away from the novel without receiving justice for his actions. After Jessie's death, the narrator asks, "Where was he who was to answer for her fate?"[50] Although immediately after her death Copley still seeks pleasure in fashionable society, by the end of the novel he marries Grace's step-sister, Anne Carlton, a woman who primarily cares about wealth and views him as a prize just as much as he did with Grace. Anne is introduced as belonging to "a type of a class of young ladies who vegetate in our society…[T]heir individuality requires a mental microscope."[51] Anne is accomplished in music and fashionable dress and is pretty, but the narrator concludes, "What 'chief end' of woman such a creature is to answer in life, must be solved by deeper philosophy than ours."[52] Anne Carlton might be a high-bred young lady, but she does not make a positive contribution to society, remaining focused on herself and obtaining her social goals. In "The Sentimentalists: Promise and Betrayal in the Home," Mary Kelley explains this female character type: "The 'fashionable woman' is a prominent object of derision and shame in the fiction not only because she symbolized the corrupting materialism of her age but because she lent credence to the notion that the middle-class woman was idle, narcissistic, and unproductive."[53] Anne Carlton embodies the type of person that Sedgwick did not want her readers to emulate. Furthermore, Anne states plainly that she does not love Horace Copley, but she regards him as the first match in New York

[49] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:26.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid, 1:43.
[52] Ibid, 1:44.
[53] Mary Kelley, "The Sentimentalists: Promise and Betrayal in the Home," *Signs* 4, no. 3 (Spring 1979): 440, http://www.jstor.org (accessed March 18, 2010).

and does not want him to marry Grace. She tells her mother, "Why, I always said that Grace was contriving and working for this prize, and would go through fire or water to attain it."[54] Although Anne attributes these motives to Grace, this statement indicates that she herself views Copley as a "prize" to be obtained in competition with Grace, just as Copley views Grace as a means to win his bet with his friend. Anne is operating as an independent agent, just as much as Copley, and she is also presented negatively. Although Sedgwick wanted women to gain autonomy, she did not argue for complete agency. Instead, women and men needed to share power and balance one another, preventing either group from becoming caught up in the corrupting focus on obtaining possessions or wealth. The narrator does not provide the reader with any information about how their marriage, which takes place at the end of the novel, works out, but it cannot have been very fulfilling for either individual. Perhaps less so for Copley because Anne had obtained her prize while he had not. She may have had more realistic expectations for their marriage than he, who had hoped to marry Grace.

The Linwoods, Sedgwick's 1835 novel, set during the Revolutionary War, contains a character similar to that of Horace Copley, and both men share a similar fate. Jasper Meredith, also something of a libertine although less committed to this lifestyle than Copley, goes through several women over the course of the novel and ends up with the one who was scheming to get him. Even though he has clearly indicated a preference for Isabella Linwood, the heroine, at the beginning of the novel, Meredith gives special attention to Bessie Lee when he goes to stay with her family. The narrator explains that Meredith was not in love with Bessie, but he enjoys his power over her. Like the other villains, Meredith abuses the power given to him by patriarchal society. He is not trying to capture her affections, but rather, "[h]e cared only for a present selfish gratification."[55] This attitude would have been opposed to one of the emerging concepts, as presented by Howe in *Making the American Self*, that exercising self-control was a key component of being a respectable individual in the early republic.[56] Meredith justifies his actions by telling his mother that he has never *committed* himself to Bessie.[57] As with his romantic views, Meredith also attempts to avoid committing himself politically as the Revolutionary War breaks out. The "neck-or-nothing patriots" suspects that his professed neutrality is a mask for his

[54] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:73.
[55] Sedgwick, *The Linwoods*, 43.
[56] Howe, *Making*, 7.
[57] Sedgwick, *The Linwoods*, 47.

sympathies for the monarch.[58] When Meredith must finally choose a side, he does remain loyal to the crown, connecting him to England. Meredith's romantic endeavors parallel his politics, demonstrating a general unwillingness in his character to commit. Unaware of Meredith's determination not to commit himself, Bessie becomes nervous and restless as he begins to distance himself from her. She runs away from home, traveling alone to New York and arriving seriously ill. Bessie recovers, but she never marries and dies young before the end of the novel.

Although Bessie's prospects may have been destroyed by her unrequited love for Meredith, he himself does not have much more success. From the beginning of the novel, Meredith wants to marry Isabella Linwood while his mother wants him to marry Lady Anne, his heiress cousin. Meredith's mother is scheming to form an alliance that will benefit her family as a whole, although not necessarily the specific individuals involved. As with Horace Copley, Meredith creates his own undoing. When Isabella discovers his attention toward and dismissal of her friend Bessie, she gives voice to the uneasiness she has regarding him and turns him down. After his second attempt to win her over, Isabella writes to him, "I have loved you, if a sentiment struggling with doubt and distrust, seeking for rest and finding none, becoming fainter and fainter in the dawning light of truth, and vanishing, like an exhalation in the full day, can be called love."[59] Although this passage proclaims a former love, Isabella's words indicate that she was never entirely confident about Meredith or his actions. When Isabella turns him down, he convinces himself that his cousin, Lady Anne, loves him, but she refuses him as well because she loves another man.[60] At this point, he tries and fails to win Isabella's affections a second time. Unwilling to commit himself to a relationship at the beginning of the novel, Meredith discovers that few women are committed to him by its end. He is rejected by his choice of wife under both alliance and contract systems of marriage. In America away from the influences of families operating under old systems, women are able to accept or reject a potential husband based on personal preference.

In a similar manner to Copley, after nearly destroying one woman and being refused by two others, Meredith receives justice for his actions through the marriage that he does make to Helen Ruthven. She is introduced much earlier in the novel in this way: "Without being beautiful, by the help of grace and versatility, and artful adaptation of the aids and artifices of the

[58] Ibid, 42.
[59] Ibid, 312.
[60] Ibid, 308.

toilet, Miss Ruthven produced the effect of beauty…She had little true sensibility or generosity (they go together)."[61] Helen is presented as a woman who designs her appearance to aid her in getting what she wants. Like Anne Carlton of *Married or Single?*, Helen operates as an independent agent, scheming to obtain her goal. By the end of the novel, what she wants is Meredith. After being rejected by Isabella and Lady Anne, Meredith finds himself captured by the web Helen has spun, forcing him to follow wherever she leads.[62] They marry, and Helen thwarts Meredith's plan to leave her behind, saying, "You should know, before this time of day, that I am never foiled in what I undertake."[63] Using similar language to that of the male villains, Helen expresses a determination to accomplish what she set out to do. It is interesting to note that while the male characters fail to marry the women they pursue, Helen succeeds in obtaining her prize, but she is not presented in a more positive manner than the male victims. Sedgwick presented unchecked desire and ambition as negative, whether it appeared in men or women. To a description of their marriage, the narrator adds, "Bessie Lee, thou wert then avenged!"[64] Helen exercises her power over Meredith, just as he had enjoyed his power over Bessie Lee at the beginning of the novel. Helen is not presented as a desirable role model, but she does avenge a wronged woman. Meredith receives justice by being subjected to the same treatment that he has used on others. Hessinger claims, "Ultimately in the American tales of seduction, young men could not be reformed."[65] Although Sedgwick's libertines fit that pattern, they remain alive and in a situation that could possibly convince them to reform, if they were willing to reconstruct themselves in adherence with the power structures that were being reshaped.

Male characters are not the only individuals who have to deal with the consequences of their unchecked ambition. Sedgwick also presented examples of female characters, in addition to Anne Carlton and Helen Ruthven, who are selfish, materialistic, and determined to get their own way. While discussing seduction tales and stories of cruel husbands, Hessinger writes that "virtuous female characters were constructed in opposition to the male figures."[66] Sedgwick's novels contain relationships that fit this pattern, but she added additional complexity by presenting positive male characters who reject the villainous female characters, indicating that

[61] Ibid, 84.
[62] Ibid, 314.
[63] Ibid, 351.
[64] Ibid, 352.
[65] Hessinger, *Seduced*, 42.
[66] Ibid, 36.

these negative traits were not limited to one gender or the other. One of these female characters, Caroline Redwood, is the primary antagonist in *Redwood*. When Caroline and her father are stranded in a small town, Caroline complains of the type of entrance that they would make into the city: "Grandmama says that people of fortune should never lay aside the insignia of their rank."[67] As with many of the male villains, Caroline already possesses wealth but continues to focus on status and appearance. Caroline was raised in the fashionable society of the American South, which Sedgwick presents as sharing attributes similar to those of European society, including a concern for status over moral character. The narrator explains Caroline's spoiled manner: "Mrs. Olney [Caroline's grandmother] who evinced her grief for the death of her daughter, by lavishing on the child [Caroline] a twofold measure of the indulgencies and flatteries that had spoiled the mother."[68] In a similar manner to Horace Copley of *Married or Single?*, Caroline has been indulged since childhood. Her father blames himself for her character. He states with regret, "[M]y child—my only child—the immortal creature whose destiny was entrusted to me, I have permitted to be nursed in folly, and devoted to the world without a moral principle or influence!"[69] Although Caroline ultimately answers for her own actions, Sedgwick presents an image of poor parenting, one which perpetuates the traditional, no longer functioning system of focusing on wealth into the next generation, producing self-centered individuals such as Caroline Redwood.

In order to compensate for his lack of guidance in her childhood, Redwood wants his daughter to marry Charles Westall, the hero of the novel and the son of Redwood's friend, who has a good character.[70] When Redwood informs Caroline that the Westalls should arrive shortly, she asks, "How papa, is he [Charles] handsome, clever, rich, and accomplished?"[71] This question clearly demonstrates Caroline's focus on wealth and appearance, not only in herself, but also in others. Redwood does not get his wish. Although Westall is attracted to Caroline at first, he eventually rejects her based on her character: "The spell of her beauty was broken; the power of the enchantress over him for ever lost by the revelation which she had made of her character in the conversation of the preceding day."[72] As with the heroines' rejections of the male villains,

[67] Sedgwick, *Redwood*, 1:15.
[68] Ibid, 1:78.
[69] Ibid, 2:157.
[70] Ibid, 1:81.
[71] Ibid, 1:182.
[72] Ibid, 1:226.

Westall's rejection of Caroline stems from her character, rather than from issues of wealth or social status. Sedgwick did not limit her argument for making matches based on moral character to women alone; she illustrated the need for all individuals to evaluate potential spouses as individuals rather than as components of a family unit.

When Caroline ruins her chances to marry a worthy man, she turns to Captain Fitzgerald, a man similar to herself in that he is focused on wealth and wants to marry Caroline for her fortune. In *The Work of the Heart*, Martha Blauvelt explains that British novels presented Americans with examples of mercenary marriages. These became images of what a marriage should not be. She adds, "Americans also associated marriage for money with the very wealthy, and regarded it as an extension of the emotional coldness Whigs found so repulsive in the corrupt British aristocracy[.]"[73] In this case, Sedgwick's presentation of her characters matches Blauvelt's assessment. The dislikable, selfish characters are most concerned with marrying for status or wealth, which would have been acceptable within a society where most marriages were based on family alliance and economic concerns. Caroline writes to her grandmother "that Fitzgerald is the son of an Earl, and brother to a Lord."[74] As with her assessment of Westall, Caroline's concerns center on connections rather than character. According to the old system, he would seem to be a good match. Later, Mr. Redwood discovers that Fitzgerald is from the younger branch of a noble family and has "turned into the army to seek his fortune in military life, for which he had no other qualifications than a fine figure and a handsome face."[75] With Fitzgerald, appearances (or Caroline's fantasies) do not match reality; his connections will bring her no status and he is not wealthy. A conversation between other characters determines that Fitzgerald does not love Caroline, and Mrs. Westall, Charles's mother, pronounces that Caroline "is heartless…and therefore fair game for a fortune-hunter."[76] In other words, Caroline and Fitzgerald deserve each other. This passage also serves to make a marriage based on economic concerns appear cold and unfeeling.

Despite warnings from her father, Caroline elopes with Fitzgerald, who urges speed so that his happiness will not be sacrificed.[77] When others attempt to stop their marriage, Fitzgerald

[73] Martha Tomhave Blauvelt, *The Work of the Heart: Young Women and Emotion, 1780-1830* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 86.
[74] Sedgwick, *Redwood*, 1:119.
[75] Ibid, 2:162.
[76] Ibid, 2:168, 167.
[77] Ibid, 2:230.

insists, "I have a right to Miss Redwood," speaking in similar language to Sedgwick's other possessive villains.[78] Caroline becomes a piece of property which he has a right to possess. The two are married, but both die young in the West Indies. Caroline's dying wish is that her sister, Ellen, the heroine, raise Caroline's daughter to be like Ellen. Deborah, Ellen's friend, writes "that if this child lives to grow up under [Ellen's] training, the world will see that a woman's being beautiful and rich need not hinder her from being wise and good too."[79] Although Caroline receives justice for her actions in marriage to a man who does not love her, she has a chance at a form of redemption by making sure her daughter does not follow in her footsteps. Deborah's words indicate that the current generation will have the opportunity to shape the new generation in a way that corrects the mistakes of the previous generation. People do not have to remain trapped in power structures that no longer function properly; they can be educated to achieve new, more effective forms of operation.

To a lesser extent, Sedgwick provided another dislikable female character who marries for the wrong reasons and represents the negative potential of too much female autonomy in Elvira Wilson, the cousin of the heroine in Sedgwick's first novel, *A New England Tale* written in 1822. She is clearly designed as a foil for the heroine, Jane Elton. The cousins are directly contrasted by the narrator: Elvira asks Jane to inform her mother that she could not find Elvira, "Elvira was so habituated to deceit, that it never occurred to her, that the falsehood was the difficult part of the errand to Jane."[80] For Elvira deceit is a reflex, but to Jane the notion is entirely foreign. Like Caroline Redwood, Elvira is deceptive in her actions. In Elvira's case, her mother's treatment has caused her to be deceitful. In addition, she is "a farrago of romance" as a result of reading love-stories at boarding school.[81] Although Elvira is not spoiled like Caroline Redwood, her actions are due to her mother's method of parenting, stemming from the transference and magnification of faults from the previous generation, which drive her to worse actions than those her mother is attempting to prevent. Elvira uses her deceitful practices to prevent Jane from going to a party with Edward Erskine, the villain, who cannot decide which of them he likes best. Erskine does take Elvira, and "so skillfully and successfully did she ply her

[78] Ibid, 2:234.
[79] Ibid, 2:288.
[80] Sedgwick, *A New-England Tale*, 39.
[81] Ibid, 40.

arts, on this triumphant day, that Erskine scarcely thought of Jane[.]"[82] Like Helen Ruthven from *The Linwoods*, Elvira acts, not out of love or affection, but out of deliberate calculation in an effort to win the man she wants. Despite Elvira's efforts, Erskine chooses to pursue Jane, although she ultimately rejects him based on his own actions.

As with Sedgwick's other villains, Elvira does not escape justice. Her romantic notions lead her to fall in love with Lavoisier, a French dance-master, who she claims is a Count in disguise.[83] Similarly to Caroline Redwood, Elvira sees nobility in a man with foreign connections. After convincing Jane to give her twenty dollars—supposedly for Elvira's brother who is in jail—Elvira takes the money and uses it to elope with Lavoisier. The newly married couple stops at a tavern, where the landlord accuses Lavoisier of having stolen on an earlier occasion his horse and chaise. The group in the tavern wants to tar and feather Lavoisier, but Elvira's intervention secures his release.[84] This scene demonstrates that Lavoisier has just as deceitful of a nature as his wife. When discussing the courtship of Sedgwick's brother, Harry, in *The Sedgwicks in Love*, Kenslea claims, "Honesty was another preeminent characteristic in a worthy husband[.]"[85] Just as she did with the corrupting dangers of too much focus on wealth, Sedgwick applied this idea to both men and women, indicating that neither Elvira or Lavoisier was a worthy spouse, at least partly as the result of their dishonesty. Due to her romantic notions and her own deceptive practices, Elvira causes herself to be bound to a man who is fairly similar to her and makes a living by tricking people into helping him out. She evaluates her potential husband based on his supposed nobility, rather than his character or his ability to support a wife.

Even though the actions of these villains do not cause their deaths, they are still destructive forces in society and receive justice as the perpetrators end up marrying someone with a similar nature. Libertines such as Horace Copley and Jasper Meredith, who attempt to seduce several women in the novels, are ultimately rejected by the heroines. The actions of these men cause the women to realize their deceitful nature, and as a result, they do not want to marry them. The women that they do marry, Anne Carlton and Helen Ruthven, are their equivalents in terms of selfish superficiality, and in the case of Jasper and Helen, she rules him in the marriage. The women, Caroline Redwood and Elvira Wilson, both formed by their parents' indulgence or

[82] Ibid, 74.
[83] Ibid, 140.
[84] Ibid, 145-146.
[85] Kenslea, *Sedgwicks*, 157.

lack thereof, also fail to marry the men they initially attempted to win. Instead, both women run off and marry men as focused on wealth and appearance as they themselves are. In each of these cases, the bad habits of both the men and women stem from having had too much wealth and indulgence as children or being too focused on obtaining more wealth and social status. Unchecked ambition and too much autonomy or authority was not seen to be a positive trait in either women or men. With some of the couples, the person seeking wealth achieved that goal in terms of fortune, but still did not have a fulfilling relationship with his or her spouse. Through these characters, Sedgwick warned her readers of the traditional system for finding a spouse, which if left unchecked could lead to moral corruption, as individuals focused more on obtaining wealth and possessions than making a positive contribution to society.

The Language of the Heart

Not all of the failed matches in Sedgwick's novels involve villains. She also presented matches that simply do not work. The reasons that they are unsuccessful illustrate, to an extent, what Sedgwick believed were the important ingredients in a relationship, which in turn reflected the elements that were increasingly emphasized by marriage practices of nineteenth-century society. In *Making the American Self*, Howe defines individualism as "the belief that ordinary men and women have a dignity and value in their own right, and that they are sufficiently trustworthy to be allowed a measure of autonomy in their lives."[86] Sedgwick's characters, male and female, illustrate individualism by exercising their autonomy in their relationships with each other and choosing their marriage partners. As Kathy Psomiades explains in "Heterosexual Exchange and Other Victorian Fictions: *The Eustace Diamonds* and Victorian Anthropology," "In a world of contract…the only distinctions between individuals that matter are those that refer to the competency to contract."[87] This emphasis on individual choice reflected the new system of marriage based on a capitalist society, in which marriages resembled contracts and affective ties were ranked more important than family alliance. In *The Sedgwicks in Love*, Kenslea describes the emphasis on choice when he states that relationships involving the Sedgwicks in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century "reveal the shift…away from marriage as a primarily economic arrangement to one in which the mutual attraction of the partners balanced economic

[86] Howe, *Making*, 9.
[87] Kathy Alexis Psomiades, "Heterosexual Exchange and Other Victorian Fictions: *The Eustace Diamonds* and Victorian Anthropology," *Novel* 33 (1999): 101.

concerns."[88] Sedgwick's novels reflect this focus on mutual attraction, moving away from an emphasis on economic arrangements or patriarchy as represented by the villains. In nearly every couple that is potentially paired up, Sedgwick makes a point of stating either through the narrator or the characters themselves which party does or does not love the other. These assertions were not always to establish love in a relationship, sometimes they asserted that one individual did not love another, such as when Anne Carlton states, "I am not in love with him," in reference to Horace Copley.[89] Whether positive or negative, the fact that Sedgwick felt the need to specify one way or another if the characters were in love indicates the importance of romantic feelings to her and her readers. In *The Work of the Heart*, Blauvelt explains that regardless of how the definition of love differed from one individual to another, "the language of the heart had become essential to courtship."[90] In almost all of the couples of the previous section, no love exists between those who eventually marry. A lack of love, however, is to be expected with villains and dislikeable characters, but Sedgwick also presents examples of positive characters—parents, heroes, and friends of the heroines—who marry or at least consider relationships with an individual that they do not love. These relationships, which either do not take place or are unsuccessful when they do, demonstrate that love in connection with contract marriages was a key ingredient in a successful relationship.

Based on the examples in the novels, it was not sufficient for one person to love the other. Love needed to be mutual, felt equally by both parties. Nancy Cott references a letter by Eliza Chaplin, an early nineteenth century writer, where Chaplin explained that she preferred to remain single "rather than endure 'the unhappiness that exists where minds are 'fettered to different moulds'—and rather than be subject to the 'eternal strife' which in such cases prevails.'"[91] For Chaplin the alternative to remaining single would have left her attached to a man with a mind constructed differently from hers, leaving them both unhappy. In *Hope Leslie*, Esther Downing, a friend of the heroine, falls in love with Everell Fletcher, the hero of the novel. She becomes ill and is believed to be on her deathbed when she confesses her feelings to Everell. He tells her that he appreciates her feelings, "but he did not intimate that he had ever felt a

[88] Kenslea, *Sedgwicks*, 6.
[89] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:73.
[90] Blauvelt, *Work*, 87.
[91] Cott, *Bonds*, 76.

sentiment responding to hers."[92] Although Esther and Everell become engaged when Hope mistakenly concludes that they love each other, Esther breaks off the relationship in a note and leaves for England. Everell marries Hope, and Esther remains single. Despite Esther not marrying another man, the marriage of Hope and Everell demonstrates that the first pairing, where the love was one-sided, would not have been the most fulfilling relationship. Wealth, status, and morals are not an issue in either relationship; the only elements that have changed are the lack of love and the preferences of the characters themselves.

In *Married or Single?*, Sedgwick took a slightly different approach to this idea. In this case, the hero, Archibald Lisle, believes that the woman he would like to marry, Grace Herbert, has engaged herself to Horace Copley, so he convinces himself that he loves Alice Clifford, his childhood friend. Clearly, Lisle does not love Alice, as demonstrated by his repeated reluctant reminders to himself, in which he "resolved, at the very first opportunity, to pledge his loyalty[.]"[93] Lisle's original preference for Grace and his reluctance to propose to Alice indicate that he only wants to marry Alice as a second choice, or in the words of Grace, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, a compromise. According to Chambers-Schiller in *Liberty, A Better Husband*, women outnumbered men in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century New England, which could explain Lisle's opportunity to marry someone even if he could not marry the woman he loved.[94] Although it would be easier for a man to compromise in a marriage partner because he would not lose autonomy by choosing wrong, based on the results of this relationship, it becomes clear that Sedgwick did not advocate this option. When Lisle finally does propose, he asks, "[W]ill you love me?," to which Alice replies, "It never occurred to me that you had a thought of *me*. Why, no, dear Archy, I am very fond of you, but I don't love you in the least—in that way I mean—I never did, and I never can."[95] This exchange highlights the importance of love for these characters. Lisle asks "Will you love me?" instead of "Will you marry me?" Likewise, Alice responds in logic founded on love. Shortly after this scene, Alice reveals that she is already in love with another man. Unlike Esther and Everell, neither individual loves the other in this relationship, and Lisle only proposes because he believes he cannot marry

[92] Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, 144.
[93] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:237.
[94] Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty*, 29.
[95] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:240.

the woman that he does love. In both cases, the characters base their decisions on love and personal preference, rather than economic necessity or social mobility.

In the case of both Esther and Everell and Archibald and Alice, the morality of the characters is not at stake. All four of these individuals have been established in their respective novels as honest, selfless people, making the deciding factor love. Love, however, was not the only factor that had to be considered in a relationship. In order to explain how she fell in love with Charles Fletcher, Alice tells Grace about Fletcher's sister, Mrs. Maltby, who "had married—oh, long ago—and married for love, Grace, a sort of wild Irishman, who took her by storm. He was handsome and eloquent, she said. She had quite a fortune from an aunt[.]"[96] Perhaps Mrs. Maltby fell in love with her husband for the wrong reasons—his handsome, eloquent outward appearance, rather than his true character. But regardless, she married for love. As Mrs. Maltby had a fortune, though, her husband could have married her out of a desire to obtain access to her wealth. Alice continues, "Her husband turned out to be a drunkard, and every thing horrid. He squandered her fortune."[97] Mr. Maltby uses their children as leverage to obtain his wife's fortune and only significant help from Alice and Charles prevents him from taking possession of the children.[98] Similarly, Kenslea writes of Sedgwick's older sister's unhappy marriage, "Frances's plight exposes the vulnerability of married women seeking a divorce or legal separation from abusive or negligent husbands at that time." Later, he adds that although almost all of Frances's brothers were successful lawyers by this time, they were unable to find a way for her to be granted custody of her children if she were to separate from or divorce her husband.[99] Unlike the unfortunate Frances, the fictional Mrs. Maltby is able, with help from her friends, to remove her children from her husband's reach. From their courtship to their marriage, Mrs. Maltby's husband turns out to not be what he had first appeared. Like Jasper Meredith in *The Linwoods*, whom Isabella admits that she had loved, Mr. Maltby does not have the inner qualities that match his looks and mannerisms, and he appears more concerned with making an economic arrangement than a partnership based on affection. Therefore, in addition to love being a necessary ingredient, individuals also needed to make sure they were marrying

[96] Ibid, 2:263.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid, 2:264.
[99] Kenslea, *Sedgwicks*, 7, 79.

someone who would turn out to be a productive member of society, not a drunkard who would squander their money or threaten their children.

Through her villains and unsuccessful romantic relationships between characters, Sedgwick presented her readers with fictional illustrations of what they should avoid while seeking a marriage partner. The most deviant villains, who attempt to force women to marry them in order to obtain wealth or a young wife, are punished the most harshly through death or loss of property and position, illustrating that actions and intentions have consequences. But they also illustrated the dangers of a focus on economic concerns without a consideration of character. Selfish libertines and deceitful female characters receive justice by making a bad marriage, usually to someone just as self-centered and superficial as themselves, demonstrating the undesirability of too much autonomy or power in the hands of any individual, male or female. Throughout each of these examples emphasis is placed on romantic feelings and personal choice. Without love and consent, these relationships cannot be successful. Additionally, both parties need to be productive members of society and good moral people, or even a relationship based on love could fall apart. The interactions between these characters illustrate, either directly or by presenting the opposite, several of the elements that were becoming important to nineteenth-century individuals with regard to their romantic relationships. Sedgwick also warned readers away from relationships that would not succeed, often based on traditional methods for selecting a spouse. Had any of these matches reached their conclusion in marriage, as the few that did demonstrated, they would have led to "the bankruptcies in married life."[100]

[100] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:284

Chapter Two: "One Noble Single Woman"

Women who remain single play a prominent role in Sedgwick's novels as she argued for their usefulness and presented examples of how a woman who chose this path through life should conduct herself. When Grace in *Married or Single?* determines that the best course for her own life is to remain single, her sister Eleanor writes to her:

> Dear sister, it is a consolation (excuse the word) that your example may send a thrill of courage or of resignation to many hearts. One noble single woman, who devotes her faculties (her ten or her one talent) to the service of God and humanity—it matters not whether it be by maintaining hospitals, reforming prisons, succoring and educating outcast children, or by the noiseless healing visit to the obscure sick, or helpless in mind or body—redeems single life from waste, and from dread and contempt. Let women, who have not a home with a master, and a nursery in it, make themselves welcome in many homes, by making them the brighter and happier for their presence; let them, if so gifted, be artists, poets, sculptors, or painters; let them be leeches, or nurses; let their mission be to the ignorant poor, or the poorer rich; let them fall on any wise and profitable occupation…[1]

In this passage, Eleanor explains Sedgwick's argument of what a woman could hope to accomplish by leading a single life, presenting possible alternative occupations for a woman who chose not to marry. As Mary Kelley explains in *Learning to Stand and Speak*, men had options to enter careers or professions, but women took advantage new opportunities to become writers, editors, and teachers because the more traditional masculine occupations were closed to them.[2] Through this exchange between the Herbert sisters, Sedgwick also makes the best of the new opportunities women were being given in the nineteenth century. By remaining single, a woman could be independent for her own sake as well as aid many others through meaningful work. Eleanor's letter continues:

> [T]he prim and ridiculous maiden-aunt will vanish from our novels, and the Lucretia Mactabs from our comedies, and, what is better, the single gossip will disappear from town and village, and the purring "old maid" from garrets and chimney corner. Why, Grace dear old Effie is a rebuke to whining wives and careless mothers, with her self-denying, lavish devotion to children, her gentle, kind doings of all sorts to her general family of human kind, and her cheerful economies of her small means of happiness.[3]

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[1] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:257-258
[2] Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak,* 5.
[3] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:257-258

In addition to attempting to convince young women that they need not marry to live a complete life, Sedgwick was attempting to reform the image of the "old maid" that commonly appeared in fiction, and was then transferred to actual women, perhaps herself included. Instead of useless old women who accomplish nothing, each of Sedgwick's novels contained at least one young or middle-aged woman who is self-sufficient and integral to the happy conclusion of the plot, and who chooses to remain single. Whether a woman chose to remain single because she could not marry the man she loved or because she did not want to limit herself to caring for a single family, Sedgwick argued that a single woman could find useful occupation among those around her and perhaps even impact more lives than a married woman. Despite the fact that Sedgwick herself chose to remain single, her argument was less about marital status than about an individual's obligation to society. In addition to useful, independent, single women, Sedgwick also provided examples of female characters who married but in the absence of their husbands, acted the part of independent single women, making an argument for the wife's greater autonomy within marriage. Therefore, according to Sedgwick, each individual, man or woman, single or married, had an obligation to society and other people to make themselves useful and contribute to society in a positive manner.

In the early nineteenth century, an increasing number of women, Sedgwick included, were choosing to remain single. In *Liberty, A Better Husband*, Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller provides the demographic trends of spinsters in America, which began to rise after the colonial period and continued to do so throughout most of the nineteenth century. Chambers-Schiller is particularly concerned with the women who made a decision not to marry in favor of independence. She adds that these women "talked about the cultivation of the self—the female self. They exhibited a drive toward personal autonomy and expressed it in their thirst for education."[4] Mary Kelley builds on this idea in *Learning to Stand and Speak*: "Employing the benefits of their schooling, women redefined themselves and their relationship to civil society. As educators, as writers, as editors, and as reformers, they entered the 'public sphere,' or the social space situated between the institutions of the family and the nation-state."[5] Women still maintained their place within the power structure and outside of institutional settings, but by remaining single, they also removed themselves from the direct authority of a husband, gaining

[4] Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty*, 3.
[5] Kelley, *Learning*, 1-2.

additional opportunities to exercise their own autonomy through occupations for which their education qualified them. Not all women were in positions to take advantage of these opportunities, but those in the middle class, who were also likely to be reading novels, were best equipped to lead a single life. As Ruth Perry explains in *Novel Relations*, "Only in the middle class could it be argued that women gained ground in society, and a new domestic ideology evolved to naturalize their reconceived roles."[6] As the middle class increased and its female members gained more advantages, they were able to redefine their roles to allow themselves more options, including single life. The occupations listed by Kelley, which were being pursued by these educated women, are similar to those listed by Sedgwick through her character, Eleanor Esterly, in the letter quoted at the beginning of this chapter. These occupations were not self-serving; they added to the improvement of others and society. In addition to the liberties of civil society, women also gained the obligation to contribute to the betterment of society, not merely pursue their own selfish ends.

Sedgwick herself followed this path by remaining single and writing novels in order to affect a wide distribution of people. Sedgwick's single status was a deliberate choice, not merely the result of not being asked to marry. In an 1836 journal entry Sedgwick reminisces about William Jarvis, a former suitor whom she turned down.[7] At one point, she describes a potential reason for her remaining single: "I lately heard or read a remark that struck me—that romantic imaginative persons formed a beau ideal to which nothing in life approximated near enough to satisfy them. This may account for my never responding to the sentiments of those who sought me—though some of them certainly deserved more than I had to bestow—but I have seen those that I think I could have conjured into beau ideals."[8] Sedgwick's explanation was that she never found a man who could live up to her expectations. Perhaps in nineteenth-century American society, no man could live up to the expectations of a woman who wanted to retain some aspect of her autonomy. Instead, through her novels, Sedgwick attempted to provide her culture with ways of imagining a different world in which women and men do live up to their lover's ideals. Nevertheless, Sedgwick writes that she "would not advise any one to remain unmarried—for my

[6] Perry, *Novel Relations*, 64.
[7] Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *The Power of Her Sympathy: The Autobiography and Journal of Catharine Maria Sedgwick*, ed. Mary Kelley (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 151-152.
[8] Ibid, 142.

experience has been a singularly happy one."[9] While this advice might seem contradictory, Sedgwick recognized that leading a single life was not for every woman. As contented as she was with her life, others might not be in her place. She discussed a variety of similar options in her novels. Although all of her heroines, heroes, and a handful of others found happiness in marriage, almost every novel contains at least one significant character who chooses or is forced into remaining single. Having equally positive characters who choose different paths in life provided Sedgwick's readers with models for finding a husband and for finding meaningful employment. She used these characters to imagine acceptable alternatives to the masculine-dominated marriage structure. Sedgwick did not argue that every woman should follow the same path through life. She provided a variety of alternatives in an effort to experiment with different options in nineteenth-century American society.

Slaves Must be Trained for Freedom

In the course of explaining to Mrs. Clifford her decision to remain single, Grace Herbert, the heroine of *Married or Single?*, asserts "As slaves must be trained for freedom, so women must be educated for usefulness, independence, and contentment in single life."[10] Because novels in the nineteenth century were thought by many to be part of a woman's education, Sedgwick was using her novels to do exactly what Grace states, to show women how they can remain single (relatively independent) and still contribute to society. In order to accomplish this goal, Sedgwick also provided examples of women who were not properly educated to single life. If a woman became attached to a man she could not have, then she did not make a conscious decision to remain single, and a disastrous outcome could be the result. When a female character wanted to marry but was prevented by the death of her lover, by a revelation of his true character, or by the impassable cultural gulfs between them, she herself did not survive long in the world of the novel. Being forced into single life, without being "educated" to it, was no more an ideal situation than being forced into marriage. Just as who to marry became a choice for women, not marrying at all also needed to be a conscious decision made by an individual.

In three of her first four novels, the single women that Sedgwick presented choose to remain single because, for one reason or another, they cannot marry the man they love. This

[9] Ibid, 123.
[10] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:214.

situation seems to be the most obvious and logical reason for a woman to remain single. After all, as Grace Herbert argued in the excerpt at the beginning of the last chapter, a woman should not compromise and marry a man she does not love simply for the purpose of being married. Even though these women do not marry for logical reasons—the man she loves has died, has been separated from her by insurmountable cultural differences, or has turned out to be the villain—Sedgwick makes an effort to have these single women stand out as something more than a plot device. For these characters, the problem is that they are not prepared for single life. They do not consciously choose to remain single and they suffer because they are forced into single life.

In her first novel, *A New England Tale*, Sedgwick presents an unmarried woman who provides a negative spin on remaining single but still holds a key position in the novel. Introduced as "a middle aged woman, whose mind had been unsettled in her youth by misfortunes," this woman is most often referred to in the novel as "crazy Bet."[11] The narrator relates Bet's history, which also explains her unsettled mind: "[Bet] would watch for whole nights by the side of a grave in her native village, where twenty years before were deposited the remains of her lover, who was drowned on the day before they were to have married."[12] This background information indicates that Bet, who was previously in love, had not married the man she loved because he died. Still, their love was strong enough (or his death tragic enough) to permanently alter Bet's mind. With an increase in the importance of affective ties, individuals would be expected to have deeper connections as opposed to merely establishing relations for the purpose of economic exchange.

Despite her unbalanced nature, Bet provides a service to the heroine, Jane, by guiding her through the wilderness to the house of an old man and his wife, who has asked for Jane's assistance. Although she is not likely to have been included as a role model for young readers, Bet does have more freedom of movement than any other character, male or female, in the novel. The narrator describes this independence: "Having no mischievous propensities, she was allowed to indulge her vagrant inclinations, in wandering from house to house, and town to town[.]"[13] Presumably, Bet does not marry because of her lost love, and although the reader does not know if any other men sought to marry her, to some extent, she chooses to remain single. Her devotion

[11] Sedgwick, *A New England Tale*, 16.
[12] Ibid, 17.
[13] Ibid, 16.

to her deceased lover is reinforced in the last sentences of the novel: "The next morning she [Bet] was discovered in the church-yard, her head resting on the grassy mound that covered the remains of her lover. Her spirit had passed to its eternal rest!"[14] Even if Bet were in her right mind throughout the novel, she would almost have had to remain single in order to maintain her devotion to her lover. From her introduction to her death on the last page, Bet does not waiver in her devotion to his memory and his grave. For her, marriage to another would be a compromise and thus unacceptable.

As with Bet, Bessie Lee from *The Linwoods* devotes herself and her affection to one man, Jasper Meredith. Unlike Bet's lover, Meredith does not die. But in a sense, Bessie's image of him does. Bessie falls in love with Meredith, and while Meredith encourages her, he does not love her in return. Bessie reflects, "[B]ut I gave my whole heart unasked and silently," to which, the narrator adds, "She could have recalled passionate declarations in his eye, prayers in his devotion; but her love had the essential characteristics of true passion; it was humble, generous, and self-condemning."[15] Bessie devotes herself entirely to Meredith, and when she discovers that he does not really love her, it is almost more than she can handle.

As her mother explains in a letter to her son, Eliot, Bessie wastes away until she is a shadow of her former self, and then she begins to act strangely. She actually turns down the proposal of Herbert Linwood, who loves her, on the grounds that she does not love him.[16] Because she cannot marry Jasper, Bessie feels that she cannot marry anyone else. Finally, she takes off one night without any explanation to anyone. Both Eliot and his mother believe that Bessie is attempting to get to New York to see Meredith and will not survive the journey.[17] Bessie proves stronger than any of them believed and arrives in New York, where she slowly recovers. Bessie's arrival and communication of events to her friend, Isabella, the heroine, result in Isabella seeing Meredith's true character and avoiding becoming attached to him as well. All that remains of Bessie's illusions about Meredith is "a sort of nun-like shrinking from the admiration and devotion of the other sex."[18] Echoing Grace Herbert's argument, Chambers-Schiller in *Liberty, A Better Husband* explains, "The most striking attitude expressed in antebellum women's literature… was the commonly expressed view that it was better to remain

[14] Ibid, 165.
[15] Sedgwick, *The Linwoods*, 66.
[16] Ibid, 70-71.
[17] Ibid, 207-213.
[18] Ibid, 353.

single than to suffer the miseries of a bad marriage or to compromise one's integrity in order to gain a husband or competency."[19] In this case, Bessie Lee suffers miseries either way, but she does not compromise her integrity. Instead, she aids others even those outside of her family, first by revealing Meredith's true character to Isabella, and then, instead of looking for another man to fall in love with and marry, "liv[ing] for others, and chiefly to minister to the sick and sorrowful."[20] Because of her unfortunate experience with a lover who, rather than dying, turned out to be other than he had first appeared, Bessie chooses to remain single, and the narrator explains that "her pilgrimage" on earth was not a long one, which implies that she remained single to the end of her life. Like Bet, Bessie experiences a strong attachment at a young age; when she cannot marry him, she chooses to marry no one.

The final character in this section also devotes herself to a young man, in this case, one she has no intention of marrying. This pairing is the only potential match that does not come close to realization in the novel, although it is hinted at strongly enough to be worth consideration. In *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick presented an Indian woman with a moral strength and defiance of the law equivalent to that of the heroine. In her introduction to the novel, in an effort to explain Sedgwick's sympathy for the Indians, Mary Kelley draws several parallels between Hope Leslie and Magawisca, arguing that they are presented by Sedgwick as "sisters of the soul."[21] Kelley explains, "The parallel between Magawisca and Hope is most striking in their challenge to established authority."[22] In addition to a number of minor resistance efforts, Hope is the principle player in two separate instances of Indian women being broken out of jail, the second being Magawisca after her conviction by the Puritan court. Likewise, Magawisca opposes her father's wishes by preventing him from killing Everell Fletcher and allowing the young man to escape. Both women are willing to defy the laws of their respective societies by doing what they believe to be morally correct. Although these characters exhibit positive agency within the novel, Sedgwick maintains the cultural barriers that prevent them from existing in the same society.

Similarly, both women love the same man. But it is Hope who marries him at the novel's end, while Magawisca returns to the wilderness alone. When Magawisca is first brought to stay

[19] Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty*, 17.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Kelley, introduction, xxii.
[22] Ibid, xxvii.

with the Fletchers, she develops a friendship with Everell, but even their sympathy for one another does not prevent her from keeping quiet about the impending attack on the Fletcher household. Throughout the novel, Magawisca wavers between conflicting duties to her father and sympathies for her friends. After Everell's capture, Magawisca appeals to her father to have mercy on Everell, and her father asks, "Why hast thou linked thy heart, foolish girl, to this English boy?"[23] Her father is not objecting to her having sympathies for the English in general, but for Everell specifically. Shortly after her father asks this question, the narrator indicates that Magawisca's heart kept time with Everell's.[24] Just as a connection is drawn between Hope and Everell, a similar connection is drawn between Magawisca and Everell.

Although the affection between Magawisca and Everell never develops beyond friendship, a few passages hint that if circumstances were different, the connection could have grown stronger. When Magawisca saves Everell from her father's vengeance, it is "the power of love, stronger than death, that…Magawisca scaled the rock, and achieved her generous purpose."[25] Magawisca's love for Everell allows her to reach him in time to save his life. This could still merely be the love one would have for a brother or a friend. Much later in the novel, when Digby, a friend of the Fletchers, who had known both young people when Magawisca was living with family, learns of Everell's engagement to Esther Downing, he tells Everell, "[T]ime was, when I viewed you as good as mated with Magawisca[.]"[26] Everell responds, "Yes, Digby, I might have loved her—might have forgotten that nature had put barriers between us."[27] This exchange indicates that Magawisca and Everell had revealed enough of their feelings that Digby, an outside observer, believed that they would eventually marry. Everell, however, points to the insurmountable barrier that stands between them. Everell calls it "nature," but he is pointing to a difference in cultures that would prevent him and Magawisca from ever being an acceptable match. Even though Sedgwick blurs the lines between social class in her fiction, she upholds the opposition to cross-cultural marriage.

Without expressing it in so many words, both Everell and Magawisca recognize that they could never be more than friends. Near the end of the novel, the narrator states with regard to Magawisca, "Her affection for Everell Fletcher had the tenderness, the confidence, the

[23] Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, 1:87-88.
[24] Ibid, 1:91.
[25] Ibid, 1:98.
[26] Ibid, 2:223-224.
[27] Ibid, 2:224.

sensitiveness of a woman's love; but it had nothing of the selfishness, the expectation, or the earthliness of that passion."[28] Even though Magawisca loves Everell just as much as her colonial counterpart, Hope Leslie, she knows that she can never act on her love. She tells Hope, with regard to another matter, "[B]ut I have learned to deny even the cravings of my own heart," an attitude which she demonstrates in her attitude toward Everell.[29] After Magawisca is freed from jail, Hope and Everell present her with the option of returning to New England, but she tells them, "[T]he Indian and the white man can no more mingle, and become one, than day and night."[30] Just as Everell identifies 'barriers of nature,' Magawisca recognizes that cultural divisions separate her people from the colonists and herself from Everell. While it is entirely possible that Magawisca returns to her people and marries an Indian man, for the purposes of this novel she is a single woman, who is more or less pushed into remaining single due to external circumstances, just as Bet and Bessie Lee were.

Although these three female characters would probably prefer not to remain single, forces outside of themselves, such as death, betrayal, or cultural differences, prevent them from marrying the men they love. Bessie Lee chooses not to marry or even consider marrying another man once she has discovered Jasper Meredith's villainous nature. As Grace Herbert suggests, she does not compromise by marrying just for the sake of marriage. While it is possible Magawisca marries after she leaves the stage of *Hope Leslie*, in the novel she chooses to walk away from a potential match, not because love is lacking, but because a marriage between cultures would be unsuitable and not permitted. External forces act against these women and their desired matches. Single life is not their first choice; they are not 'educated for it,' which places them in direct contrast to the female characters found in the next section who made a conscious decision to remain single despite offers of marriage from men that they loved.

Not Essential

Based on the evidence of the previous section, Sedgwick clearly advocated remaining single if a woman was prevented from marrying the man she loved, but she also indicated through her characters that it should be acceptable for a woman to shape her own course, without the intervention of external circumstances, and choose to remain single. Beyond the choice of

[28] Ibid, 2:276.
[29] Ibid, 2:199.
[30] Ibid, 2: 349.

marriage or single life, Sedgwick believed single women to have just as much of a duty to others as individuals who chose to marry. In *Learning to Stand and Speak*, Kelley explains, "The claim that women's learning was dedicated, not to self-actualization, but to social improvement was designed for the same purpose it had served in its post-Revolutionary articulation—legitimating women's engagement in the making of public opinion."[31] Sedgwick was both exercising this idea, that a woman, married or single, could affect a positive impact on society, by writing novels, and arguing it through her characters. A woman might make the conscious decision to turn down a marriage proposal, but if she was not going to start a family of her own, she needed to devote herself to some other benevolent pursuit. Rather than focusing entirely on whether or not an individual should walk the path to the altar, Sedgwick also considered methods for becoming involved in social improvement, regardless of marital status. This involvement justified a woman's single life as well as her participation in public opinion.

The character that most clearly illustrates the good that could be accomplished by a woman, even if she was single, is Julia Travers in *Married or Single?*. It is not explicitly stated in the novel that Julia is single by choice, but based on her interaction with the other characters, it is implied that she does not put herself in a position to be considered an eligible marriage partner. Grace writes in a letter to her friend Alice that she asked Julia if she was going to Mrs. Seton's, to which Julia replied that she never goes to parties. When Grace inquirs further, asking if Julia condemns them, Julia responds, "For myself, I do. The late hours do not suit me; and I must take care of my health, that being essential to me."[32] This exchange clearly indicates that Julia has no interest in conventional female activities. She is more concerned about her health than about going to parties, and presumably, meeting eligible young bachelors. Even though Julia does not directly turn down a marriage proposal, it is evident that her choice of lifestyle is a key component to her remaining single.

Like the characters who remain single due to external circumstances, Julia maintains an independent lifestyle. She is in a position to be able to support herself and devote her life to charity work. Another of the guests comments with regard to Julia, "It is not a good sign for a young woman to cut and carve a way of life for herself."[33] Julia's independence leads her to occupy her time with charitable organizations rather than spending time socializing at parties like

[31] Kelley, *Learning*, 102.
[32] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 1:191.
[33] Ibid, 1:192.

the rest of the female characters. Mrs. Hall, who objects to Julia's independence, continues to criticize her: "You know, Mr. Herbert, it is absurdly odd for a girl of her fortune to be a Visitor at the Half Orphan, and Manager of the Colored Orphan Asylum! To drill little negro children! I hear she has her mornings for receiving her poor."[34] It is important to note that in this passage Mrs. Hall identifies Julia as a woman of fortune. Having a fortune would allow her to pursue an independent lifestyle-option that would not have been available to every young woman in New England. In *Liberty, A Better Husband*, Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller provides the example, "Even though some 50 percent of the unmarried native-born females in Utica in 1855 were secure enough financially to be spared entry into the ill-paid female labor force, the other half struggled to support themselves or their families."[35] Therefore, for many women, single life would not have been a practical choice in economic terms. However, if a woman such as Julia Travers had financial independence, she could have just as easily lived a leisurely life without much obligation. Instead, she chooses to becoming involved in voluntary associations, teaching and aiding the poor. Like her character, Sedgwick was involved in reform movements, directing the Woman's Prison Association in New York from 1848 until her death.[36] Although she did not have an independent fortune, she lived with various relatives throughout her life, giving her the financial security to pursue an independent lifestyle. In case the reader does not feel properly sympathetic to Julia, the narrator adds after Mrs. Hall's outburst, "(Dear Julia, think of her modest charities being so pounced upon by this bird of prey.)"[37] It is Julia that the reader is meant to identify with, and perhaps use as a role model for an independent single life.

Sedgwick does not simply use Julia as an argument for the usefulness of a single woman's life. She also adds a defense of "old maids." Shortly after Sedgwick's narrative bid for sympathy toward Julia, Mrs. Hall claims, "As to charities, subscribing to societies, and being kind to the poor, that's all right…but as to making it a profession, that is only suitable for a spinster of forty or fifty."[38] Rather than taking Mrs. Hall's argument at face value, the reader can see the benefit of Julia making a profession of her charities, preventing this kind of benevolent work from being delegated to older women. Evidence indicates that increasing numbers of young

[34] Ibid, 1:193.
[35] Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, A Better Husband*, 44.
[36] Barbara A. Bardes and Suzanne Gossett, *Declarations of Independence: Women and Political Power in 19th-Century American Fiction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 35.
[37] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 1:193.
[38] Ibid.

women were choosing to remain single in the nineteenth century.[39] If greater numbers of these young single women were to become more involved in these organizations, perhaps charity work would cease to be viewed as a spinster's profession. Regardless of whom she was directing this argument at, Sedgwick argues through Julia Travers for the importance of the involvement of people of fortune in charitable organizations. For her, it was unacceptable to go through life party by party, only caring selfishly for one's own wealth and status. Instead, one needed to find some way to aid others and be a positive moral force in society.

Sedgwick made her strongest argument for a single life at the end of *Hope Leslie*. Over the course of the novel, Esther Downing falls in love with the hero, Everell Fletcher. Everell, however, loves Hope Leslie, not Esther. Because Hope mistakes their feelings for one another, Esther and Everell become engaged. When Esther realizes that Hope and Everell love one another, she, the character most strongly connected with obedience to duty, performs her one and only defiant act. She leaves a note, breaking the engagement, and heads for England.[40] Esther's action removes the only obstacle preventing the hero and the heroine from marrying. Her choice to remain single is a positive force in the novel.

Esther maintains her decision, even when she returns to New England at the end of the novel. The narrator states, "[Esther's] personal loveliness, Christian graces, and the high rank she held in the colony, rendered her an object of very general attraction. Her hand was often and eagerly sought, but she appears never to have felt a second engrossing attachment. The current of her purposes and affections had set another way."[41] It might appear as though Esther is following the guidelines of the women in the first section—she cannot marry the man she loves so she remains single. But this is not the case. As the narrator indicates, she has found a different purpose in life. The final sentence of the novel states, "Indeed, those who saw on how wide a sphere her kindness shone, how many were made better and happier by her disinterested devotion, might have rejoiced that she did not *'Give to a party what was meant for mankind.'*"[42] Sedgwick emphasizes this passage by ending the novel with a woman who chooses to devote her life to others. Esther has a wider sphere of kindness by remaining single, and she also escapes being held to the norms of a woman's role in marriage. Although Sedgwick does not elaborate

[39] Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty*, 3, 5.
[40] Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, 366.
[41] Ibid, 370.
[42] Ibid, 371.

on details of what exactly Esther does for others, it can be assumed that she pursues some sort of benevolent purpose, perhaps similar to the charitable activities of Julia Travers. In *Liberty, A Better Husband*, Chambers-Schiller explains, "Antebellum culture correlated goodness with usefulness, and usefulness with happiness."[43] Therefore, Esther's happiness can be assumed as much as the now-married heroine's. Each woman is useful in her own way, and thus by nineteenth-century standards, should be happy.

Connected to this argument of devoting one's life to the happiness of others is Sedgwick's argument for single life. Just prior to the previous quotation, the narrator states that "[Esther] illustrated a truth, which, if more generally received by her sex, might save a vast deal of misery: that marriage is not *essential* to the contentment, the dignity, or the happiness of woman."[44] Sedgwick ends *Hope Leslie* not with the marriage of the title character, but with a woman realizing that it is not essential that she marry. The different choices of Hope and Esther demonstrate that a woman can marry or not as she chooses and be happy in either situation. Interestingly enough, when describing in her autobiography her father's decision to remarry after her mother's death, Sedgwick states, "In that time marriage was essential to a man's life."[45] This idea was reflected in her novels, in which no man remains single throughout his life and even many of those whose wives die remarry or are thinking of remarrying before the novel's end. Within patriarchal society, men had greater autonomy, regardless of their marital status, and Sedgwick's male characters as well as her father would gain little by remaining single. But for a woman, remaining single allowed her to gain greater control in her life. The increasing numbers of women choosing to do so, as reflected in Sedgwick's novels, illustrated an ability and desire to change the existing power structures regarding interactions between women and men. This change could only be effected by women like Julia Travers or Esther Downing, who had the financial independence to shape their own course.

Not all the single women in Sedgwick's novels were portrayed in a positive manner, indicating that she did not advocate single life for everyone. In *Redwood*, Sedgwick provides two single women in the generation prior to the heroine's, which when contrasted illustrate positive and negative choices that a woman could make in how she went about living her single life. Deborah Lenox, the older sister of Mr. Lenox, whose family hosts a significant portion of the

[43] Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty*, 20.
[44] Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie,* 371.
[45] Sedgwick, *Power,* 57.

novel, is initially described as rather masculine in appearance.[46] The narrator states, "The only relict of worldly or womanly vanity which Debby displayed, was a string of gold beads."[47] The story behind these beads that has been passed down to the younger generations is that they were given to Deborah thirty years earlier by a veteran of the Revolutionary War who "was captivated by the martial air of this then young Amazon."[48] As the narrator explains, "But Debby was so imbued with the independent spirit of the times, that she would not then consent to the surrender of any of her rights: and there was no tradition in the family that her maidenly pride had suffered a second solicitation."[49] Evidently, the soldier loved Deborah, but the fact that she kept and continued to wear the beads that he gave her indicates some attachment on her side as well. Despite the mutual affection in this pair, Deborah still turned down her lover's proposal because she did not want to surrender her autonomy.

A similar story with different results is told with regard to Susan Allen, the aunt of the heroine's young friend, Emily, who joins the Shakers. As Susan attempts to convince Emily to give up the man she loves, she tells the story of the man who loved her in her youth, much like Deborah Lenox was loved by the soldier. Susan claims that her love for William Harwood was mutual, but thirty years ago, Susan was persuaded to cast him off because of the new gospel she found among the Shakers. William could not stand the disappointment and fell into bad habits, but he continued to sit for hours on the door-step of the Shaker community until one night, twenty years after Susan joined them, when he froze to death on the doorstep.[50] William's devotion to Susan is quite evident in his continued visits over the course of twenty years, but she refuses him on the basis of religious principles rather than a desire for autonomy as Deborah Lenox did. By placing these stories of single women in the same novel, Sedgwick shifted the focus from a criticism of religious devotion to an evaluation of the positive and negative possibilities of choosing single life.

After Deborah makes her decision to remain single, she lived with the family of her younger brother, Mr. Lenox.[51] Bridget Hill explains in *Women Alone* that unmarried daughters, or in the case of Deborah, sisters, repaid their relatives for their keep by contributing to the

[46] Sedgwick, *Redwood*, 1:31.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid, 1:32.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid, 2:30-33.
[51] Ibid, 1:32.

family and being someone who could be relied upon in a crisis.[52] These women did not lead independent and isolated lives; they could still be part of a family unit and contribute to the household. In the novel, Deborah provides a great deal of assistance to the heroine, Ellen Bruce. When the Lenox family, whose son is in love with Emily Allen, decides that an effort should be made to rescue her, Ellen sets off with Deborah and no one else. The narrator explains that for Ellen's "own part she should esteem her good friend Deborah's right arm as sufficient a defence for these modern times, as a gallant knight or baron bold would have been in the days of danger and of chivalry."[53] Deborah is considered sufficient protection for a lengthy journey, and not only are the women safe in their travels, but they also manage to rescue Emily from a far worse situation than that from which they had set out to extract her. Deborah provides a character integral to the plot and is presented in a positive manner throughout. She lives with and for her family, and in the case of Emily Allen, for those her family loves. Her actions in the novel are selfless and designed to hold the familial community together.

In contrast to Deborah, Susan tries to keep Emily cut off from her family and the Lenox family, including their son with whom she is in love. As Susan is telling the story of her lover, William, she tells Emily that all of her relatives who joined the Shaker community with her left, and "I alone remained to abide our day of wasteness and desolation."[54] While Deborah surrounds herself with family, Susan is alone among the Shakers, a group which, in turn, isolates itself from the society around it. Part of the reason that Emily becomes entrapped by them is because Susan wants her niece with her. This selfish desire directly results in the chief villainy of the novel, when the other Shaker leader, Rueben Harrington runs off with Emily in an effort to make her marry him against her will. Susan's actions have negative consequences, while Deborah's result in positive outcomes. Even though Susan is surrounded by the rest of the Shaker community, she is isolated from her family and the larger society. If Sedgwick was arguing through her novels that people should benefit others as much as their lives and means allow, then Susan's negative portrayal could be the result of her violating this principle. Her actions lead to difficulties for the other characters because she is not using her single status to broaden her ability to assist others.

[52] Bridget Hill, *Women Alone: Spinsters in England 1660-1850* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 69.
[53] Sedgwick, *Redwood*, 1:261.
[54] Ibid, 2:32.

Unlike Julia Travers, Esther Downing, and Deborah Lenox who aid the other characters, Susan only attempts to pull individuals away from family and the community.

With these single women who make the conscious decision not to marry, Sedgwick went beyond arguing for or against matrimony. Instead, she was concerned with what an individual did in relation toward others, and how women were able to achieve different objectives from different places within society. It was more important that individuals follow in the footsteps of the positively portrayed single women and not act in an isolationist manner similar to the negative female characters. Although Sedgwick envisioned a reshaping of the power relations between women and men by presenting these single women, she also cautioned against too much isolation, arguing that individuals had an obligation to make a positive contribution to society by taking care of others, either strangers or family. In Sedgwick's eyes, women, single or married, were required to fulfill this obligation just as much as men, and if the distribution of power was redefined within nineteenth-century society, it would allow women more opportunities to have a positive impact, regardless of their matrimonial status.

My Own Little Ventures

In order to demonstrate how little marital status really mattered, Sedgwick also provided female characters who choose to marry but do not act in a significantly different manner from their single counterparts. These women act independently of their husbands. Widows would obviously be likely to fall under this category since they have been deprived of their husbands, but Sedgwick's widows take this a step farther by refusing to rely on their male relatives to take care of themselves and their families. But Sedgwick also illustrates this idea through women who remain married and either act in opposition to their husbands or send them away, leaving the woman to support herself and manage her household without his assistance. According to Daniel Walker Howe in *Making the American Self*, men and women in the nineteenth century were increasingly adopting the right to self construction, which "is the right to decide what kind of person one wishes to be and also the right to fulfill one's potential. It is therefore related to the right to choose one's religion, occupation, or political preference."[55] Although Howe does not develop his discussion in this direction, it could also be applied to marriage in terms of the right to marry or not and fulfill one's potential either way. Independent married women who are

[55] Howe, *Making*, 9.

presented in a positive light exhibit the same characteristics as the positively portrayed single women, demonstrating what Sedgwick considered to be the obligation of individuals, rather than merely single women, in nineteenth-century society.

The Linwoods contains a widow who rivals the heroine in her independent lifestyle. Mrs. Archer, the heroine's aunt, is first introduced into the novel when she opposes Isabella's desire to bring her friend to stay with the Linwood family in New York. Mrs. Archer explains to her niece, "It is the work of a lifetime, my dear Belle…to acquire habits of exertion and self-dependence—such habits are essential to this little country-girl."[56] Mrs. Archer specifically refers to Isabella's friend, but based on her actions in the novel, her statement could be applied to other women, most obviously herself, but also to those women who choose to remain single or become single over the course of their lifetime. After the Revolutionary War breaks out, Mrs. Archer refuses to leave her home, despite the fact that it is territory inhabited by skinners, a violent unorganized group who associate themselves with the rebel cause.[57] Another character explains to Eliot Lee, "I mistrust, captain, you a'n't much acquainted with the quality in York state, or you'd know Madam Archer of Beech-Hill; the widow lady with the blind twins. I believe the Lord has set a defence around her habitation; for there she stays, with those helpless little people, and neither harm nor the fear of it come nigh her[.]"[58] Although his prediction of her safety ultimately proves false, it is a testament to her independence that she remains where she is. Mrs. Archer writes her reasoning to Isabella: "No, I repeat it, I cannot go to the city. You say I am afraid of the shackles of city life! I confess, that with my taste for freedom, and my long indulgence in it, they would be galling to me."[59] Mrs. Archer connects the city to restrictions on freedom, and within the novel, the city contains colonial British society. While this passage draws additional parallels between restrictive power structures and European society, it also illustrates that the roots of these oppressive aspects of society can be found in America just as much as Europe. Women, such as Mrs. Archer and through her, Sedgwick, work to reform these characteristics, even if they need to remove themselves from the society to do so. Despite the fact the Mrs. Archer was once married, in this novel she is single and acts with the independence of a single woman who refuses to rely on others for aid or protection.

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[56] Sedgwick, *The Linwoods*, 20.
[57] Ibid, 155. Also see note to page 155 on page 367.
[58] Ibid, 155-156.
[59] Ibid, 159.

Mrs. Archer takes her agency beyond merely refusing to leave her home when the band of skinners arrive to rob her. Believing that his men have been cheated out of their spoils by this woman because they can find very little worth stealing, the leader of the skinners decides to take one of her children as security that she will bring him more money at an appointed time. Her son offers to go in place of his sister, but Mrs. Archer insists, "Neither shall go, my children—they shall take my life first," and "[t]he outlaw had advanced with the intention of seizing one of them; but, awed by the resolution of the mother, or perhaps touched by the generosity of the boy, he paused and retreated."[60] For the sake of her children, Mrs. Archer is able to stand up to the outlaws directly, risking her own life, and not just opposing them by maintaining her present residence. At the first opportunity, Mrs. Archer gets a horn, while her female servant is frozen with fear, and sounds the alarm.[61] If it were not for this warning, Eliot Lee would not have brought others to her aid, nor would he have been able to ultimately rescue her daughter who had been carried off by the outlaws. Even though Eliot does the rescuing, Mrs. Archer's selfless act makes it possible. Mrs. Archer is one of several female characters in Sedgwick's works who blurs the lines between married and single. She had consented to marry and presumably become the dependent of her husband, but upon his death, she asserts her own autonomy and fills the traditionally masculine role of the protector of her family. Through characters like Mrs. Archer, Sedgwick was able to test the limits of female autonomy, imagining for her readers what they could accomplish in a society where women and men aided one another and negotiated power, rather than leaving the authority resting in the hands of a portion of the population.

In *Redwood*, the heroine, Ellen Bruce, also has a strong independent woman as a role model, but unlike Mrs. Archer, Mrs. Harrison is still married while she is advising her young friend. The Allens, by whom Ellen Bruce is being raised, live on a farm adjoining the Harrisons. When young Ellen inadvertently passes along an insult to Mr. Harrison, he tells his wife that she should have nothing else to do with their neighbors. In *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, Gordon Wood explains that women were both legally considered like children and often treated as such by their husbands.[62] Following this practice of patriarchal society, Mr. Harrison expresses his opinions about the people with whom he wishes his wife to interact and assumes she will obey. Their marriage is not one of compromise and discussion; Mr. Harrison

[60] Ibid, 166.
[61] Ibid, 166.
[62] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 49.

clearly perceives himself to be holding the authority in the relationship. The narrator explains her response: "Mrs. Harrison made no reply; she usually conformed to the spirit of the promise contained in the dutch marriage service, maintaining silence in the presence of her husband; it was the least difficult expression of acquiescence, and long habit had given her a facility in this extraordinary virtue."[63] Mrs. Harrison does not directly oppose her husband, but neither does she actively support his line of thinking. In fact, she continues to look for opportunities to maintain her acquaintance with Ellen.

When the Allens' house catches on fire, Mrs. Harrison wakes the servants and rushes across fields, over fences, and across a stream to their aid without even a passing thought about her husband. Some of the Allens escape from the house just as Mrs. Harrison arrives. She quickly learns that Ellen is still inside, but "Allen, stupefied with fright, had gone with a single pail to a well at some distance from the house; other members of the family, who had escaped by different windows, were so bewildered with terror as to be incapable of rendering the slightest aid."[64] Upon seeing that no one else will help, Mrs. Harrison runs into the burning house herself: "The passage was so darkened with smoke that she could not perceive the door she sought, but inspired with preternatural courage, menaced with death on every side, already scorching with the heat, and nearly suffocated with the smoke, she pressed forward till she reached a passage-way that crossed the entrance at right angles."[65] Mrs. Harrison is able to locate Ellen and rescue her from the burning house. During this incident, Mrs. Harrison conducts herself in a manner not unlike the heroines of Sedgwick's novels. Despite personal danger, she acts when no one else, including the male characters surrounding her, will. Like Mrs. Archer, Mrs. Harrison can and does function independently of her husband, with whom she does not always agree. By choosing not to oppose her husband directly, Mrs. Harrison negotiates some measure of autonomy within her marriage, which allows her to keep the peace between them, but still act independently to the benefit of those around her.

It can also be assumed that she passes on these character traits to Ellen Bruce through her education. After the fire, Mrs. Harrison obtains Mr. Allen's permission to keep Ellen until their family is established in a new home. While they are together, Mrs. Harrison "taught [Ellen] every thing she was capable of receiving at the age of five years, in the way of formal

[63] Sedgwick, *Redwood*, 145.
[64] Ibid, 1:146-147.
[65] Ibid, 1:147.

instruction…She insinuated moral, and it may be added, religious principles into her mind, in the winning form of stories."[66] Mrs. Harrison is a key figure in Ellen's moral upbringing. Once the family is reestablished, Ellen splits her time between Mrs. Harrison and the Allens, and "[i]n this arrangement there was a system of checks and balances that produced that singular and felicitous union of diversity of qualities which constituted the rare perfection of Ellen's character."[67] Mrs. Harrison's role in Ellen's life helps to produce the woman who will become the selfless and morally correct heroine of the novel. Education and upbringing can be emphasized in this case because Ellen has a half-sister that she does not know existed who was raised in an indulgent life of luxury and became a spoiled selfish young woman. The two young women are sisters, and the extreme differences in their character can only be accounted for by examining those who influenced them, such as Mrs. Harrison. It is only by eventually going against her husband's initial suggestion to avoid all interaction with the Allens that Mrs. Harrison is able to play this vital role in the shaping of *Redwood*'s young heroine. Through her, Sedgwick demonstrates the benefits of a woman who did not blindly obey her husband. Instead, she evaluates situations and made decisions on her own, without upsetting the existing social order.

Mrs. Archer no longer has a husband; Mrs. Harrison's husband should not be obeyed; but what happens when a woman loves her husband? Can she still negotiate her own autonomy? The actions of Eleanor (Herbert) Esterly in *Married or Single?* indicate that a woman can act independently even when married. Unlike many early nineteenth-century novels, *Married or Single?* begins with one of the two main female characters marrying relatively quickly. Although the heroine, Grace, fulfills the traditional narrative structure by marrying at the end of the novel, her sister, Eleanor, falls in love with and marries Frank Esterly near the beginning. To all indication, Eleanor and Frank have a companionate marriage based on mutual love. Eleanor describes their marriage when she says that her sister "will have nothing, if not a love and confidence like ours—ever growing; our smallest joy, and our keenest sorrow binding us closer together; a mutual dependence, and an individual freedom springing from reciprocal faith, love, and charity; each a life apart, and a life together."[68] To all appearances, the Esterlys' marriage is nothing like the Harrisons'. They have a functioning marriage founded on love and respect, rather than the discord, which is felt if not spoken, between Mr. and Mrs. Harrison.

[66] Ibid, 1:154.
[67] Ibid, 1:155.
[68] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2: 79.

For nearly the entire novel, the marriage between Eleanor and Frank operates more as partnership than a power struggle. After the death of one of their children, Eleanor helps her husband, who is a clergyman, as much as she can with his work. The narrator describes Frank's response to Eleanor's efforts: "He acknowledged her help, comparing himself to a traveler through a tangled forest, confused by opposing and uncertain lights, who, ever and anon, catches a ray from the polar star, and thence is sure of his course."[69] Frank recognizes his struggle and allows his wife to assist him. In this instance, each spouse relies on the other in order to work through a difficult time in their lives. Their relationship is not tyrannical because Frank is willing to relinquish some of his society-sanctioned power to his wife. Sedgwick presented this argument within imagined marriages, but it could be applied to the society as a whole. If men were to share a greater percentage of power with the women in their lives, more could be accomplished and each individual could help those around them to live happy fulfilling lives. This presentation might seem idealistic, but Sedgwick was not arguing that allowing women autonomy would solve all of the problems in America. Instead, she demonstrated that some of the problems could be solved and more could be tackled with women and men working together.

Despite her companionate marriage, Eleanor, like Mrs. Harrison, finds the need to act independently of her husband. When Frank has a crisis of faith and decides to leave the church, Eleanor supports his decision. She informs her husband, "You shall command the ship, as you have done; but I must have my own little ventures on board."[70] This passage indicates that Eleanor is unwilling to relinquish all of the power in their marriage to the judgment of her husband. She moves away from merely supporting and aiding Frank to exercising her own autonomy. Eleanor writes to the principal of a boarding school to secure employment for herself as a music teacher and arranges for an elderly relative to come and take care of their children.[71] These changes allow the Esterlys to let their house, moving to a cheaper residence in order to provide Frank with the funds to travel in Europe for a year, resting and repairing his strength.[72] Essentially, Eleanor sends her husband away and finds employment for herself, taking on the traditional masculine roles of the husband. She is able to support her family, functioning in a similar manner to the widow, Mrs. Archer of *The Linwoods*. Even happily married to her

[69] Ibid, 1:245.
[70] Ibid, 1:247.
[71] Ibid, 1:248.
[72] Ibid.

husband, Eleanor desires some independence or is able to step into this role when her husband is at a loss to fulfill it. Although Eleanor does not replace her husband, who returns later in the novel, she demonstrates that women are just as capable of managing a household if necessary. Given the chance, a nineteenth-century wife could assist her husband, and working together they could accomplish more than if the family were presided over by a tyrannical patriarch.

Each of these women, Mrs. Archer, Mrs. Harrison, and Eleanor Esterly, are in different situations, but all are married at one point or another. Still, in their novels, each woman is able to exert her autonomy by acting without the aid of the men in their lives to accomplish a positive outcome. Mrs. Archer defends her family and warns others of danger. Mrs. Harrison runs into a burning building to save a little girl. And Eleanor Esterly supports her family while her husband is abroad. Even though these women are married, they do not completely surrender their identity to their husband or their marriage. They act as individuals, making choices and negotiating with others, and they do so within the institution of traditional heterosexual marriage.

To expand this idea a bit farther, the heroines of all of Sedgwick's novels are more concerned with helping others and having a positive impact on those around them than merely finding a husband. Prior to their marriages, which happen at the end or even after the plot of the novel is completed, the heroines operate as though they are single women; they work with the men in their lives or by themselves to solve the problems presented by the plot. Sedgwick's novels are not just romances with the primary purpose of marrying the heroine off to a worthy man. Sedgwick's heroines had to prove to themselves or the reader that they were able to accomplish things on their own. While discussing Sedgwick, Barbara Bardes and Suzanne Gosset state in *Declarations of Independence*, "Furthermore, Sedgwick's decision to portray independent, free-spirited heroines in virtually all of her novels reveals an understanding of the specific conflict that republicanism created for women."[73] This conflict refers to the emphasis on individual independence expressed in republicanism but denied to women in the nineteenth century due to their lack of authority in patriarchal society. Sedgwick's heroines find this republican independence within their traditional lives. Other women negotiate a space for autonomy by remaining single, but the heroines learn to act alongside, but independently, of their future husbands. Only after they establish their own autonomy do the heroines marry the men who aided them, and who presumably might allow them to continue to function with some

[73] Bardes and Gosset, *Declarations,* 32.

autonomy. Sedgwick emphasized this theme of independent women by including the single women discussed in this chapter. The parallels between the single women, the married women who operate as though they are single, and the heroines demonstrate the importance of autonomous action that allows an individual to benefit society, regardless of his or her marital status.

Chapter Three: "A Happier Fate"

In concluding her own personal debate between married and single life, Grace Herbert asks Mrs. Clifford at the end of *Married or Single?* "Am I not true to my theories? While I contended that there might be golden harvests reaped in the fields of single life, that it was not a condition to be dreaded, scorned, or pitied, but infinitely preferable to the bankruptcies in married life, did I not admit there was a happier fate?—and is not that fate mine?"[1] Ultimately, Grace decides not to remain single because she has found a man that she believes is worthy of marrying. In Archibald Lisle, Grace sees a potential husband with whom she can form companionate, hard-working relationship, rather than simply someone to support their family, a means to an end. While continuing to reinforce heterosexual ideals, nineteenth-century marriage-plot novels began to shift from ending with marriage to wrestling with some of the struggles that could be faced by a married couple. Sedgwick still ended all of her novels with a marriage or plans for a marriage, but she also gave an indication of how well the husband and wife would function as a couple by having them work together during the events of the novel. Together, the pairs of romantically attached individuals explore the expected endurance of love, obligations to society, and shifts away from previous institutions.

In *Mysteries of Sex*, Mary Ryan explains, "The marriage partners of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century reformed the household economy."[2] Ryan provides the example of farm households entering into market agriculture, and she argues that both men and women participated in this shift. Although men worked in the fields and women around the house, both produced goods that they were able to sell, and the farmer's wife often kept her earnings.[3] In this description, as in Sedgwick's novels, women and men worked together, not necessarily as equals, but as partners completing complementary tasks. This participation side by side among women and men anticipated increased liberties that would not necessarily be in the near future. Ryan describes the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as "a distinctive moment in American family history, after patriarchalism had been deposed but before the

[1] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:284.
[2] Mary P. Ryan, *Mysteries of Sex: Tracing Women and Men through American History* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 82.
[3] Ibid.

sentimental mother had been installed at the center of Victorian culture."[4] It was during this time that Sedgwick was writing, during a time when American society had started to move away from what Sedgwick identified as the rigid practices of its European predecessors, but before it had completely settled on rigid practices of its own. Sedgwick's generation was situated in such a way that they could see the possibilities of the rhetoric that had produced the American Revolution and shape a vision of the future that included greater participation of all individuals, women included, through their novels.

In Real Life

At the end of *Redwood*, one of the other characters tells the heroine, "[I]n romance all the business of life ends with a wedding, but in real life that seems to be the starting point."[5] Although Sedgwick did not provide details of the hero and heroine's life after their wedding in *Redwood* or any of her other novels, she did illustrate examples of married life through the other characters. These secondary characters allowed her to explore the nature of love within relationships in addition to its increasingly central role in making matches. In Chapter One, I argued that according to Sedgwick and others in the nineteenth century, mutual affection was an essential component to a successful relationship, and without it, individuals should not marry. But what happened when love was not present in a marriage? Or what if one partner in a companionate marriage died? In addition to examining the function of mutual affection in getting two people into a marriage, Sedgwick also discussed the role it played during and after marriage. Through her characters, a better understanding of how nineteenth century individuals were supposed to act, according to the middle-class ideal, in marriage can be reached.

As previously discussed, despite her married state Eleanor Esterly plays the role of a single woman during a portion of *Married or Single?*. However, Eleanor marries near the beginning of the novel, providing her with time to play both the role of the independent single woman and the dutiful wife. Even though Eleanor can represent a married woman acting as though she is single, she, along with her husband, Frank, also provide the example of an ideal couple enjoying a companionate marriage. The narrator of *Married or Single?* states, "With more of such Christian unions as that of the Esterlys, there would be fewer divorces for

[4] Ibid, 84.
[5] Sedgwick, *Redwood*, 2:277.

'incompatibility,' and a long lull in to the stormy question of 'women's rights.'"[6] This statement occurs just after the couple discusses a difference of opinion they had had earlier. As Sharon Marcus explains in *Between Women*, "Beginning in the late seventeenth century, an increasing tendency to view marriage in egalitarian terms transformed it into something like friendship between husband and wife[.]"[7] As in relationships between friends, Eleanor's marriage to Frank is not perfect; there is conflict as well as support. It is the ability to disagree and work through problems that allows their marriage to be successful and relatively realistic.

Generally, Sedgwick's novels indicate that being selfless is a good attribute, but the portrayal of Eleanor's actions illustrate that too much self-sacrifice is cast in a negative light. Sarah, the aunt who raised Eleanor, writes in a letter, "Eleanor is trained in self-sacrifice—'I am the trainer, no doubt'—and her activity and industry—she is the busiest of little bees—will preserve her from the self-created miseries of the nervous, sickly women that afflict domestic life."[8] Although Eleanor might lean too far in the direction of self-sacrifice, her industry, her desire and capacity to act, prevent her from being miserable in domestic life. Later, the narrator asks, "Why do our most gifted and accomplished young women question life instead of using it, as if its harvests could be reaped without being sown? Why do so many married and unmarried women waste, and fret, and fritter away life, instead of seeing that each cross, trial, and blessing is a rung of that ladder which is set up for them to mount heave! Let them pray and strive for the spirit that makes life duty, and duty life."[9] Sedgwick's argument for married women was similar that for single women. It was not sufficient for a woman to choose an ideal spouse; she must also make something of her life, be active and useful. According to Gordon Wood in *The Radicalism of the Revolution*, "Central to the republican Revolution had been the desire by the revolutionary leaders to refine and improve the moral and aesthetic sensibilities of the American people."[10] Sedgwick, who grew up in the era immediately after the American Revolution, applied this desire to her characters, imagining a society in which women as well as men took on this obligation to improve the moral sensibilities of the American people.

Despite the fact that they are the ideal to be achieved, the relationship between Eleanor and Frank is not perfect. After they have been married for a few years, Eleanor hands Frank a

[6] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:47.
[7] Marcus, *Between Women*, 85.
[8] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 1:35.
[9] Ibid, 1:149.
[10] Wood, *Radicalism*, 354.

handkerchief, and he takes it "without the 'thank you' a gentleman bestows on a maid-servant."[11] Following this exchange, Grace, Eleanor's sister, tells her, "When was there any thing gained in this world by inert submission? I do not like women publicly to champion *women's rights*…but I would have every woman, in her own place, maintain her dignity, and not submit to those little domestic wrongs and tyrannies of your 'very good men,' which are vestiges of the dark ages."[12] Although Grace objects to a woman submitting completely to her husband, she does not necessarily advocate the public intervention of women's rights. Eleanor's solution, which allows her to walk the line between submission and selfishness, is to send her husband abroad for a year, leaving her to operate independently. Without attempting to rewrite the institution of marriage, Eleanor is able to negotiate limited autonomy within her marriage.

This separation seems to indicate troubles in their marriage, but actually it is just the opposite. Because Eleanor and Frank are willing to separate for a time or discuss their differences, they are able to maintain a working and loving relationship. When Frank asks Eleanor why she never becomes impatient or cross with him, she responds, "Well then, Frank, when you are out of humor, I feel just as I do when baby is cross with teething. It is her inevitable misery and my business to help her, to divert and soothe her as well as I can."[13] Eleanor sees it as her job to aid Frank in any way she can. This need to help seems to be merely an aspect of her character, which causes her to spend her time "with thoughts and doings for others," but it, along with Frank's willingness to listen to his wife, is what allows their marriage to function.[14] Eleanor and Frank are not always equals in their relationship with one another, but they complement each other and work together to make their marriage work.

The Esterlys illustrate a very practical example of a companionate marriage, where life is not romance and love all the time, but problems are worked out and hurdles are overcome together. Grace Herbert's declaration that one should not compromise in choosing a marriage partner would seem to indicate that a person can only have one true love. However, Sedgwick provided an example that illustrates another functioning marriage as well as the possibility for finding a second love if something happened to the first. In *A New England Tale*, the narrator digresses to explain the back story of Robert Lloyd, a newly arrived Quaker man. Robert Lloyd

[11] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 1:151.
[12] Ibid, 1:152.
[13] Ibid, 2:47.
[14] Ibid, 1:244.

and Rebecca Elwyn were educated together because it was the dying wish of Rebecca's mother that they one day marry. As a result, "[t]he children…were so much alike in their characters, that one seemed the soft reflection of the other."[15] This similar temperament led them to marry, and others believed that "their love was as 'fervent, mutual, and dear,' as William Penn himself could have desired."[16] From the beginning the marriage of Robert and Rebecca is presented as a companionate marriage based on mutual love. The Lloyds' marriage is actually presented as more significantly more problem-free than that of the Esterlys, perhaps because the Lloyds inhabit Sedgwick's first novel while the Esterlys dwell in the last, and Sedgwick's perspective became more realistic as she got older. The narrator describes the Lloyds' first years of marriage: "Three years glided on in uninterrupted felicity. Excepting when they were called to feel for others' woes, their happiness was not darkened by a single shadow; nor did it degenerate into selfish indulgence, but, constantly enlarging its circle, embraced within its compass all that could be benefitted by their active efforts and heavenly example."[17] Not only were the Lloyds providing one another with happiness, but they were also helping others and leading by example, the same way Sedgwick's characters could provide ideal role models for her readers.

After Rebecca gives birth to their first child, she suffers a lingering illness and dies with the request that Robert will raise their daughter in the area to which they have travelled. Robert tells her, "If that is thy wish, my love…it shall be a law to me."[18] This passage demonstrates Robert's willingness to listen to his wife and allow her wishes to guide him, which based on the example of the Esterlys is a key component of a successful companionate marriage for Sedgwick. Without his wife, Robert remains in the country, and "he hoped there to cultivate and employ a 'talent for doing good;' that talent which a noble adventurer declared he most valued."[19] Beyond assuring his dying wife that her wish will be his law, Robert actually does what she asks, and after her death, he buys property where they were staying and raises their daughter. But he also wants to do good, to help others.

One of the people Robert finds in need of his aid is Jane Elton, the heroine of the novel. Robert notices that Jane seems to be falling in love with Edward Erskine, but when he looks into Erskine's character, he does not like what he sees. Robert has no solid proof of Erskine's bad

[15] Sedgwick, *A New England Tale*, 27.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid, 34.
[19] Ibid.

character, which would give him a right to interfere, "but still he felt as if she was on the brink of a precipice, and he had no right to warn her of her danger."[20] Robert hopes that Jane will make the right choice on her own, but he feels that it is not his place to meddle. Unwilling to exercise his masculine authority, Robert will not force Jane to do something against her will. Instead, he allows her to come to her own conclusion, which by the end of the novel is the same one that he had reached. In order to marry, Robert or Jane had to convert to the other's religion because he was a Quaker while she was Congregationalist. The last pages of the novel consist of Robert deciding that he will leave the Quakers, but before he can inform Jane of his decision, she tells him she would like to join his "society of friends." It is Jane who finally decides to covert to her husband's religion, equating it with taking his last name.[21] It matters less which of them converts than that they are both willing to convert to be able to marry the other. As with the Esterlys, Robert and Jane are both willing to compromise in aspects of their daily lives in order to assure their continued relationship. The husband remains in a position of power in the relationship, but if he is willing to talk and compromise rather than dictate, the parties are somewhat equalized, allowing for a companionate marriage. In order for this type of negotiated relationship to be accomplished, the husband needs to relinquish some of his power and treat his wife as an independent individual.

Most of the previously married couples in Sedgwick's novels are cast in a clearly functional or dysfunctional way, with no middle ground. Only one couple transitions within the novel itself from dysfunctional to achieving a positively portrayed relationship. At the beginning of *Married or Single?*, Mr. and Mrs. Tallis would, without question, fall into the unsuccessful marriage category. While warning Grace Herbert, the heroine, that Horace Copley does not love her, Augusta Tallis provides some insight into her own marriage to Rupert Tallis: "Do not—for all the world and the glory of it—do not marry one who does not love you—Rupert Tallis tried that, and it had been nothing but wretchedness for us both."[22] Later, she explains that she married Rupert because her father would not allow her to marry the man she did love, but even though she did not love Rupert, he loved her.[23] This marriage was founded on a system in which fathers dictated who their daughters could and could not marry, based on the most beneficial alliance for

[20] Ibid, 76.
[21] Ibid, 162-164.
[22] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 1:214.
[23] Ibid, 1:228.

the family. As with Sedgwick's other characters, Mrs. Tallis's statement seems to indicate that a marriage based on one sided-love is doomed. In this case, it is the man whose love is not returned but the situation functions the same as a woman's unrequited love.

Augusta tells Grace that their marriage has been wretched for both her and her husband, but part of this wretchedness is caused by her decision to act as though she is unmarried, to flirt and spend time with Horace Copley. While attempting to explain to her husband that Copley is not a good match for her sister, Grace, Eleanor Esterly says, "[F]ar worse than that, [Copley] has, up to last week, kept up his intimacy with Mrs. Tallis, and in her husband's absence has been every day at her house—so Mrs. Milnor, who lives opposite, told me. She says his French valet is every morning at Mrs. Tallis' door with bouquets, and perfumed notes."[24] Esterly dismisses his wife's claims as gossip, but the evidence in the novel supports Eleanor's assessment. Augusta Tallis does not love her husband, but she is not content to find other, useful, employment for her time. Instead, she has a much gossiped about relationship with Horace Copley. For most of the novel, the marriage of Augusta and Rupert Tallis seems to be an excellent example of how individuals should not act in a marriage.

However, before the novel ends and in time to save Grace Herbert from a similar mistake, Augusta realizes the error of her ways. Almost immediately after Grace becomes engaged to Horace Copley, Grace receives a letter and a parcel full of trinkets and a diamond bracelet. In the letter, Augusta explains that her daughter has died because Augusta was too preoccupied with Copley to listen to her complaints of illness. Because she feels that her daughter's death is the result of her selfish relationship with Copley, Augusta sends the things he has given her to Grace, to make amends and prevent Grace from falling into his trap as well.[25] The impact of Augusta's actions goes beyond her own marriage and family. If she had not sent this letter to Grace, the heroine would have married the villain, and presumably, lived a miserable life. Augusta saves Grace from an unhappy marriage and redeems herself in the process.

Because Augusta is able to change, she is also able to transform her marriage. After the death of Augusta's daughter, Grace goes to the distraught mother. Augusta worries about her husband's reaction, asking Grace if she thinks Rupert still loves her and could forgive her for the

[24] Ibid, 2:79.
[25] Ibid, 2:90-94.

neglect of their daughter. Grace assures her, "Feeling as you do, this bereavement, you will know what he feels, and from your infinite pity for him, affection must spring up; not a girlish love, but the considerate affection of a steadfast friend."[26] The love that Grace encourages Augusta to adopt is that of a friend—a companionate, consistent love, rather than one based on passion alone. In *Between Women*, Marcus asserts the importance of friendship "in novels that revolved around companionate marriage and assumed that parents could no longer legitimately choose husbands for their daughters and that friendship should partially or whole define the ideal relationship between husband and wife."[27] Marriage had become a defining factor in relationships between individuals, romantic or otherwise. Augusta does not figure prominently into the rest of the novel, but near the end, Eleanor writes to Grace, "Never in my life have I seen two people so completely changed…such a capacity of love and happiness as she had discovered in Rupert, in *herself*." Eleanor adds that Augusta has asked her for patterns for baby garments, indicating that she and her husband have patched up their romantic relationship as well.[28] Beyond merely aiding the heroine, Augusta is able to learn to love her husband and turn her marriage into an example of a successful relationship. Even if a marriage did not begin with love on both sides, there was still hope that people could change and improve their relationship with one another. This relationship indicates that with give and take on both sides, there is hope for a dysfunctional relationship. Sedgwick presented her readers with imagined methods for improving their marriages if they had already chosen a spouse.

Through the successful relationships, Sedgwick demonstrated the necessary components of a companionate marriage. Viewed from the traditional gender roles of the nineteenth century, a marriage could never be between equals because the patriarchal society always favored the husband, giving him power over his wife. Actual interactions, as demonstrated by the novels, could allow for more give and take. Male characters who are willing to relinquish some of their power to their wives, in terms of decision making or even advice, are rewarded with more fulfilling marriages. This argument as made in the individual marriages in Sedgwick's novels could be applied on a broader scale. If women were regarded as individual agents, they could gain a greater voice in society and thus a better chance of having a positive impact. Both parties had to be willing to work together to accomplish their goals, even if their goals centered

[26] Ibid, 2:101.
[27] Marcus, *Between Women*, 85.
[28] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 2:259.

primarily on their household. As in the case of Augusta Tallis, if one person in the relationship was unwilling to compromise, it would most likely result in unhappiness for everyone involved. According to Sedgwick there was hope, however, for a change, for individuals to learn how to relate to one another in terms of affection and friendship, and working together, they could accomplish more than either could alone.

Accessory to a Hazardous Elopement

The rewards for women and men who worked together went beyond having a satisfying marriage. Whether married or single, Sedgwick argued that an individual had an obligation to contribute to society. This contribution was more than just adding to the population by having children, as was demonstrated by the actions of her heroines and heroes prior to becoming engaged and marrying at the end of her novels. At critical moments in the three of Sedgwick's novels that contain the most action and adventure, the heroine and the hero must work together in order to accomplish a goal vital to the main plot. One or both of the characters has attempted to carry out similar actions on his or her own, but alone, he or she was unsuccessful. Together, they are able to accomplish their goal and bring about a positive conclusion to the plot. Beyond providing her readers with entertainment, Sedgwick was arguing through the success and failure of her characters that individuals needed to work together to aid others who were caught in some power hierarchy from which they could not escape.

Early in *The Linwoods*, Eliot Lee is cast as a hero, a courageous soldier in the patriot army during the American Revolution. The first rescue in which Eliot participates was mentioned in the previous chapter with regard to Isabella Linwood's aunt, Mrs. Archer. Mrs. Archer's young blind daughter is taken by a group of outlaws as insurance that she will bring them money. As soon as Eliot learns that there is trouble at Mrs. Archer's, he tells his companions, "Rouse up these fellows—wake that snoring wretch on the settle, and we'll to her aid instantly."[29] And when one of them questions who the woman is, implying that they should not aid her if she is not on their side, Eliot responds, "She is a woman in need of our protection. This is enough for us to know," demonstrating his chivalrous character.[30] Leaving behind some of his companions who object to helping a Tory woman, Eliot pursues the kidnappers and

[29] Sedgwick, *The Linwoods*, 169.
[30] Ibid.

succeeds in rescuing the girl. At first they believe that Mrs. Archer's daughter died in spite of their efforts, but she revives upon returning home. Eliot's rescue is barely successful, and during the pursuit of the kidnappers, Eliot crosses paths with his faithful servant, Kisel, from whom he had become separated earlier in the novel. When Eliot later sneaks into British-occupied New York, he learns that Kisel has been captured with the outlaws and is going to be executed. Isabella Linwood attempts to intervene on Kisel's behalf, but is turned down by the British aristocrat, who claims that his death is decreed by law.[31] Kisel dies before the British can execute him.[32] Eliot had the opportunity to save his friend, and Isabella has also made an unsuccessful attempt. Working alone, neither Eliot nor Isabella can accomplish their goal.

On the other hand, near the end of the novel, Eliot's friend and Isabella's brother, Herbert Linwood, is imprisoned as a spy because he snuck into New York in order to see his estranged father. Herbert decides to escape and devises a way to have Rose, a freed slave and the family servant, sent to him. The narrator explains, "Rose, once admitted, became first counsellor and coadjutor; and with the aid of the young ladies at home [Herbert's sister, Isabella, and Herbert's betrothed, Anne Seton], a project was contrived, of which this noble creature was to be the main executor."[33] This plan is formed by men and women working together, requiring their cooperation, with Rose playing a vital role. In order to allow Herbert to escape, Rose dresses him up in a disguise to make him look like her. She remains behind in his cell and physically subdues the guard, who is armed with a knife, before tying him up with her garters.[34] When Herbert joins Isabella and Anne, who are to see him off at the water's edge, his pursuers nearly catch up with him, compelling Isabella and Anne to join him in Lizzy Bengin's boat.[35] All of them escape, successfully navigated by Lizzy, whose father, a pilot, "had repaired, as far as possible, what he considered the calamity of her sex, by giving her the habits of a boy."[36] Unlike Eliot Lee's rescue operation, this escape is planned and executed with the involvement of both women and men. The individuals who make it possible include a man who is willing to masquerade as a woman, a woman physically strong enough to subdue a prison guard, and a female boat pilot who has been raised with the habits of a boy. It is only by moving outside the traditional gender categories that

[31] Ibid, 275.
[32] Ibid, 282.
[33] Ibid, 326.
[34] Ibid, 327-329.
[35] Ibid, 335-336.
[36] Ibid, 336.

these characters are able to execute a successful rescue operation. Acting in surprising ways for their gender allows Herbert to slip away, Rose to surprise the guard, and Lizzy to pilot the group to safety. This scenario argues for blurred gender categories, in which individuals can accomplish whatever task is necessary without relying on their specific gender roles as dictated by society. Regardless of how it succeeds, when contrasted with Eliot's semi-successful rescue, it illustrates Sedgwick's argument that women and men need to work together in order to aid others because they can accomplish more as a team than they can alone.

A similar pair of contrasting events is presented in *Hope Leslie*, except in this novel, the characters are attempting to achieve the same goal both alone and then together. *Hope Leslie* contains three escape plans, and only one is unsuccessful. Early in the novel, Hope, the heroine, decides to free an old Indian woman who has been imprisoned for using heathen medicinal practices to cure Hope's teacher. Hope devises the plan and runs into Digby, a friend of her family's, which "afforded her an opportunity of concert with him."[37] In the middle of the night, Hope unlocks the woman's prison and leads her to Digby, who ferries her across the river and gives her supplies.[38] Working together, Hope and Digby successfully get the old woman away from her captors. The authorities suspect Hope's involvement in the escape and suggest a transfer of her foster-father's "neglected authority to less indulgent hands" for a time, which causes Hope to be sent to Boston and the care of John Winthrop's family.[39] Not only is the escape successful, but Hope's punishment causes her to make a close friend of Esther Downing and later be reunited with Everell Fletcher, the novel's hero. As Hope does not buckle under the authority in Boston, any more than she did during her stay in the country, the escape has no real negative consequences.

The second escape attempt is to break a different Indian woman, Magawisca, out of jail, where she has been imprisoned for conspiring with the Indians against the English as well as practicing a heathen religion. Everell takes it upon himself to free Magawisca, and he enlists the help of Digby, who had aided Hope in freeing the old Indian woman. Using a tool, Everell begins to pull the bars off Magawisca's window while Digby holds the ladder. When Everell is on the last bar, Digby insists that they must leave because someone is coming, and "if you do not

[37] Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie,* 124.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid, 125.

escape now, nothing can ever be done for her."[40] So they flee, leaving behind their tools and Magawisca, still imprisoned. This escape, devised and executed by men and men alone, fails. It accomplishes nothing beyond alerting the authorities that someone is trying to help Magawisca escape, which should make the next attempt to break her out all the more difficult.

The final escape resembles Herbert Linwood's rescue in *The Linwoods* more so than either of the other escapes in *Hope Leslie.* Everell, evidently designs the plan because he first asks Esther Downing to assist him, but she refuses. When he makes the same request of Hope, she agrees. Leaving her teacher in Magawisca's cell, Hope takes the Indian woman out of the jail in the disguise of a man.[41] Hope played a vital role in this plot because it is unlikely that any of the other characters would have succeeded in convincing her teacher to remain behind in Magawisca's place. As with Herbert Linwood's escape, it was necessary for the prisoner to reverse her gender. The reversals are opposite, indicating that it was not enough for women to adopt masculine traits or men to become feminine. Both gender categories needed to be blurred, adopting aspects of each, in order for anything to be accomplished.

Once outside, Everell joins them and they proceed to where Digby, who has once again been employed to convey the escapee across the water, waits with a boat.[42] Although this escape is successful, the involvement of both Hope and Everell is revealed to the authorities as Hope speaks with the jailer and Everell turns himself in as soon as Magawisca reaches safety. As with Hope freeing the old Indian women, the benefits of the escape far outweighs the negative consequences. For punishment, Hope and her teacher received a private admonition from Governor Winthrop while Everell is given a public censure by the court, which probably does very little to convince either of the parties that they have acted wrongly.[43] In comparison, Magawisca escapes and Hope's involvement prevents her from being captured by the villain, which would have resulted in her death when his mistress blew up his ship. As with the escape in *The Linwoods*, this jailbreak involves men and women who are willing to work together and bend the lines of gender, allowing a female prisoner to walk out of the prison without the least suspicion being raised against her because she is dressed as a man.

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[40] Ibid, 271.
[41] Ibid, 326-332.
[42] Ibid, 348-355.
[43] Ibid, 363.

This pattern does not only hold true with escaping prisoners; plans for getting a young woman away from the clutches of the villain also have a better chance of success when men and women work together. In *Clarence*, the villain, Pedrillo attempts to run off with multiple women over the course of the novel. The first, Angélique, is the daughter of Gerald Roscoe's neighbor. When "Pedrillo sprang forward to receive his prize," Roscoe prevents him and safely returns the "prize," Angélique to her father's house.[44] Roscoe convinces Angélique to avoid any farther contact with Pedrillo by reminding her of her duty to her father.[45] It is true that in this case, the hero is able to save a young woman from becoming the villain's "prize" by reminding her of her obligation to her family, but Roscoe does little more than that. Pedrillo escapes and is free to purse Emilie Layton, another young woman in the novel. Even Roscoe's knowledge of Pedrillo's poor character is not enough to convince Emilie's parents that her new suitor is a danger to her. This rescue is carried out entirely by a single man. Even Angélique cannot be considered a participant because she wants to go with Pedrillo until after Roscoe's intervention. As far as the novel is concerned, this rescue is unsuccessful in solving the problem of the villain.

When Pedrillo blackmails Mr. Layton in exchange for his daughter, it is Gertrude Clarence, Emilie's friend and the heroine of the novel, who arranges for Emilie to escape Pedrillo's clutches and run off with the man she wants to marry. Gertrude acts in direct opposition to the patriarchal tradition of fathers dictating husbands for their daughters. Instead, she reinforces the idea of women being allowed to choose their husbands based on personal preference rather than family alliance. The original plan involves only Gertrude and Randolph Marion, the man Emilie wishes to marry, who will impersonate Pedrillo at a masquerade in order to escort Emilie home in his place. Instead of going home, they plan to leave town for Virginia, allowing Emilie to marry Marion, rather than being bound by her father's promise to marry her to Pedrillo. As she is leaving the party, Gertrude asks Roscoe to accompany her to her carriage, and on the way, she tells him, "I am at this moment giving you the strongest proof of my confidence—making you privy and accessory to a hazardous elopement."[46] Before the carriage drives off, Roscoe asks Gertrude if he can follow, and she tells him he can.[47] As with the

[44] Sedgwick, *Clarence*, 1:209.
[45] Ibid, 1:209.
[46] Ibid, 2:240.
[47] Ibid, 2:242.

jailbreaks in *The Linwoods* and *Hope Leslie*, this "hazardous elopement" requires the complete involvement of both women, Emilie and Gertrude, and men, Marion and Roscoe.

Pedrillo, whose arrival at the party is deliberately delayed, quickly pieces together the plot and takes off with some of his men in pursuit of his prize. When they catch up with Emilie, Gertrude, and Marion, Pedrillo and his men force their way into the house in which the trio is staying. Marion is left to fight of Pedrillo's men while Pedrillo goes upstairs to find Emilie. He encounters Gertrude instead, and the narrator explains, "He had never coped with heroism in such a shape, and he shrunk as he would not have done from an armed enemy."[48] Gertrude's defiance only causes him to pause, not stop, and he reaches Emilie. As Marion is caught off guard and unarmed, Pedrillo and his men quickly begin to overpower the group and he probably would have succeeded in dragging Emilie off if it had not been for the timely arrival of Roscoe leading a handful of armed men. During the struggle with Roscoe, Pedrillo encounters his estranged father, one of the men who had accompanied Roscoe, and stabs himself fatally, instead of continuing to fight.[49] Unlike Roscoe's first attempt to rescue a woman from Pedrillo, this one results in the woman being free to marry the man that she loves and puts an end to the villain, so that he cannot pursue another. It is also during the hazardous elopement that Roscoe discovers the true identity of Gertrude Clarence, a piece of information that he has been attempting to uncover for the entire book and a necessary step to their marriage at the end of it. As with the escapes of Herbert Linwood and Magawisca, this rescue requires the efforts of both male and female characters. If Gertrude had not devised the initial plan, invited Roscoe along, or stood in defiance of Pedrillo, she would not have succeeded in rescuing her friend. Likewise, if Marion had not been with them to slow down Pedrillo's men or if Roscoe had not arrived when he did, Gertrude's plans would have been all for nothing. Both women and men were necessary to reshape marriage practices, while the villain, adhering to the old system, self-destructed. With this scenario, Sedgwick demonstrated the attempt by some to shift away from a male-dominated marriage structure toward one that allowed for more individual autonomy.

Sedgwick was most likely not advocating breaking prisoners out of jail or participating in cross-country carriage chases. Instead, these fictional events demonstrate the importance of women and men working together, and not just to raise a household of republican citizens. In the

[48] Ibid, 2:261.
[49] Ibid, 2:263-264.

cases of Herbert Linwood and Magawisca, the characters work in direct opposition to a political decree, each issued from the English or colonial government, and in *Clarence*, they help Emilie to defy the command of her father. This defiance calls into question the previous and current systems of authority, arguing for cross-gender cooperation and renegotiated power structures. In the society in which Sedgwick was writing, it would be unacceptable and most likely unpopular for a woman to write a political tract arguing that women should be permitted a role in public life outside of the household. As Rosemarie Zagarri explains in *Revolutionary Backlash*, "By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, women were actively discouraged from participating in any activity that smacked of 'politics.' Women who did so openly were disparaged or vilified."[50] With this option closed to them, female writers such as Sedgwick, demonstrated through the actions of their characters that women were capable of aiding men in endeavors relating to political or patriarchal issues. In "The Sentimentalists," Mary Kelley quotes Sedgwick as stating in another of her works, "I cannot believe that it was ever intended…that women should lead armies, harangue in the halls of legislation, bustle up to ballot-boxes, or sit on judicial tribunals."[51] Sedgwick argued for complimentary roles in society, not necessarily equal participation in American government. Just as Eleanor and Frank Esterly of *Married or Single?* illustrate how to listen to one another and negotiate a companionate marriage, the characters of *The Linwoods*, *Hope Leslie*, and *Clarence* provide examples of women who do not step far outside of the bounds of what is proper—no woman picks up a knife or a gun or storms a jail to help a prisoner escape—but are still able to work with the men in their lives to accomplish what neither would be able to accomplish on his or her own. Instead of telling her readers how they should act in a didactic manner that might cause them to become defensive, Sedgwick subtly shows them that they have more options for reshaping if only they are willing to blur the gender lines between the male and female spheres.

We Are All Free and Equal

In order to be willing to move into new directions regarding marriage and gender roles, the people of nineteenth-century America needed to revise old institutions that reinforced the current patriarchal power structures. While Sedgwick's characters introduce new ideas of women

[50] Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Woman and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 9.
[51] Kelley, "The Sentimentalists," 441-442.

and men working together and successful companionate marriages, they also modify old ideas of religion, traditional social hierarchy, and patriarchal family structure. Sedgwick associated these elements of society with Europe, especially England, and she saw the United States as needing to move away from these traditional distributions of power. Sedgwick presented the United States in the nineteenth century as a place where old institutions existed alongside new methods, where individuals could choose whether they wanted to continue to adhere to the old path or move forward by reshaping the old ways into a new society where women and men could work together to negotiate a new system. In *Married or Single*, the narrator explains, "We are all free and equal—all republicans—all democrats. There are no recognized gradations of rank; but they are felt and measured with microscopic accuracy."[52] This passage indicates that the old institutions, such as class hierarchy, still exist in America, just as much as they did in England; they have merely been reworked and disguised under new names. Changes occurred during the American Revolution, but many of power structures remain the same. Rather than just altering the rhetoric, Sedgwick sought to imagine new ways in which women and men could interact with one another. Sedgwick exposed the continuation of these hidden power structures and entreated her readers to reject or reshape them by following the example of her characters.

Strict religious institutions that required total obedience without consideration for individual needs was one such power structure against which Sedgwick argued. Right before she published her first novel, Sedgwick converted from Congregationalism to Unitarianism. *A New England Tale* contains illustrations of the insincerity and strictness of some Congregationalists in the form of the heroine's relatives who take her in, and as discussed above, the heroine joins the Quakers when she marries at the end of the novel. In *Redwood*, Emily Allen has a much more conflicted relationship with her religious choices, which are also bound up in her romantic attachments. Emily's situation is presented in contrast with the earlier choices of her aunt, Susan. As discussed in the previous chapter, Susan turns down the man who loves her in order to devote herself fully to the Shakers. Her lover's unwillingness to give her up results in his death. Susan encourages her niece, Emily, to follow in her footsteps by joining the Shaker community. At the beginning of the novel, Emily had been living with her aunt among the Shakers, but just prior to the novel's events her brother Edward became ill and she returned home, not making it in time to see him before he died. One of the characters mentions that Edward died of a broken heart, but

[52] Sedgwick, *Married or Single?*, 1:90.

although he did love a young woman who was playing with his affections, Edward's grandmother explains that it was the loss of his sister to the Shakers that caused his death. She tells her deceased grandson, "Oh, my dear boy, how often have I heard you say you would die for her [Emily] if thereby you could bring her back from her idolatry."[53] Even before the novel begins, conflicting religious views have torn the Allen family apart.

Romance adds another dimension to the family tensions when Deborah reveals that Emily and James Lenox "always had a notion for each other." When Ellen asks why Emily would join the Shakers if she had an attachment to James, Deborah responds, "But I am as sure that Emily Allen would rather stay with James, than to go back to the shakers, as that I know a southerly breeze from a northwester."[54] Just as religion kept Susan and her lover apart, it is also keeping Emily and James apart. Susan tells Emily to take up her cross and rejoin the small party of Shakers returning to their community. She is asking her niece to isolate herself from her family and society. Emily responds to her aunt's religious appeal, but when James secretly hands Emily a piece of paper on her way out, she takes it. The narrator explains, "A person of ordinary sagacity might have predicted, that from this moment the charm of the elder sister's power was dissolved, and that though accident and habit, and the natural submission of weakness, intellectual or physical, to power, might detail the youthful disciple in thralldom, it would no longer be the service of a willing heart."[55] Emily bows to the power wielded by her aunt as an elder in the Shaker community, but it is against her on personal preferences that she obeys her aunt's request. By accepting James's note, Emily reinforces her connection to her family and the community in which she resided most of her life, which undermines the isolationist aspects of the Shaker religion.

Emily does not remain trapped by the religious rhetoric of her aunt, but she barely escapes from the Shaker community. As the narrator states, "Her mind too had been recently weakened by the hard conflict between her natural affections and her mistaken sense of duty."[56] Being torn between duty to her aunt and her own personal affection for James causes Emily to be susceptible to the attentions of Reuben Harrington, also an elder in the Shaker community, who wants to rob the community of its money and run off with Emily. When Emily realizes

[53] Sedgwick, *Redwood*, 1:87.
[54] Ibid, 1:98.
[55] Ibid, 1:101-102.
[56] Ibid, 2:46.

Harrington's intentions, she turns him down, but his hypocrisy, confirmed by her aunt, shakes her faith in the Shaker beliefs.[57] Harrington succeeds in luring Emily away from her protectors with a forged letter from James, asking her to join him in a nearby town.[58] Emily debates duty verses affection until "no strong tie remained to be broken but her love for the elder sister [Susan], which had produced such habitual dependence on her, that she had become a mere machine governed by a power which she could neither understand nor resist."[59] Subject to the strict religious devotion of the Shakers, Emily becomes not an individual, but a machine, a component of the power structure who cannot make decisions on her own. To the extent that she is an individual, she remains isolated from friends and family who would guide her in making the correct decision. This language could be applied to other religions or even women within the patriarchal society of the early republic as they are governed by a power which they are expected to neither understand or resist. By going with Harrington, Emily makes a choice as an individual, but she only chooses to go with Harrington because he forged a letter from James. She is actually choosing to leave the isolation of the Shaker community and reconnect with her lover. Eventually Emily escapes from Harrington, with the help of the heroine and Deborah, and is reunited with James. This ultimately positive conclusion to the romance of Emily and James reflects Sedgwick's promotion of individual choices over blind devotion to a religion which would take away individual choice.

In addition to some religious practices, Sedgwick also objected to holding social status or reputation in such a high regard that one ignored the character of the people with whom they were associating. In *Clarence*, Emilie Layton and Randolph Marion, who are discussed above, defy the wishes of Emilie's father when they choose one another. But this is not merely a case of a willful child disobeying her father. Pedrillo blackmails Emilie's father until "[h]e was inextricably involved with Pedrillo, and his own safety could only be secured by the sacrifice of his beautiful child."[60] The safety that Mr. Layton will gain by forcing his daughter to marry against her will is only a safety of reputation. Pedrillo only threatens to expose Layton's cheating at the gaming table to his friends, not take his life. The narrator, however, gives a glimpse of Layton's background, "Jasper Layton was the only son of a man of talent, virtue, and fortune,

[57] Ibid, 2:53.
[58] Ibid, 2:60-61.
[59] Ibid, 2:63.
[60] Sedgwick, *Clarence*, 1:221-222.

and he never quite lost the sense of responsibility such an inheritance involved; and to the last, the fear of publicly disgracing his honorable name, was a source of the keenest suffering to him."[61] Layton then inherited his need to keep his name untarnished from his father, from the past where perhaps more of an emphasis was placed on reputation. As with the alliance system of marriage, Layton uses his daughter's marriage as a method for maintaining his reputation. When Pedrillo blackmails Layton later in the novel, Pedrillo tells him, "you may let leave this place with unsullied reputation, if—."[62] Once again, it is personal reputation, social standing, that Pedrillo appeals to in order to bend Layton to his will. Layton is willing to sacrifice his daughter to a lifetime of marriage to a villain in order to preserve his good name. The elopement of Emilie and Marion becomes, then, a rebellion not only against oppressive fathers, but also against using marriage to maintain standing in a certain social class.

In *The Linwoods*, this issue of acting in a particular manner within a social class becomes associated with England, a practice to be rejected by Americans during the Revolutionary War. Jasper Meredith, the conceited young man who finally sides with the English when he is forced to choose one side over the other, wants to marry Isabella Linwood. His mother wants him to marry his heiress cousin, Lady Anne Seton. When Meredith receives a letter from his mother that communicates her arrival with Lady Anne, he reinterprets it as "The term of my dear niece, Lady Anne's mourning, is nearly expired—she will have scores of suitors, and her fortune will pass out of the family; while you, my dear son, are throwing yourself away upon the broken-down Linwoods—the only hope is in my crossing the horrible Atlantic, and braving storms and privateers."[63] Meredith's mother wants him to marry his cousin in order to keep her wealth within the family. When Meredith does finally get around to pleasing his mother by asking his cousin to marry him, Lady Anne turns him down because she is in love with Isabella's brother, Herbert, who defied his father to remain loyal to the American cause.[64] Beyond merely choosing one man over the other, Lady Anne rejects the English social hierarchy that would have her marry the most wealth available in favor of a man so committed to his cause that he is willing to defy his father. Not only does she reject the man associated with England, but Lady Anne also rejects the English system. After Lady Anne marries Herbert Linwood, she reminds Mrs.

[61] Ibid, 1:222.
[62] Ibid, 2:204.
[63] Sedgwick, *The Linwoods*, 214.
[64] Ibid, 308.

Linwood, "pray—pray do not call me *Lady* Anne. I have told you, again and again, that I have renounced my title, and will have no distinction but that which suits the country of my adoption—that which I may derive from being a good wife and mother—the true *American order of merit*."[65] Based on this passage, Sedgwick clearly had more of an agenda than instructing her readers on which type of man made the best husband. Anne's matrimonial choice is connected with a shift in identity—she changes from Lady Anne, a member of the English aristocracy, to Anne, an American wife and mother. Her change in identity also parallels the shift from a social hierarchy solely based on increasing wealth, status, and reputation to one in which improving character, through instructing husbands and children, was more important than titles. The marriage between Anne and Herbert argues for class-cross cooperation, bringing both of them into the middle class.

Closely connected to issues of social class and reputation are issues of wealth. In opposition to the traditional mode of thinking, a few notable characters in Sedgwick's novels view inherited wealth as a negative attribute. Almost all of Sedgwick's heroes and a few of her heroines have occupations with which they support themselves. Most of the heroes are lawyers, unsurprising since the majority of Sedgwick's brothers were lawyers as well. Emphasizing occupation over inherited wealth demonstrates the need for individuals to obtain their own means of supporting themselves through hard work and determination. According to Gordon Wood in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, "By the early decades of the nineteenth century working in some useful occupation was widely regarded as the new source of fame."[66] It was this emphasis on having an occupation that Sedgwick reflected in her work. In two instances, wealthy characters are actually forced to hide their true identities in order to gain the trust and regard of the person they want to marry. The families of Gertrude Clarence and Gerald Roscoe are friends at the beginning of *Clarence*, but they lose touch when Mr. Clarence inherits a great deal of money from being the illegitimate child of a English relative. As an adult, Gertrude crosses paths with Roscoe again, she reveals that he is "the hero of her imagination" for his part in helping her father secure his inheritance and his reputation.[67] Gertrude also "rejoiced in her inmost soul, that she was still unknown to him as the dreaded *rich* miss Clarence."[68] Since

[65] Sedgwick, *The Linwoods*, 353.
[66] Wood, *Radicalism*, 283.
[67] Sedgwick, *Clarence*, 1:260.
[68] Ibid, 1:263.

Roscoe did not know Gertrude as an adult, his rejection of her is entirely based on her wealth, rather than her character. Roscoe's distain of the Clarence fortune arises from the role it played in the death of Gertrude's brother, Frank, who was Roscoe's friend. Frank's illness turned fatal when his father became too preoccupied with the court case involving his inheritance to listen to his son's complaints, much like Augusta Tallis's daughter in *Married or Single?*.[69] This causes Roscoe to reject Gertrude on principle of her being rich without actually learning what kind of a woman she has become. When Gertrude finally meets the hero of her imagination, she refuses to tell him her name, and she continues to refuse throughout most of the novel despite the fact that she meets and converses with Roscoe several times because she believes that Roscoe, unable to see past her wealth, would dismiss her. Roscoe explains to a friend in a conversation overheard by Gertrude, "I conceived an early prejudice, a sort of natural antipathy against a *fortune*—that I believe is the technical term for a prize-lady."[70] Near the end of the novel, when Gertrude's identity is revealed to Roscoe, she throws this comment back at him, saying, "Yes, Gertrude Clarence—but not a '*prize lady*.'"[71] Through her actions, Gertrude had proven herself to be more than just a woman with wealth, but in order to do so, she had to conceal her identity or she would have only been judged on what she owned and not who she was. Even though Gertrude inherits her wealth, she does not allow it to define her or prevent her from aiding others, which emphasizes her qualities as an individual rather than a wealthy member of her father's family.

Like many of Sedgwick's arguments, the issue of the dangers of wealth can be applied to men as well. In *Redwood*, Grace Campbell, a friend of the heroine, has a rich uncle who agreed to will everything to Grace and her English cousin, Fenton, if they marry one another. The only obstacle in the path to wealth is Howard, the man that Grace has fallen in love with.[72] Grace believes that her uncle will disinherit her if she chooses Howard over Fenton, setting up a conflict between choosing love or money, but not both. Grace's friend, Ellen insists, "If you love Howard, if he deserves your love, he is worth this sacrifice" while her uncle instructs Grace, "obey orders, marry Fenton, you shall have the sum total."[73] In addition to causing tension between love and money, this situation also places England and patriarchy, in the form of Grace's uncle and Fenton, on the side of devotion to wealth while the America Howard and

[69] Ibid, 1:108,117.
[70] Ibid, 2:105.
[71] Ibid, 2:241.
[72] Sedgwick, *Redwood*, 2:199.
[73] Ibid, 2:202-203.

individual choice are aligned with following one's heart. Grace chooses to offer her "unportioned hand" to Howard, only to learn that Howard actually was her cousin Fenton, whom she had never met, all along.[74] It was necessary for inheritance to be taken out of the picture in order for Grace to fall in love with her cousin and not just his wealth. Like Gertrude Clarence, Fenton feels the need to conceal his identity in order to convince Grace of his good character and his lack of preoccupation with wealth. He becomes an American, adopting what Sedgwick views as the uniquely American attitude of focusing on character over wealth. Taken together, these two novels indicate that both women and men can fall into the trap of a desire for wealth until others only see the money that they posses and not their own individual qualities.

Sedgwick placed her characters within older frameworks of religion, status, and wealth, which served to reinforce patriarchal power structures. In doing so, she emphasized the importance of individual choice for both women and men, especially in terms of their romantic relationships, a choice that was not based on possessions or position in the social hierarchy. Many of these negative aspects of society are associated in the novels with England or Europe. Sedgwick wanted her readers to move away from what she identified as harmful practices rooted in the old world and take advantage of the new opportunities presented by a new country. In the United States as imagined by Sedgwick, women were individuals just as much as men, and every individual deserved to make his or her own choices without a decision being forced on him or her from an existing power structure. Despite the fact that the United States claimed to have resolved some of these issues in the nineteenth century, Sedgwick drew attention to the unbalanced power structures that were still in place, preventing its citizens from all being free and equal.

The successful relationships in Sedgwick's novels illustrate what an ideal companionate marriage should be—not always perfect happiness or complete equality, but where the husband and wife are willing to listen to one another and negotiate their relationship. Because the primary action of Sedgwick's novels takes place prior to a marriage between the heroine and the hero, Sedgwick was able to expand this idea to women and men working together in society as a whole. As demonstrated by jailbreaks and daring rescues, cooperation between women and men is necessary for the major feats of the novels to be accomplished. In fact, it would be impossible for several of the novels to reach a positive conclusion without the active involvement of women.

[74] Ibid, 2:204-207.

This teamwork reflects the necessary, and perhaps missing, element of nineteenth-century American society. Sedgwick did not advocate women being involved in government and politics, but she did argue through her characters for women playing an active role in society beyond the home. Involved in embracing changing roles for women was rejecting old institutions that reinforced the current gender hierarchy. Characters do whatever they have to, including disguising or shifting their own identities, in order to allow others to focus on who they are and not be distracted by outside factors. Sedgwick's novels present a world where power structures have not disappeared, but they have been reshaped to encourage more useful interaction between women and men.

Sedgwick used her fiction to challenge her society to become something different than its European predecessors. She imagined characters and situations that emphasized moral character, individual autonomy, and cooperation with others as positive traits in both women and men. Although she presented shifts in American society, Sedgwick did not advocate a radical reversal of the gender hierarchy or women running the government. Sedgwick only asked her readers to walk away from the precipice, not to alter the landscape. In fact, she argued that too much autonomy in women could be just as destructive as too much authority in men. Instead, she used her novels to guide women to negotiate a path that did not adhere strictly to traditional practices or revolutionize society. Sedgwick illustrated a shifted distribution of power within the existing institutions, reinforcing basic beliefs such as heterosexual marriage but opposing tyrannical masculine power. As America began to adjust to its new independence, openings were left for individuals or groups of individuals to shift how they were perceived by their society. Female novelists, such as Sedgwick, saw the opportunity to use novels to comment on what changes should be made and illustrate possibilities for restructuring society in such a way that most individuals had a voice. Novels cannot be taken as examples of real life in the nineteenth century, but they can be used to explore the questions that were under consideration, especially by examining the work of a popular novelist such as Sedgwick, who according to one reviewer was "said to be at present the most popular native writer in America."[75] In addition to providing entertainment, fiction was used to call into question traditional practices while at the same time, presenting options for altering them. An examination of Sedgwick's novels demonstrates that the

[75] "Letters from Abroad to Kindred at Home by Miss Sedgwick from the London Examiner," *Roberts' Semi-Monthly Magazine for Town and Country* 15 (August 1841): 600, American Periodicals Series Online, http://www.proquest.com (accessed June 16, 2010).

power structures based on class and gender in a capitalist society were being called into question by some individuals in the United States, then explored and reshaped into new forms in nineteenth-century American society.

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