"A FINE VIEW OF THE DELECTABLE MOUNTAINS": THE RELIGIOUS VISION OF MARY VIRGINIA TERHUNE (MARION HARLAND) AND AUGUSTA JANE EVANS WILSON

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VITA

Sara Stone Frear, daughter of George Lewis Frear, Jr., and Joann Palmer, was born on October 16, 1960, in Utica, New York. She was graduated from Hugh C. Williams Senior High School in 1978. She entered Yale College in New Haven, Connecticut in 1978 and was graduated *summa cum laude* with a Bachelor of Arts degree in East Asian Studies in 1982. She entered the direct-track Ph.D. program in history at Auburn University in August 2001, majoring in Early America with minors in Modern America and in American Religious History.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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THE RELIGIOUS VISION OF MARY VIRGINIA

TERHUNE (MARION HARLAND) AND

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In the past twenty-five years, there has been a growing scholarly interest in the popular domestic fiction of the nineteenth century. Cultural historians have studied this literature, largely created by women, for the insight it provides into white middle-class values of the era. One aspect of this genre that has been relatively neglected by scholars is its intensely religious nature. Women novelists generally wrote from an evangelical Christian perspective and often out of a sense of mission, hoping that their novels would instill Christian conviction as well as bring spiritual consolation to their readers.

This dissertation explores the religious dimension of domestic fiction by focusing on two highly successful southern novelists, Mary Virginia Terhune (penname Marion

Harland, 1830-1922) of Richmond and Augusta Jane Evans, later Wilson (1835-1909), of Mobile. It is a popular intellectual history in that I use these two writers as a window onto the evangelical culture of the mid-nineteenth century. I argue that Terhune and Evans Wilson were representative of a larger, unified evangelical culture that in the 1850s was infused with romanticism. In keeping with this culture, both authors endorsed domestic ideology and emphasized the hidden, spiritual dimension of life. I have concentrated on the period from 1850 to 1880 so as to examine the impact of the Civil War and the Gilded Age on their thought. The war was a crisis for both Terhune and Evans Wilson, but in the end they remained rooted in the evangelical vision that had inspired them in the 1850s. Their popularity continued well into the early twentieth century, and the positive responses they received from their readers encouraged their belief in domesticity and women's influence.

This study is interdisciplinary in nature, combining narrative biography and cultural history with literary analysis. I have made extensive use of both writers' published works, their personal papers, their family papers when available, and church records. An examination of the religious thought of Terhune and Evans Wilson as it developed in the mid-nineteenth century promises insight into areas of tension in evangelical culture that are of particular interest to modern scholars as well as to a broader readership: the prescriptive (and potentially coercive) aspects of evangelicalism, the meaning of religious experience, the question of women's roles, the meaning of sexuality, the nature of art, the clash between Christian and secular or non-Christian values, and the quarrel between scientific ideology and belief in the supernatural. Terhune and Evans Wilson wrestled with dilemmas that still confront Americans today.

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Computer software used: MS Word

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INTRODUCTION: THE HEAVENLY HOME

> A home!---it is the bright, blessed, adorable phantom which sits highest on the sunny horizon that girdeth Life! When shall it be reached? When shall it cease to become a glittering day-dream, and become fully and fairly yours?
>
> It is not the house, though that may have its charms; nor the fields carefully tilled, and streaked with your own foot-paths;---nor the trees, though their shadow be to you like that of a great rock in a weary land;---nor yet is it the fireside, with its sweet blaze-play;---nor the pictures which tell of loved ones, nor the cherished books,---but more far than all these---it is the Presence. The Lares of your worship are there; the altar of your confidence there; the end of your worldly faith is there; and adorning it all, and sending your blood in passionate flow, is the ecstasy of the conviction, that *there* at least you are beloved; that there you are understood; that there your errors will meet ever with gentlest forgiveness; that there your troubles will be smiled away; that there you may unburden your soul, fearless of harsh, unsympathizing ears; and that there you may be entirely and joyfully---yourself!
>
> Ik. Marvel (Donald Grant Mitchell)
> *Reveries of a Bachelor*[1]

For many Americans in the tumultuous nineteenth century, the home took on a profoundly religious meaning. "A home" was to be a sanctuary in every sense of the word – both a holy place and a refuge from the dangers of a harsh, unpredictable world. Like all sanctuaries, it was to be a place set apart for reflection and refreshment. Like all shrines, the home also pointed beyond itself to a heavenly place, the hope of perfect

[1] Ik. Marvel [Donald Grant Mitchell], *Reveries of a Bachelor; or, A Book of the Heart* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1850; reprint, Philadelphia: Henry Altimus, 1895), 90-91 (page citations are to the reprint edition). Highly popular when it first appeared, this collection of meditative essays on home and family life continued to be in demand for the remainder of the century. Scribner issued reprints in 1863, 1878, 1883, 1889, and 1891.

happiness in a future world. It was this yearning, both temporal and transcendent, that lay at the heart of domestic ideology, the home-worship that so captured the imaginations of American women and men in the mid-1800s. Shaped by both Christianity and Romanticism, domesticity became essentially religious, an all-encompassing vision of human fulfillment. This dissertation explores domestic ideology as a religious vision, and the central role of women in that vision, by examining the lives and writings of two popular novelists who promoted domesticity through their writing, Marion Harland (Mary Virginia Terhune) and Augusta Jane Evans Wilson. In so doing, it addresses an aspect of the domestic novel previously neglected by historians.

The ideology of domesticity gave women a new degree of cultural authority, for the ministering priests of the home-sanctuary were women. There was a general consensus among the adherents of domesticity that "Woman," naturally sympathetic and spiritual, was best suited to that role. Her genius was thought to reside in the heart (while that of man lay in the head), and in that capacity she was believed to exercise a moral influence that could transform the whole of society. To do so, however, she had to remain within her domestic sphere, for if she entered the public sphere of men she would become coarse and corrupt. Thus, the ideology of "separate spheres" was closely tied to that of domesticity. Many women, particularly evangelicals, embraced their new ministry as an affirmation of their femininity and a source of meaning. Their fundamental work, of course, was understood to be the glorified art of home-making, but the religion of domesticity offered other opportunities as well. In particular, women might exercise their spiritual authority as authors.[2]

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[2] Both words are related to the Latin *auctor*, creator.

By mid-century many women had achieved success as popular novelists and their writing generally promoted the domestic vision. They were in effect evangelists for the gospel of domesticity as well as that of Christianity – and the two were intimately linked in the mind of the reading public. Their romantic tales typically featured heroic young women who, cast upon their own resources in the cold world, persevered through their intelligence and virtue, finally making a happy marriage to a suitably virtuous and wealthy man. Scholars have labeled the works written according to this formula "domestic fiction." Once disparaged as "sentimental," the domestic novel has in recent years received serious scholarly attention as a rich source of information about the culture of the mid-1800s, particularly that of white, middle-class Americans. Many works in this genre have also, on closer inspection, revealed a considerable degree of intellectual complexity and artistry.

Terhune and Evans Wilson, the subjects of this dissertation, were among the most talented and successful of the domestic novelists. Devout evangelicals, both embraced domestic ideology wholeheartedly and were remarkably similar in their thinking on this topic despite their considerable denominational, regional, and personal differences. Their careers as writers and women serve as a window onto the romantic evangelical culture which had formed them, and which they in turn sought to disseminate through their works. Both were convinced that women were the heart of the home, the home the heart of society, and that the glow of the hearth could illuminate the entire land. Indeed, Terhune quoted in full the above passage by "Ik. Marvel" at the end of her second novel,

The Hidden Path.[3] Yet as evangelicals Terhune and Evans Wilson also believed that the home-heart, like the heart of the individual, had to undergo conversion. The hearth glowed with a heavenly warmth only when it had been ignited by a spiritual transformation, and until then it was as bleak and cruel as the sinful world that engulfed it. Thus, the mid-century cult of domesticity to which these authors adhered was permeated by a romantic strain of evangelical Christianity.

The religious atmosphere of the antebellum era was both vibrant and generally optimistic, at least in its popular literary expressions. These piously cheerful qualities were reflected in the standard happy ending of the domestic novel. Terhune and Evans Wilson were unusual in this respect, for their writing also reveals their sharp personal struggles and their consequent willingness to explore darker and more ambiguous areas of spiritual experience. From the beginning of her career, Evans Wilson's novels veered off from the conventional happy ending. Terhune explored some grim themes in her first short stories and even in her early novels, although she redeemed the latter with sunny conclusions. Privately, she had concluded as early as the late 1840s that life in this world was, at best, a "chequered" reality.

The Civil War was a crisis for both novelists, and indeed for the ideology of domesticity itself. The domestic novel went into decline after the war, its romantic happy ending having lost credibility. Evans Wilson and Terhune, although well established authors by then, were obliged to come to terms with the war and its aftermath, as writers and as women. Evans Wilson, a passionate Confederate patriot, gradually overcame her

[3] Marion Harland, *The Hidden Path* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1854; reprint, Leipzig: Alphons Dürr, 1856), 277(page citations are to the reprint edition). Terhune also named the characters of this novel after the characters of *Reveries of a Bachelor*.

hatred and despair by reaffirming her Christian faith as her ultimate homeland. She continued to produce fiction similar to that which she had written before the war, tales in which grace finally triumphed over cold righteousness. Terhune had sided with the victorious Union but suffered severe personal disillusions and losses during and after the war. After a period of disorientation, reflected in the bitter novels she wrote, she pursued two separate lines of writing. On the one hand, she produced domestic advice books that suited the practical temper of the new age. On the other, she returned to writing Christian novels which, however, had a more subdued and melancholy quality than those she had written before the war.

By 1880, both Terhune and Evans Wilson had reaffirmed the faith they had embraced as young women in the 1850s, and they would remain rooted in this faith for the rest of their lives. They retained their evangelical vision, with its romantic idealization of domesticity, even as that vision gradually fell out of favor in the wider society and, in Terhune's case, with her own children. Terhune and Evans Wilson had some cause for confidence in the reality of "women's influence." Both had received numerous grateful letters from admiring readers and they remained popular throughout careers that extended well into the twentieth century. As they neared the end of their lives, each developed a stronger assurance that they had lived well and were nearing their heavenly home. As Terhune wrote at the end of her autobiography, ". . . I am asking myself whether it may not be that the chequered scene I survey from the hill-top – which on clear days gives me a fine view of the Delectable Mountains – has been exceptionally eventful, as it has been affluent in God's choicest gifts of home-joys and home-loves, and

in opportunities of proving, by word and in deed, my love for fellow-travelers along the King's Highway."[4]

Author's Note: For the sake of name recognition, I decided to refer to Terhune by her married name, Evans Wilson by both her maiden and married names. Terhune, who married at age twenty-five and who had used a pseudonym from the beginning of her career, was publicly known as "Mrs. Mary Virginia Terhune." Evans Wilson, who did not marry until she was thirty-three and who published under her own name, was known by both her maiden and marriage names. Reprints of novels she had first published while single sometimes named the author as "Evans," sometimes as "Wilson."

[4] The "Delectable Mountains" metaphor is a reference to John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, a Terhune favorite. In traveling through these mountains the pilgrim, while not yet entirely out of danger, was within sight of his final destination, the Celestial City. Marion Harland [Mary Virginia Terhune], *Marion Harland's Autobiography: The Story of a Long Life* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1910; reprint, Signal Lives Autobiographies of American Women, New York: Arno Press, 1980) 488-489 (page citation are identical in the original and reprint editions).

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

Of the two authors in this study, Evans Wilson is the better known today both among scholars and the general public. This is almost certainly because her two most popular novels, *Beulah* and especially *St. Elmo*, achieved a "blockbuster" status that eluded Terhune's novels. In addition, Evans Wilson has been intriguing to feminist scholars because of her status as a kind of proto-feminist who, according to the predominant interpretation, pushed against the confines of separate-spheres ideology before and during the Civil War, only to retreat into the recesses of that same ideology in the post-war years. The prolific Terhune has received far less scholarly attention, and deserves closer study. In her own day she was as well known as was Evans Wilson, and by modern standards her works are far more readable. From the perspective of women's history as well as Southern history, Terhune rivals her fellow novelist as a fascinating subject. Her life, even more than Evans Wilson's, illustrates the dilemma of a woman torn between the separate-spheres ideal and the growing feminist movement. Her position as a liminal Southerner (she married a New Jersey minister and lived most of he adult life in the North) can shed light on the question of Southern distinctiveness. Finally, the primary sources for Terhune are much more plentiful than those for Evans Wilson. They include, in addition to her copious personal writings, ample family materials saved by the historically-minded Haweses (her family of origin) and Terhunes.

By contrast, Evans Wilson wrote less herself, and the materials for her family are very sparse indeed. This abundant but lopsided evidence created some difficulty in maintaining a balance between Evans and Terhune in this study. In a reversal of the existing scholarship, this dissertation is weighted toward Terhune.

Among the most important of the primary sources for Terhune is a diary that she kept between 1846 and 1853, during the years that she was coming of age and discovering her vocation as a writer. A typed manuscript of this diary is at the Terhune Sunnybank Memorial Association of Lakehurst and Pompton Lakes, New Jersey. Terhune scholar Karen Manners Smith, a professor of history at Emporia State University in Kansas, kindly sent me a photocopy of her personal copy, which had been provided to her by Mary Virginia's great-grandson Frederick F. Van de Water III of Richmond, Virginia (now deceased). Terhune evidently planned to share at least parts of her diary with others. It begins as a private journal, but the entries become longer and more polished by 1850. The diary was an invaluable source of information on Terhune's early years. Of equal importance was the Mary Virginia Terhune Papers (1843-1920) at Duke University. Most of the items in this collection are long letters, alternately chatty and passionate, that Terhune wrote to her close friend Virginia Eppes Dance (later Campbell), between 1843 and 1856. The collection also includes newspaper clippings, a few letters to other friends, several letters from her husband Edward Payson Terhune to the Reverend Campbell, written in the late 1850s, and several letters Terhune wrote to Dance Campbell toward the end of her life. The Katherine Heath Hawes Papers (1789-1941) at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond is a large collection of primary sources for Terhune and Hawes family members. It includes family letters, photographs, journals, a

genealogy prepared by Mary Virginia, and newspaper clippings. Edward Terhune's diary (1876-1907) is available at Rutgers University, as are the Albert Payson Terhune Papers, a collection of letters written by the Terhunes' son, "Bert" Terhune, to his favorite nephew, Frederick Fritz Van de Water II in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The Edward Terhune diaries are mostly perfunctory, but contain some personal commentary, while Albert Terhune's letters include his thoughts and feelings about his family history. Smaller collections of letters by Mary Virginia Terhune and Albert Payson Terhune, mostly beyond the time frame of this dissertation, are at Columbia University, the New York City Public Library, the Springfield Public Library in Springfield, Massachusetts, the University of Virginia, and the Huntingdon Library in San Marino, California. An important resource to which I did not have direct access is an unpublished family history, "Talented Family," written by Terhune's grandson Frederick Fritz Van de Water II, himself a writer and historian. Manners Smith quotes liberally from this history in her dissertation, "Marion Harland: The Making of a Household Word."[5] This dissertation was a highly important source for my own work, and Dr. Smith provided an abundance of practical help and personal encouragement during the period of my research. Finally, a variety of primary and early secondary sources provided me with a fuller picture of the Richmond community and Presbyterian church in which Mary Virginia Terhune came of age. These include an 1899 biography of Terhune's pastor, Moses Drury Hoge, written by his nephew Peyton Harrison Hoge, which quotes from Hoge's personal correspondence, as well as *The Making of a Downtown Church*, a history of the Second Presbyterian Church of Richmond by Wyndham B. Blanton.

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[5] Karen Manners Smith, "Marion Harland: The Making of a Household Word" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1990).

Sources on Evans Wilson are fewer and less widely scattered. Rebecca Grant Sexton, professor of English at Morehead State University in Morehead, Kentucky, has made the lives of Evans scholars much easier by reprinting the novelist's letters, the originals of which are held in multiple archives, into a single volume titled *A Southern Woman of Letters: The Correspondence of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson*.[6] Missing from this collection, however, are four letters that Evans wrote to her friend and mentor the Rev. Walter Clopton Harriss in the late 1850s. These letters are an important source of information about the religious crisis Evans experienced around 1855. Once believed lost, the letters are still in the possession of Harriss descendent Grace Jones Middleton of Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Mrs. Middleton kindly sent me color photocopies, and I was also able to locate typescripts of the same letters at the Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon College, Montgomery, Alabama. The typescripts, prepared in the 1960s, helped to clarify portions of the originals that have since crumbled or become illegible. The Methodist Archives also holds typescripts of four letters by the Reverend Harriss to family members, as well as the records of the St. Francis Street Methodist Church of Mobile, where Evans Wilson was a member.[7] I have, to date, been unable to locate correspondence or other personal papers by Evans Wilson family members.

Most of the published writings by Terhune and Evans Wilson are still available, although their earlier and more obscure works have disappeared or are difficult to find. A

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[6] Rebecca Grant Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters: The Correspondence of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2002).

[7] The Evans letters to Harriss are dated 29 January, 1856, 22 April, 1856, 12 October, 1856, and 29, October, 185(8). According to Mrs. Middleton, the collection originally included a fifth letter which has been lost. I have edited and prepared an introduction for these letters, and the resulting article has been published in *The Alabama Review*. Sara S. Frear, "Notes and Documents: 'You My Brother Will Be Glad with Me': The Letters of Augusta Jane Evans to Walter Clopton Harriss, January 29, 1856, to October 29, 185[8?]," *The Alabama Review* 60:2 (April 2007): 111-141.

few of the "Robert Remer" essays Terhune wrote for the Richmond *Watchman and Observer* are available on microfilm. Terhune's prize-winning short story "Kate Harper" seems to have vanished, but the short stories she published for *Godey's Lady's Book* from 1853 through the 1860s have been preserved. Her novels are available on microfilm, through libraries and, increasingly, in electronic format and modern reprints. The same is true of Evans Wilson's novels, which went into multiple reprint editions well into the twentieth century and which are still readily available in hard copy. A number of Evans's early newspaper articles have been lost, but a copy of "The Mutilation of the Hermae" (11 November, 1862, *Gulf City Home Journal*) has been preserved in the J.L.M Curry Papers at the Library of Congress.[8] General biographical information and commentary, mostly laudatory, on both writers is available through nineteenth-century sources such as Willis Brewer's *Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men*, James Cephas Derby's *Fifty Years Among Authors, Books and Publishers*, and Mary Forrest's *Women of the South Distinguished in Literature*.[9] The New York *World* and the *Southern Literary Messenger* are good sources for reviews of both novelists' works, and the Mobile *Register* ran a number of news articles and feature stories on Evans Wilson and her family. Originals or photocopies are in the collections of the Historic Mobile Preservation Society.

Neither Terhune nor Evans Wilson was ever completely forgotten. Scholarly study of them began at about the same time that their popularity as authors was fading, in

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[8] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese located copies of Evans's 1859 articles on "Northern Literature" and "Southern Literature," published in the Mobile *Advertiser*, through her contact with Evans Wilson biographer William Perry Fidler.

[9] Willis Brewer, *Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Records, and Public Men, From 1540-1872* (Montgomery, Alabama: Barrett and Brown, 1872); James Cephas Derby, *Fifty Years Among Authors, Books and Publishers* (New York: G.W. Carleton & Co., 1884); Mary Forrest, *Women of the South Distinguished in Literature* (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1861, 1866).

the early twentieth century. In 1934, Marion Wright Hudson published her dissertation, "Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune ('Marion Harland'): Her Life and Works."[10] Hudson did not attempt a critical study of Terhune, but she made an important contribution to scholarship in that she systematically catalogued the author's numerous works, identifying the first editions and publishers. In 1937, Sydney C. Phillips completed his master's thesis on Evans Wilson at Alabama Polytechnic Institute, now Auburn University. His provocative, albeit reductionist, thesis was that Evans Wilson, a good and virtuous woman but a poor writer, owed her popularity among young people primarily to the fact that her novels portrayed "sex conflict," a topic of perennial interest to adolescents. Phillips speculates that Evans Wilson's own sexual anxiety began during the Civil War, when the once-sheltered young woman nursed Confederate soldiers. She found their company delightful, but since young men in danger of imminent death would not have been chaste, her encounters with them created a conflict in her.[11]

The mid-twentieth century saw a series of literary studies of "sentimentality," most of which had a condescending or ironic tone. In *The Feminine Fifties* (1940), Fred Lewis Pattee argued that the 1850s had been a decade dominated by feminine emotionalism, most fully expressed in the "vast swamp" of popular sentimental literature.[12] In *The Sentimental Novel in America*, published in the same year, Herbert

[10] Marion Wright Hudson, "Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune ('Marion Harland'): Her Life and Works." George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1934.
[11] Sidney C. Phillips, "The Life and Works of Augusta Evans Wilson" (M.S. Thesis, Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University), 1937), 176, 182, 191, 208-209.
[12] Fred L. Pattee, *The Feminine Fifties* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1940), 307.

Ross Brown also equated femininity with an undemanding emotionalism, and argued that sentimental novels were the product of a cultural disease, a perverted idealism.[13]

A decade later, William Perry Fidler adopted a gentler tone in *Augusta Evans Wilson: A Biography* (1951). This work is the only full biographical treatment of Wilson to date and it includes interviews with family members who had known her. Fidler clearly liked Evans Wilson personally. He categorized her as “a domestic sentimentalist,” and his central argument was that her writing, while not great from a literary point of view, accurately reflected the tastes and values of the Victorian era: respect for tradition and sentiment rather than “reason,” and belief in absolute moral standards. The unsophisticated Americans of that age, Fidler thought, were desperate to appear cultured and read Evans Wilson because her elevated tone and obscure scholarly allusions led them to believe that they were reading high literature. Fidler suggested that the Victorians, despite their naivety, should be respected for their sincerity and moral earnestness.[14]

Helen Waite Papashvily struck a very different note with *All the Happy Endings: A Study of the Domestic Novel in America, the Women who Wrote It, the Women who Read It, in the Nineteenth Century*.[15] Rather than a lachrymose swamp, she found sentimental literature to be a witches’ brew created by women to retaliate against the men who dominated society. The novelists appealed to Heaven and the Bible, rather than to the common law and Blackstone, and they repeatedly portrayed women as superior to

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[13] Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940).
[14] William Perry Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson, 1835-1909* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1951), 7-8, 218, 223-224.
[15] Helen Waite Papashvily, *All the Happy Endings: A Study of the Domestic Novel in America, the Women Who Wrote It, the Women Who Read It, in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956).

men. Their motive, Papashvily argued, was vengeance rather than justice or truth. It was an interpretation strangely at odds with the character of the sentimental genre itself, and Papashvily, like the earlier scholars, failed to recognize the extent to which sentimental literature was read, and its premises accepted, by men.

Even as literary scholars excoriated the domestic novel, or damned it with faint praise, religious historian William McLoughlin made an important contribution to the interpretation of nineteenth-century evangelicalism. In the introduction to his anthology, *The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900* (1960), he argued that the story of evangelicalism was the story of America itself in the nineteenth century, and that its outstanding characteristic was the decline of the Calvinist tradition. McLoughlin divided the development of evangelicalism into three phases. He characterized the period from 1800 to 1830 as influenced by the Scottish common-sense school of philosophy. The middle decades, to about 1865, were dominated by Romantic thought. Romantic evangelicalism emphasized the intuitive perception of truth through the heart (emotions) over reason, and the personality of Jesus over the moral order of God. It also sentimentalized and idealized women, children, and parenthood (curiously, McLoughlin omits romance). In their Romantic stage, evangelicals embraced domestic ideology and made women the guardians of both art and religion. They generally opposed woman suffrage on the ground that exposure to the harsh world outside the home would harden and corrupt women. After the Civil War, evangelical religion entered a third phase that McLoughlin describes as "liberal evangelicalism." Having absorbed the Romantic notion of the bible as literature or poetry, and discarded the theological rigor of orthodox Calvinism, late nineteenth-century evangelicals were able to avoid grappling directly

with the intellectual challenges of the era, particularly Darwinism, positivism and biblical higher criticism.[16] As this dissertation will show, Terhune and Evans fit squarely within McLoughlin's definition of romantic evangelicalism. Indeed, I arrived at this term, independently of McLoughlin, as a result of reading their works.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the "second wave" of feminism led to the rise of women's history as a distinct field. While early biographical studies by feminist historians focused, naturally enough, on leading women who had been considered radicals in the nineteenth century (Gerda Lerner's work on the Grimké sisters is a noteworthy example), the new wave of scholarship also devoted considerable attention to domestic ideology. In a landmark article, "The Cult of True Womanhood" (1966), Barbara Welter argued that the essential characteristics of the Victorian feminine ideal were "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity."[17] Kathryn Kish Sklar challenged this paradigm considerably in her 1973 biography *Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*, one of the earliest studies of a woman leader in the domesticity movement.[18] Sklar painted a complex and sympathetic portrait of Beecher as a woman who struggled with the expectations of her family as well as her culture, and whose personal difficulties enabled her to articulate a new vision of womanhood. It was a vision that posited a unique moral and social role for women and, in the process, helped women in the early nineteenth century to endure the hardships and disappointments of their lives.

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[16] William G. McLoughlin, ed., *The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900, An Anthology* (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks, 1986), 2-3, 14-15, 18, 22-23.
[17] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, No. 2 (Summer 1966), 151-174.
[18] Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973).

In 1977, Nancy Cott presented a similarly ambivalent picture of domesticity in another path-breaking monograph, *The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835*. The title's double-entendre was intentional. Cott argued that "woman's sphere" was both a constricting and a liberating social space, constricting because it barred women from full participation in their society, liberating because it led to the formation of a distinctive "woman's culture" that provided women with companionship and moral support as they sought to reform their society and improve their own circumstances.[19]

In the 1980s, a number of literary scholars developed a new appreciation for the hitherto disparaged sentimental novelists, both for their literary and intellectual abilities and for the role they played in shaping nineteenth-century culture. Nina Baym led the way with her 1978 monograph, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*. Rejecting the label "sentimental," she argued that the "woman's fiction" was a distinct genre which was primarily concerned with "the formation and assertion of a feminine ego." As such, it represented a moderate or pragmatic feminism. Baym also defended the genre's much-maligned emotionalism as realistic. While acknowledging that she had not discovered any lost masterpieces among the novels she had examined, she nevertheless deplored the tendency of earlier scholars to dismiss the domestic novel as trivial. She argued that "woman's fiction" should be taken seriously, on its own terms.[20]

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[19] Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*, 2[d] ed., with a new Preface, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 205.
[20] Nina Baym *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*, 2[d] ed. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 12, 14-15, 19, 24-25.

Jane Tompkins and Philip Fisher further developed Baym's arguments about the cultural functions of nineteenth-century popular literature. In *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (1985), Tompkins argued that popular women's novels not only reflected but were designed to effect social change. They were best understood as "cultural work" rather than as "art for art's sake." Simplicity and stereotyped characters were desirable qualities rather than literary defects, since they assisted in the process of reforming society. Like Baym, Tompkins rejected the disparaging label "sentimental," noting that the novels often promoted endurance and patience, rather than tearful lamentation, as the appropriate response to hardship.[21] In *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (1987), Philip Fisher echoed Tompkins's argument that the popular novel was an instrument for bringing about fundamental changes in the mindset of a society. When a cultural ideal contradicted a social reality (a "hard fact"), popular fiction helped Americans resolve the tension by acknowledging the conflict while at the same time reducing it to a "dream-like simplification." Like Tompkins, Fisher argued that popular novels were repetitive and emotional precisely because they were attempting to bring about a change in *mentalité*. As "ordinary" works of fiction, they had a transformative power that works of literary genius lacked because the latter were too complex to be incorporated into the collective mindset.[22]

Other scholars adopted less sanguine interpretations of the domestic novelists and their cultural impact. Probably the best known critic of literary domesticity is Ann

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[21] Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), xi-xiii, xvi, 175.
[22] Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 5, 7, 8.

Douglas. In a scathing monograph, *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977), Douglas charged nineteenth-century middle-class women and liberal ministers with joining forces to create a sentimental and anti-intellectual culture that then paved the way for the shallow, self-indulgent consumer society of the modern era. Sentimental novels were an important part of this process in Douglas's view, and she raised feminist hackles by her use of the term "feminization" to describe what she saw as a collective loss of moral and intellectual rigor.[23] In her 1984 work, *Private Woman, Public Stage*, Mary Kelley explored the personal conflicts experienced by successful domestic novelists who were torn between their loyalty to an ideology that consigned them to a hidden, domestic sphere and the reality of their public status as well-known writers.[24] Kelley portrayed women novelists as unhappy, even tormented, over their inability to resolve this contradiction. Literary scholar Gillian Brown admitted the cultural power of domestic novelists but took a darker view of this power. In *Domestic Individualism* (1990), she argued, based on a close analysis of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that domesticity was a feminized form of the same possessive individualism that characterized the male-dominated capitalist commercial culture of the nineteenth century. While matriarchal domesticity purported to be benevolent, it retained proprietorship over its supposed beneficiaries while denying them equality, and it maintained a "sentimental" racial segregation.[25]

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[23] Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977; The Noonday Press, 1998), 8, 12-13.
[24] Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).
[25] Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (University of California Press, 1990).

Scholarship on the domestic novelists has also been influenced by the growing importance of religious history in the last two decades of the twentieth century. In particular, Douglas's provocative work helped to stimulate historians' interest in the relationship between women, religion and popular literature. *The Feminization of American Culture* had focused on the northeastern United States, but in 1985 Jane Friedman examined the role of religion in the lives of Southern women. In *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900*, Friedman argued that Southern women remained conservative and non-activist, even well after the Civil War, because they lived in a limited world, an "enclosed garden" which was bounded in by kinship obligations, local church polity and community loyalties.[26] In a direct, revisionist challenge to the idea that women were constricted by their domestic role, Glenna Matthews argued in *Just a Housewife: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (1987) that the short-lived reign of domesticity represented a high point in prestige for both women and housework. Granting that women were confined to a "separate sphere," Matthews nevertheless argued that that sphere had been central to American culture, and that the home had represented a "touchstone of values" for reforming all of society.[27] Although Matthews did not focus on religion, her study demonstrates the connection between domestic ideology and evangelical Christianity that McLoughlin had noted decades earlier. In a 1990 monograph, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, Lori Ginzberg argued that middle-class women's benevolent work, which was closely related

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[26] Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).
[27] Glenna Matthews, *Just a Housewife: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 35.

to evangelical religion as well as the belief in the distinctive nature of women, helped to create a distinctive middle-class culture.[28] She added that this feminine role began to decline in the 1850s and was replaced by a new, class-based approach that emphasized social control (this aspect of Ginzberg's thesis supported Matthews's argument that domestic ideology had had a short reign). Richard Cawardine explored the role of evangelical Christianity in electoral politics in his 1993 study, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*. His findings related to women's experience as well, since women were keenly interested in politics, especially as the crisis of the Civil War neared. Contradicting Eugene Genovese, Cawardine found that Southern evangelicals did not defend slavery as a positive good, although they did see it as a Christianizing agent. Unable to escape the humanity of the slave, due to their commitment to monogenesis, evangelical theologians like James Thornwell tended to see slavery as one of the consequences of the fallen condition of humanity rather than an ideal social system.[29]

In 1990, Karen Manners Smith completed her thoughtful dissertation on Mary Virginia Terhune, "Marion Harland: The Making of a Household Word." Smith's thesis was that Terhune, although almost forgotten today, had been a highly influential cultural leader in her own day. As a popular novelist as well as purveyor of domestic advice, she had been a nineteenth-century "Julia Child, Danielle Steel, and Dear Abby" all rolled into one, making her a "household word."[30] Smith described Terhune as advocating a limited "domestic feminism." While sympathetic toward her subject, Smith was critical of

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[28] Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
[29] Richard Cawardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 157-158.
[30] Smith, "Marion Harland," Ph.D. diss., xi, 1, 25.

Terhune's domineering and occasionally manipulative personality, her concern for her social status, and especially her inconsistency in advocating a purely domestic role for other women while pursuing a career as a professional writer herself. According to Smith, Terhune yearned to be an American Charlotte Bronte.[31]

I find myself in disagreement with Dr. Smith on two points. While Terhune was remarkably energetic, I do not see in her a driving ambition for fame. Terhune was sincere in her belief in domesticity (Bronte, after all, did not write cookbooks), and a personal conflict over ambition is much more evident in Evans Wilson than it is in Terhune. Secondly, Smith sees a stark inconsistency between Terhune's insistence that all women could be content in a domestic role (properly understood), and her career as a professional writer. Terhune, however, did not object to women undertaking useful activities apart from their home-making, provided that they did not neglect their household duties in the process. Moreover, while she earned a substantial income as a writer, she always wrote part-time, devoting the rest of her time to her work as a home-maker, parent, and pastor's wife. That said, Smith's assessment was shaped by a source I did not have access to, "Talented Family," the family history penned by her grandson Fritz Van de Water. Van de Water disliked his grandmother personally, and according to Smith his accounts of her usually have a negative cast.

Smith's dissertation anticipated a proliferation of historical scholarship on popular woman writers during the 1990s. In this decade, historians undertook a reassessment of "sentimentality," a trend already current in literary studies. In 1992, two of Evans Wilson's most important novels, *Beulah* (1859) and *Macaria* (1864), were republished in

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[31] Karen Manners Smith, e-mail communication to author, September 9, 2005.

paperback editions. The novels were edited by two leading historians of women, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Drew Gilpin Faust, respectively. In her introduction to *Beulah*, Fox-Genovese challenged the dominant feminist interpretation of Evans Wilson as a writer who had at first embraced woman's independence, then retreated into the domestic ideology that constricted women and kept them subordinate. Evans Wilson, according to Fox-Genovese, had not denied female independence per se, but had rejected arrogance and excessive individualism in both sexes. In addition, Fox-Genovese introduced a novel psychological interpretation of Beulah, arguing that, while skeptical philosophy and literature had been the catalyst for the heroine's religious crisis, its roots lay in her childhood experience of emotional deprivation.[32] In her introduction to *Macaria*, Faust argued that the novel had been the quintessential war story for women. Referring to Tompkins's thesis, she described the "cultural work" of *Macaria* as a reorganization of the Confederate war effort from a woman's point of view. The novel also presented the provocative possibility that a woman might find fulfillment in an unmarried life. In *Macaria*, the fruitful single life was a form of religious service, and in Faust's interpretation religion had helped Evans Wilson to contain her subversive attack on woman's sphere. Faust argued that, in the end, *Macaria* conveyed a deeply conflicted message about woman's autonomy. Moreover, Evans Wilson had retreated from her subversive stance after the war, "strangling" (Augusta's own word) her ambition to write a history of the Confederacy.[33]

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[32] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Introduction to *Beulah*, by Augusta Jane Evans (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), xxxiii.
[33] Drew Gilpin Faust, Introduction to *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice*, by Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), xv, xxiii, xxvi.

1992 also saw the publication of Elizabeth Moss's monograph *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture*.[34] Moss argued that the domestic novels written by Southern women constituted a distinct genre, one that sought to defend the Southern way of life in response to Northern critiques of slavery. She further argued that Southern women novelists endeavored to mediate between South and North as the secession crisis deepened. Moss devoted little to attention to the role of sentimentality in the domestic novel, but this question was taken up by a volume of papers published that same year. *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, edited by Shirley Samuels, was the product of a conference on sentimentality held in 1990 at Cornell University.[35] The essays in this volume neither condemned nor endorsed sentimentality but explored its consequences, particularly in terms of its intersection with race, gender, and class. A number of the essayists also explored the paradoxical relation of sentimental culture and the material world, since sentimental ideals were both "corporealized" and "transcendentalized."

More works on woman's culture, literary domesticity and sentimentality were published later in the decade. These included revised editions of Baym's *Woman's Fiction* (1993), Cott's *The Bonds of Womanhood* (1997), and Douglas's *The Feminization of American Culture* (1988). Karen Manners Smith published two articles on Terhune. "Mary Virginia Terhune (Marion Harland): Writer, Minister's Wife, and Domestic Expert" suggested that Terhune would probably have become a Presbyterian

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[34] Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists of the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

[35] Shirley Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

minister had the option been available in the nineteenth century.[36] In "Half My Heart in Dixie: Southern Identity and the Civil War in the Writings of Mary Virginia Terhune," Smith explored Terhune's ambiguous sectional identity as a Virginian and Unionist. She argued that, after the war, Terhune resolved her conflict over her regional loyalties by identifying herself as a Virginian rather than a Southerner, and focusing her attention as an author on the colonial era so as to distance herself from the Confederacy.[37] In 1997, the concept of "domestic fiction" was challenged by Laura Romero in *Home Fronts: Literary Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States*.[38] Romero questioned the identification of domestic fiction with women, arguing that the genre was neither particularly domestic nor particularly feminine. She pointed out, echoing Tompkins, that there had been many popular male authors in the early nineteenth century and that their writings could not be sharply distinguished from those of women.

The scholarly trends of the 1980s and 1990s, which include the growing importance of religious history and the increased attention to woman novelists as writers and thinkers, continued into the first decade of the twenty-first century. E. Brooks Holifield's magisterial *Theology in America* included discussions of popular as well as academic theologians, although he gave scant attention to women's religious thought.[39] Michael O'Brien, however, included a number of women in *Conjectures of Order*, his

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[36] Karen Manners Smith, "Mary Virginia Terhune (Marion Harland): Writer, Minister's Wife, and Domestic Expert." *American Presbyterians: Journal of Presbyterian History* 72, No. 2 (Summer 1994): 111.
[37] Karen Manners Smith, "Half My Heart in Dixie: Southern Identity and the Civil War in the Writings of Mary Virginia Terhune" in *Beyond Image and Convention: Explorations in Southern Women's History*, ed. Janet L. Coryell et al. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 134-135.
[38] Laura Romero, *Literary Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States* (Durham: Duke University, 1997).
[39] E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

massive, two-volume study of intellectual life in the Old South. O'Brien placed Evans Wilson among the "realists" of the late antebellum period, who faced the inevitability of cultural loss and looked to something larger than the self for meaning and stability, "God" and "duty" in the case of Evans Wilson. O'Brien considered *Beulah* to be primarily a novel of ideas, and one of the most sophisticated treatments of the problem of knowledge to have been produced in the antebellum South.[40] Jonathan Wells emphasized the importance of evangelical religion in *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, a monograph that argued that a full-fledged middle class had emerged in the South by 1850.[41] That class, he asserted, combined imported Northern ideals about personal initiative and industriousness with evangelical religion to create a distinctive Southern middle-class ethos, one that offered an alternative to the traditional honor-based culture of the Southern elites.

Strong studies of popular women's literature continued in the 2000s, and the focus shifted from the antebellum era to the Civil War and post-Civil War years. Among the leading monographs to emerge during these years were Lyde Cullen Sizer's *The Political Work of Northern Woman Writers and the Civil War* (2000), Alice Fahs's *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865* (2001), Jane Turner Censer's *The Reconstruction of Southern Womanhood* (2003), and Sarah E. Gardner's *Blood and Irony: Southern White Women's Narratives of the Civil War, 1861-1937* (2004). Sizer argued that, while the Civil War did not create a dramatic change in women's social reality, women themselves believed that they had a stake in the national

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[40] Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South*, 1810-1860, Vol. 2 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1161, 1163.
[41] Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

crisis, and their "political" writings were an important aspect of Americans' experience of the war at the time. It was only after the war, according to Sizer, that amateur and professional historians redefined the conflict primarily in terms of its masculine and military aspects. Examining the literary productions of both Union and Confederacy, Fahs argued that popular war literature had helped to create a "cultural politics of war" and nationalism, as well as feeding into a burgeoning commercial market for war poetry, short stories, novels, and other writings. While Sizer had identified sentimentality with upper- and middle-class Northern women, Fahs found that sentimental values were shared by North and South, women and men. She also found that the writings of Southern women differed from those of their Northern counterparts. Southern women did not claim, as Northern women sometimes did, that their wounds were equal to those of their men, and unlike their Northern counterparts they did not create sensationalist adventure stories with women heroines (as Fahs points out, Southern women were more likely to experience the war firsthand and they usually did not enjoy the encounter). Censer examined the writings and attitudes of Southern elite women after the Civil War, finding that younger women in particular learned both ladyhood and self-support, often preferring to manage their households themselves rather than resort to African-American or white servants. Censer devoted the last two chapters of her book to Southern woman writers. She found that they wrote for a variety of motives, including financial need, pride in working for a living, altruism and the desire to edify society, and professional ambition. Their fiction was characterized by a fascination with the exotic and beautiful, a preoccupation with the North and Northerners, and ambivalence over race and class differences. Censer noted two new trends in the 1890s, a growing criticism of the North

and the re-emergence of the Confederate hero. However, she acquitted Southern women of creating the plantation legend and the myth of the black rapist. Gardner, by contrast, argued that Southern white women, from the Civil War on, saw themselves as the repositories of the truth about the Confederacy and the war and played a major role in the creation of the "Lost Cause" mythology. This role became formalized in 1894 with the founding of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, an organization that encouraged writing as one of the most effective means of fulfilling its mission. Like earlier scholars, Gardner emphasized Southern women's intense bitterness and yearnings for revenge, feelings that rankled for decades after the Confederate defeat.[42] Finally, in 2005, Melissa Homestead published an important study of women authors, copyright, and coverture law in the United States and the Confederacy. In *American Women Authors and Literary Property, 1822-1869*, Homestead found that, while the legal system constrained women writers in various ways, they adroitly manipulated the system to their advantage.[43]

This dissertation contributes to the current reassessment of "sentimental" or domestic fiction in several ways. Focusing closely on two of the most popular domestic novelists and examining the intersection between their personal lives and their writing, I argue that they wrote primarily for religious rather than economic or political motives. This aspect of domestic fiction has been relatively neglected by historians. I share the now widespread view among scholars that the dismissive label "sentimental" has done a

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[42] Lyde Cullen Sizer, *The Political Work of Northern Women Writers and the Civil War, 1850-1872* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North & South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865-1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 220-224, 226, 258, 272, 274; Sarah E. Gardner, *Blood and Irony: Southern White Women's Narratives of the Civil War, 1861-1937* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
[43] Melissa J. Homestead, *American Women Authors and Literary Property, 1822-1869* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

disservice to a body of works that, while falling short of artistic greatness and limited by the prejudices of its times, was nevertheless intelligent, often gracefully written, humane and sometimes humorous, and at times bracingly unsentimental. Terhune and Evans each attempted to communicate their personal vision to readers, a "token from my soul to yours," as Terhune put it, in the hope of changing their society for the better.[44] Their vision corresponds closely to the evangelical romanticism described by William McLoughlin, and I argue that while Terhune and Evans Wilson produced regionally distinctive "Southern" versions of that ideal, they were very much a part of a larger evangelical community of shared visions and values.

Although evangelical Christianity continued strong after the Civil War, its romantic element faded. I find, however, that both Terhune and Evans, following a period of disillusion and disorientation, returned to their roots in the romantic evangelicalism of their youth. I further argue that the romantic ideal of "influence" had a basis in reality. Individual readers testified that Terhune and Evans had shaped their lives, and their ongoing popularity into the early twentieth century indicates that a significant number of Americans found their writing both enjoyable and meaningful. The fact that both writers and their fellow domestic novelists are being reexamined today is one indication of a change in the direction of the cultural winds at the turn of the twentieth century.

In making an argument for the reality of "influence," I find myself in company with a significant number of scholars. As the voluminous literature shows, both historians and literary scholars have embraced the idea that writing, and fiction in

[44] Harland, *The Hidden Path*, vi.

particular, has played an important role in reflecting and, some would argue, shaping the national culture. Popular fiction is an interior landscape in which authors and readers can move about freely, exploring their ideals and aspirations as well as their griefs and fears. In many cases these interior journeys inspire both writers and readers to live out the ideals they have embraced in imagination. Scholars exploring the hitherto neglected cultural spaces of nineteenth-century fiction have argued for their impact on American culture, or at least on large segments of American society. Their research indicates that the interior world of fiction intersects closely with, and often has an impact on, the external reality traditionally studied by historians. In short, fiction can shape history.

CHAPTER II: BIOGRAPHIES

Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune: The Storyteller

As a writer, Mary Virginia Terhune combined a religiously motivated desire to do good in the world with sheer delight in telling a good story. Karen Manners Smith, in her excellent dissertation on Terhune, has argued that the Virginia author was part of the storytelling tradition of the South. While still a young girl, she drank in the gossip, ghost stories and local lore of the neighboring women in her hometown in rural Virginia, as well as the stories of her "colored" nurse.[45] She brought these tales to life in her own potent imagination. As an elderly woman, Terhune recalled that she had loved games of make-believe, which she called "playing ladies," and that she had often soothed herself to sleep as a child by making up stories.[46] It was this love of storytelling that gave Terhune's writing its qualities of warmth and humor, and that rescued it from the didactic tendencies of much of the religious fiction of the era.

Terhune was the child of a mixed marriage, in terms of both section and class. Her father, Samuel Pierce Hawes, was a native of Massachusetts who had come to Richmond with his merchant employer at age sixteen. Almost certainly raised as a Congregationalist, Samuel had joined Richmond's First Presbyterian Church by his mid-

[45] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 40-41, 430; Harland, *Autobiography*, ix, 39, 71.
[46] Harland, *Autobiography*, ix.

twenties.[47] It was through this church that he met his Virginia-born wife, Judith Anna Smith. Judith was from a large planter family that claimed descent from Captain John Smith of Jamestown. Both Samuel and Judith were Sunday school teachers, and Samuel was later ordained as an elder. Both were dedicated to their church and great lovers of books.[48] The couple was married on January 25, 1825. The commonplace book that Judith kept during the year leading up to her marriage conveys both the intensity of her religious devotion and the fulfillment she found in her early married life. Her final entry, on February 2, 1825, was an extended prayer that her marriage would be a means for her husband and herself to grow in love for God, for each other, and for the church. "May we be mutual helpmeets to each other on the way to heaven, may we serve thee who art a spirit in spirit and truth."[49]

Initially, Samuel and Judith seemed assured of a comfortable future in Richmond. Samuel had become a junior partner in a successful mercantile venture, while Judith brought a number of slaves to her marriage.[50] Their first son, William Edwin Hawes, was born in 1826. However, Samuel's business soon failed, a casualty, according to his daughter, of fraud and alcoholism on the part of his senior partner. After paying his partner's debts, Samuel used the remains of his fortune to purchase a country store in Dennisville, Amelia County, a small town two days' journey from Richmond. The couple moved there with their young son and two slaves in 1828.[51] Their first daughter,

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[47] Harland, *Autobiography*, 3.
[48] Harland, *Autobiography*, 33; Smith, "Mary Virginia Terhune" in *American Presbyterians*: 112.
[49] Commonplace book of Judith Anna (Smith) Hawes, Katherine Heath Hawes Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.
[50] Harland, *Autobiography* 3; Smith, "Mary Virginia Terhune," *American Presbyterians*, 112.
[51] Harland, *Autobiography,* 24-26.

Ann Almeria (Mea), was born later the same year. Mary Virginia was born two years later, on December 21, 1830.

Although Terhune insists in her *Autobiography* that country merchants were considered equal in status to their urban counterparts, the relocation to Dennisville must have been both depressing and humiliating to her parents. She describes the town as "a mere hamlet, destitute of school and social privileges." Her parents' few neighbors were "their inferiors in breeding and education; their children were a lawless, ill-mannered set, and the only school near them was what was known as an 'old field school' upon the outskirts of a plantation three miles away."[52] Terhune would later make this school the setting for her semi-autobiographical novel, *An Old-Field School Girl* (1897). The heroine of this novel is a bright and ambitious girl who, as the daughter of an overseer, suffers from the humiliation of her low social status.[53] Samuel Hawes's unhappiness with his new environment was also evident in his decision, made with his wife's tearful consent, to send his five-year-old son to be raised by his mother in Boston. The couple was heartbroken when they received news several months later that Edwin had died of "brain-fever."[54] Terhune believed that it was this bereavement that led her parents to move to a new home, still further from Richmond, in Lunenburg, Lunenburg County. Eventually, Samuel Hawes purchased a store at Powhatan Court House, a village situated between Richmond and Judith's family home at Montrose.[55]

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[52] Harland, *Autobiography* 24, 27.
[53] In her opening chapter, Terhune explains that the old-field school was built on worn-out farmland, and often served as the neighborhood school. Marion Harland, *An Old-Field School-Girl* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897).
[54] Harland, *Autobiography*, 27-29.
[55] Harland, *Autobiography*, 31, 52. Terhune writes in her *Autobiography* that her father, being taken with "Western fever," had wished to move further west but was dissuaded after her mother became seriously ill. *Autobiography*, 43, 53; Karen Manners-Smith suggests that Judith Hawes's illness may have been, in part,

Whatever her parents' regrets about leaving Richmond, Mary Virginia found much to enjoy in her rural childhood. "Ginny," as her family called her, loved to wander about the countryside, was fascinated by insects, and developed a great fondness for animals, especially birds.[56] It was also during her rambles that Ginny imbibed the local lore that would later color her own stories. While she was still a child, the stories fed her vivid imagination and led her to fancy that fairies nestled in the woodlands while ghosts might haunt a deserted room or graveyard.[57] Bible stories and children's literature added more grist to the mill, and Ginny eventually began to act out elaborate dramas, with the family slave children often playing supporting parts.[58] In a favorite game of "make-believe," she converted her playhouse into a family chapel in which she took on the role of minister to her congregation of slave children. A chair set on top of a barrel served as a rickety pulpit, and on one occasion Ginny preached a fire-and-brimstone sermon with such vehemence that she upset both chair and barrel, and toppled headlong into her congregation.[59]

Young Ginny was able to preach with a degree of verisimilitude, for the devout Hawes family attended church weekly on Sundays. When church attendance was impractical, Samuel and Judith required their children to read the Bible, memorize portions of the psalms, and study that staple of Presbyterian pedagogy, the Westminster

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a way to prevent her husband from moving the family to the West. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss), 36.

[56] Marion Harland, *When Grandmamma Was New: The Story of a Virginia Childhood* (Boston: Lothrop Publishing Company, 1899), 36-37, 107-113, 146-147. In the fiction Terhune wrote as an adult, birds often serve as metaphors for divine goodness and human joy.

[57] Harland, *Autobiography*, 39 – 42.

[58] Terhune describes some of these dramas in her semi-autobiographical collection of children's stories, *When Grandmamma Was New* (see note 12).

[59] Harland, *When Grandmamma Was New*, 54, 61.

Shorter Catechism.[60] The family carefully observed the Sabbath. Play was forbidden, and although the Hawes children were permitted to read pious children's memoirs, literature that "partook too much of the nature of fiction" was locked up on Saturday night.[61] As Terhune explained in her *Autobiography*, Presbyterians of that time regarded fiction as a personal indulgence at best.[62] Her own early novels would later play a part in changing this perception.

By her own account, Terhune enjoyed church as a small child because it presented an opportunity for her to see "people dressed in their prettiest clothes" and to sing hymns. Even at that young age, however, she had developed a sense of reverence that prevented her from actually offering prayer during her make-believe Sunday services, for fear that the Almighty would see such play-acting as blasphemous.[63] As she grew older, Ginny developed an intellectual and moral appreciation for her Presbyterian faith, and a personal conviction of its truth. Her sincere belief was blended with an emotional frankness, and a certain humorous irreverence, that saved her from stilted piety and would later give her writing a distinctive astringent quality. Terhune's autobiographical writings suggest that she inherited this capacity for honest laughter from both of her parents. She recounts, for instance, her father's barely smothered mirth upon witnessing her tumble from her make-believe pulpit, and her mother's merriment at reading Charles Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* and seeing in the sanctimonious character of Mr. Pecksniff a portrait of her clerical uncle.[64]

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[60] Smith, "Mary Virginia Terhune" (Ph.D. diss.), 112.
[61] Ibid., 54.
[62] Harland, *Autobiography*, 98.
[63] Harland, *When Grandmamma Was New*, 53-54.
[64] Ibid., 61- 62; Harland, *Autobiography*, 54.

The vividness of Terhune's writing also stems from her encounter with the darker side of human nature, both in herself and in others. One of her earliest memories was her lynching of a doll. Ginny, then about three years old, was furious when a family friend presented her sister Mea with a beautiful doll, and had no comparable gift for her. At first opportunity, she seized the doll and took it to the garden, stripped off its clothes, tied a string around its neck, hung it from a tree, and proceeded to beat it with a switch until it was "a shapeless rag." She did not recall her own subsequent punishment with the same switch, and speculates that she had probably been in too much of a "berserker rage" to feel it.[65]

Terhune was also much affected as a child by the abusive treatment she received at the hands of her first tutor, whom she calls "Mr. Tayloe" in her writing.[66] The tutor, whose real name was James Naylor, taught the Hawes children together with the children of several neighbors. According to Terhune's various accounts, he was a short-tempered, sadistic man who deliberately intimidated his charges. She speculated that Naylor had singled her out for humiliation because of her refusal to "break down" under his taunts.[67] Since the cruel tutor would later become a seminarian, his "tyranny" gave young Ginny a lesson in the capacity of seemingly devout Christians for evil. Some of the most sinister characters in her fiction are outwardly respectable and pious. The hatred she herself

[65] Harland, *Autobiography*, 37-38. Terhune tells a modified version of same story as "The Tragedy of Rozillah," in *When Grandmamma Was New*, 11-27.
[66] Terhune used pseudonyms for two purposes. One was to protect her identity early in her career as a writer. The second was to conceal the identity of individuals she portrayed negatively in her autobiographical writings and fiction. She used pseudonyms that resembled the individual's real name.
[67] Terhune describes her experience with Naylor as "The Reign of Terror" in her *Autobiography* (70-83). Smith suggests that Naylor may also have singled Terhune out because of her family's relatively low social status. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 60. However, if Terhune's own account in her *Autobiography* is to be believed, Naylor treated her pretty older sister, Mea, with "cubbish gallantry." Harland, *Autobiography*, 76.

developed for Naylor was an additional lesson in human evil. It was an antipathy she would maintain throughout her life, despite her Christian belief in the necessity of forgiveness, and its intensity made a strong impression on her grandson Fritz Van de Water. In an unpublished family memoir he commented, "It was not a Christian attitude, but, when her ego was involved, she wrote her own religion."[68]

Ginny's subsequent education was a happier affair than her schooling under Naylor. Naylor's successor was Miss Wilson, a "handsome Yankee governess," who lay some of the groundwork for Terhune's authorial career by encouraging her to write "compositions."[69] When Miss Wilson left a year later, Samuel Hawes sent his two oldest daughters, then fourteen and twelve years of age, for further study at Hampden-Sydney College. This Presbyterian men's school was located in Prince Edward County, about seventy miles southwest of Richmond, and it had an associated school of divinity, Union Theological Seminary.[70] The Hawes children boarded with Ann Rice, the widow of Reverend Doctor John Holt Rice who had founded the seminary. Although they did not take classes, they were tutored by a seminarian and had opportunity to attend college debates, lectures, and prayer-meetings. By the 1840s, the desirability of educating girls as well as boys had gained widespread acceptance in both North and South, but Samuel Hawes's decision to send his daughters to a male college was highly unusual, and the

[68] Frederick F. Van de Water, "Talented Family," typed manuscript memoir, 1955 (?), 42, in the collection of Frederick F. Van de Water III (now deceased), Richmond, Va., in Smith, "Marion Harland," 60; Harland, *Autobiography*, 79.
[69] Harland, *Autobiography*, 84-89.
[70] Union Theological Seminary is now located in Richmond.

arrangement was dismissed by his neighbors as "the most outré of 'Mr. Hawes's experiments.'"[71]

The stay at Hampden-Sydney made a powerful impression on the young Ginny, for a number of reasons. It was here that her genial tutor Robert Reid Howison (a seminarian!) encouraged her to read full-length novels, a practice her family had regarded as over-indulgence in a genre of doubtful moral and intellectual worth. It was here that she first met a young cousin of her mother's, Moses Drury Hoge. Hoge, at the time a seminarian and tutor, would later become a well-known Richmond minister and, during the Civil War, the chaplain of the Confederate Congress. Terhune wrote of him, "I think he was born sophisticated."[72] Finally, it was during her time at Hampden-Sydney that Ginny had a quiet experience of Christian conversion that left her with a lifelong sense of God's fatherly love for her.[73]

By 1844, the Hawes family was sufficiently recovered, financially and socially, to plan a move back to Richmond. Mea and Ginny were sent first, in October, to stay with relatives. Beginning in the winter of 1845, they attended a school run by "Mrs. Nottingham" (Elizabeth Nottingham) and her four daughters (the school had been recommended by Moses Drury Hoge). The rest of the family joined them in the springtime, and the family lived in a rented house.[74] By this time, the Hawes family included six children. Ginny had been followed by her brother Herbert Henry, her

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[71] Harland, *Autobiography*, 96.
[72] Ibid., 103.
[73] Always reticent about her most deeply personal experiences, Terhune wrote an account of her conversion but did not publish it. The essay was published by her daughter Christine Terhune Herrick after her death. Marion Harland [Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune], "When I Was Only Twelve," *The Continent* 56, No. 15 (April 9, 1925), 411, 414.
[74] Harland, *Autobiography*, 143; Smith, "Marion Harland," 84; Wyndham B. Blanton, *The Making of a Downtown Church: The History of Second Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Virginia, 1845 – 1945* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1945), 1945.

favorite brother Samuel Horace (whom the family called "Horace"), and her toddler-aged sisters Alice and Myrtle ("Syrtie"). The youngest child, George Percy, was born the following year. Samuel Pierce Hawes became a commission merchant, selling country produce, and established himself as a member of Richmond's business and professional class.[75]

The Hawes family also established themselves as members of a new church. At the time of their arrival in Richmond, the well-established First Presbyterian Church had just begun a "colony" to the west, where the city was rapidly expanding. A lecture-room had been built at Fifth Street and Main, and Moses Drury Hoge, who had recently graduated from seminary and become an assistant pastor at First Church, was elected pastor of the new congregation. It was a post he would continue to hold until 1899. Many of his parishioners formally transferred from the First Church, and this "colony" became the basis for a vibrant new church, Second Presbyterian.[76] The Hawses joined the new congregation, and Ginny was well satisfied with her new pastor. She wrote to a friend, "We attend his preaching and are of course pleased and I hope profited."[77]

Second Presbyterian Church thrived under the leadership of the popular Hoge. He maintained a close working relationship with the Rev. William S. Plumer, pastor of First Church, and the two churches had Sunday worship services at different times so that

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[75] Advertisement, *Watchman and Observer* (Richmond), 8 February 1849; Smith, Ibid.
[76] *Encyclopedia of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, ed. Alfred Nevin (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Encyclopedia Publishing Co., 1884), s.v. Richmond, Virginia, Second Presbyterian Church, 763.
[77] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 18 October 1845, Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, NC. Text-fiche.

their members could worship at both if desired.[78] At the same time, Hoge nursed ambitions for his church, hoping that it would eventually become the most important Presbyterian church in Richmond.[79] This appeared to be a realistic goal, for Second Presbyterian was so immediately popular that the lecture-room was crowded to overflowing. Beginning in 1846, the congregation made plans for the construction of a new church. Hoge was adamant that the architecture should be Gothic rather than classical, remarking, "I am tired of Grecian temples with spires on them – as out of place on that classic structure as a cockade would be in a parson's hat."[80] His congregation concurred, appointed a building committee, and began raising funds for the project.[81] The completed Second Presbyterian Church, built in a restrained Gothic style, was dedicated on May 7, 1848.[82]

The Hawes family was, over several generations, among the most dedicated members of Second Presbyterian. They regularly attended worship services twice on the Sabbath. Samuel Hawes, in addition to being ordained a deacon, served on the three-man building committee. In the latter capacity he traveled with Hoge to New York to consult the architect of Second Presbyterian, Minard Lafever.[83] His wife and children were active in church activities, including fairs and lecture programs. Ginny taught a Sunday

[78] When Plumer moved to Baltimore in 1847, the elders of the First Church sought a replacement who would work well with Hoge, and found one in the Rev. Thomas Verner Moore. Hoge said that the First Church had treated him with "delicate regard" in the matter. Peyton Harrison Hoge, *Moses Drury Hoge: Life and Letters* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1899), 97.
[79] Ibid., 98.
[80] Hoge was part of widespread movement among evangelicals of the mid-nineteenth century toward adopting aspects Catholic architecture and worship even while denouncing Roman-Catholic religion. The trend is in keeping with romantic evangelicalism, with its love for beauty and mystery. For a description of this trend, see Ryan K. Smith, *Gothic Arches, Latin Crosses: Anti-Catholicism and American Church Designs in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Hoge, *Moses Drury Hoge*, 90.
[81] Blanton, *The Making of a Downtown Church*, 67.
[82] Second Presbyterian remains a vibrant congregation in downtown Richmond today.
[83] Blanton, *The Making of a Downtown Church*, 69.

school class, and she and Mea sang in the choir. Hoge, moreover, became a close family friend and a frequent visitor to the Hawes home.

If Hoge had made a favorable impression on Ginny at Hampden-Sydney, her admiration for him deepened after her move to Richmond. As early as 1844, she wrote to a close friend, "It is strange what an effect his preaching has upon me. I feel as if lifted above things earthly, my mind instinctively follows his, and never do I have such clear views of truth as when he explains it." Perhaps fearing that her friend would interpret such sentiments as infatuation, she went on, "It is not that I am partial to the orator but there is something so pure and elevating in his style and subject, a sort of indescribable loftiness which seems to expand the soul and raise our ideas far beyond the mean and petty trifles which alas engage too much of our time and attention."[84] Hoge's own admiration for Ginny's early writings would thus play an important part in encouraging her sense of vocation as an author.

Terhune's love of stories went back to her early childhood, when she had made up stories in order to lull herself to sleep. She first began to write as a young teenager, producing "compositions" for her literary-minded Yankee governess, and simple poetry for friends. One such poem, written in 1843 and dedicated to her friend Virginia Eppes Dance, begins, "I pray for thee at nightfall, / When all the world is still, / When dewdrops linger on the flower / And moonbeams on the hill." At the conclusion of the poem the budding author added, "Written most tremulously at night March 26, with the <u>love</u> of a heart which is (believe it!) more steady than the hand." This early endeavor illustrates

[84] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 4 November 1844, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

the intensity of Ginny's affections as well as her devout faith, and the role these played in inspiring her writing.

In 1847, at the age of sixteen, Terhune began work on her first novel, *Alone*. Years would pass, however, before she felt sufficiently confident to share the manuscript with her family, let alone attempt to publish it. In the meantime, she wrote essays and short stories and, diffident about her abilities, hid them from all eyes but her own. Her lengthy letters to her close friend Virginia Eppes Dance sometimes had a whimsical, creative quality, but "Eppes" was often enjoined to strict confidentiality on the principle of "non showibus, you know."[85] Terhune kept a diary from 1846 to 1853, and this provided an additional exercise in writing. The entries range from perfunctory to profoundly personal and expressive, but there is a distinct shift in style in May 1850. This last portion of the journal is titled "Pictures of Real Life" and is written in essay style, an indication that the young diarist was polishing her writing and probably intended to share it with others.[86]

As a teenager, Terhune increasingly came to think of her writing as not merely a passion but a vocation. Yet a number of obstacles, both practical and ideological, confronted her. On the practical side, she had various competing responsibilities including her studies, house-keeping, tutoring her younger siblings, and teaching a Sunday school class.[87] Although generally robust, she also suffered from recurring

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[85] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 16 November 1844, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke University.
[86] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune), "Diary 1846 – 1853," p. 42 of typed transcript. The original and typed transcript was in the possession of Frederick F. Van de Water III of Richmond, Virginia, now deceased. An additional copy of the typed transcript is owned by the Terhune Sunnybank Memorial Association of Lakehurst and Pompton Lakes, New Jersey.
[87] As an adult, Terhune maintained a disciplined schedule that allowed her to write amid multiple competing responsibilities. It was probably a skill she honed during her adolescent years.

headaches and frequent toothaches that temporarily immobilized her. Finally, Ginny was affected in various ways by her father's business problems in the late 1840s. His financial worries caused him to put pressure on both Mea and Ginny to find work as governesses. Mea acquiesced, while Ginny resisted with difficulty. Still more trying to his teenaged daughter were his bitter moods and the sarcastic, humiliating comments he directed at her. On April 26, 1848, she wrote in her diary, "Another and more cutting rebuff from father . . . I do not know why he sees fit to administer unmerited reproofs in the presence of the entire family, if it is to teach me self-control he is in a fair way to accomplish his object."

The ideological obstacles were quite as formidable, for they were a strong influence on Terhune's parents and church, and they influenced her own thinking. In society at large, writing for publication was considered unfeminine, as were all activities that cast women in a public role. By the late 1840s women authors had gained considerably greater acceptance, but something of the earlier attitude remained.[88] Ginny's own mother attached far greater importance to her daughter's accomplishments in needle-work, and disapproved of the time she devoted to writing. In fact, at age sixteen, Ginny burned her writings in a melodramatic response to a rebuke from her mother, or so she describes the episode in her semi-autobiographical collection of stories, *When Grandmamma Was Fourteen*.[89] Her diary indicates that she was motivated not

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[88] For a discussion of the conflict this created in literary women, see Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage*, 1984.

[89] Terhune describes this episode in a chapter titled "I Make a Holocaust." Smith has attributed this adolescent gesture more to Terhune's melodramatic personality than her mother's censoriousness. Judith Anna Smith Hawes to Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune), 5 December 1842, typed copy of letter at beginning of Tms of Terhune's "Diary"; Hawes (Terhune) "Diary," 9 February 1847, p. 19-20 of typed transcript; Marion Harland, *When Grandmamma Was Fourteen* (Boston: Lothrop Publishing Company, 1905); Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph. D. diss.), 94-96.

only by her mother's displeasure but by moral qualms about the uncharitable quality of much of her writing. She confided to her diary, ". . . I returned home and burnt nearly the whole of my prose writings because I considered them hurtful, not to say sinful. If God has given me talents they shall be devoted to his service and not to the injury of immortal souls. It is a pleasure to write as I have been in the habit of doing, but I am convinced that it is wrong, and He will bless the sacrifice."[90]

Terhune wrote in her diary that she had made her "holocaust" following a consultation with her schoolmistress, Mrs. Nottingham, but had already resolved on her action prior to that meeting.[91] It is possible that Terhune's secret writings did have a considerable element of spitefulness. Herself gifted with a lively intellect, she was impatient and sometimes contemptuous of the lesser minds that surrounded her, and her diary contains cutting comments about acquaintances of both sexes. Whatever her moral qualms about her own character, however, Terhune's diary description of her sacrifice indicates that she had become convinced that she might use her literary gifts to good purpose.

As an evangelical Christian and a Presbyterian, however, Terhune the storyteller faced an additional obstacle, the widespread belief that fiction, whether written by men or women, was inherently immoral. The problem was not merely the content of the fiction, although eighteenth-century novels of seduction such as Samuel Richardson's still-popular *Pamela* (1740 – 41), gave ample offense on that account. The most adamant opponents argued that fiction, especially popular fiction, was deceptive and trivial, conducive to idle daydreaming. Ginny's storytelling instincts could hardly have been

[90] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," Friday, February 1847, p. 21 of typed transcript
[91] Ibid.

encouraged by an article that appeared in 1851 in the *Watchman and Observer*, a local Presbyterian paper to which her family subscribed. Entitled "Novelists and Novel-Readers," the article argued that the popular novelist must be "in a very considerable degree self-degraded by sycophancy to the lowest order of minds, and cannot (except for mercenary purposes) think himself advantageously placed."[92]

Despite the persistence of such views in the Presbyterian Church, Ginny and her family had by this time learned to enjoy novels. Ginny, however, was probably affected by her culture's skeptical attitude toward fiction. She was wary of her own imagination and she worried about her habit of daydreaming. In the late 1840s she made a religious resolution to keep her wandering fancy under control. On May 24, 1848, she confided in her diary, "I feel more than ever assured that I am successful in my attempts to curb my fancy. It has played some wild freaks and given me no little pain. The task is difficult but by the help of my ever faithful Friend I trust that I shall at last conquer." Terhune did not describe the offending fancies in her diary, but throughout her career her stern practical judgment would wrestle with the fairies of her romantic imagination.

In light of these misgivings about fiction, it is unsurprising that Terhune's first published work took the form of religious essays. She impersonated a middle-aged man, perhaps to better disguise her identity, and took the name of "Robert Remer." For the next several years, roughly between 1846 and 1849, she published her articles in the *Watchman and Observer* (the same paper that in 1851 would publish the article

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[92] *Watchman and Observer* (Richmond), 9 September 1851.

denouncing popular fiction).[93] Terhune does not explain how she made this arrangement, but the paper's editor in the late 1840s was the Presbyterian minister and evangelist Benjamin Gildersleeve (1791 – 1875), and Terhune's personal correspondence indicates that the Hawes and Gildersleeve families were friends.[94] Terhune's articles would have circulated widely, for the *Watchman* was the most successful Old-School Presbyterian newspaper in the South during the late 1840s.[95]

"Robert Remer's" surviving essays indicate that he was of a gentle, pious, and meditative bent. When he occasionally succumbed to impatience or a critical spirit, his conscience immediately prodded him into more Christian conduct. He revered his mother who had raised him in the faith, and his favorite friend from college days was a young man whose only earthly ambition was to preach the Gospel. A visit to his childhood home, now deserted and decaying, reminded him of the brevity of his own life. Hearing the ticking of a death watch insect, he mused, ". . . it occurred to me for the first time that I too had a death-watch within me, each beat of which brought me nearer to eternity . . ."[96]

To Ginny's delight, the unpretentious Remer essays were warmly received by her readers. They reflected the intense but understated religious devotion of the educated

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[93] In 1856, the struggling *Watchman and Observer* was purchased by Moses Drury Hoge and Thomas Verner Moore, who changed its name to *The Central Presbyterian*. It continued to be published under the firm name of Moore and Hoge. Hoge, *Moses Drury Hoge*, 118.

[94] In 1848, Terhune wrote a friend that her family had moved into a new house on Grace Street. Later in the same letter she wrote, "I forgot to tell you that our dear friend Emma Gildersleeve lives but three doors above us, she is extremely sociable, so are we." Terhune's "Emma" was Benjamin's daughter, Emma Louise Gildersleeve (1830 – 1884). Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 9 October 1848, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

[95] Peter Wallace, "'The Bond of Union': The Old School Presbyterian Church and the American Nation," (Ph. D. diss., Notre Dame University, 2005), Appendix 6, 8.

[96] The death watch beetle, which lives in dead wood, or possibly another insect that makes a similar clicking sound. "Desultory Sketches and Observations, No. VXI," 22 June 1848; "The Reliquary, No. I," 23 September 1848; "The Reliquary, No. IV," *Watchman and Observer* (Richmond).

Presbyterian middle class and elite (Remer's decrepit childhood home had been a mansion), and their local color had a special appeal for Richmond readers.[97] Indeed, the *Watchman*'s Richmond subscribers began to speculate as to the writer's identity. The teenaged essayist enjoyed the acclaim, and was thrilled when the rumor circulated that the Reverend Hoge himself was the author. Her sense of mission was also gratified, particularly when an erudite young minister, believing her to be in contact with Remer, gave her the following commission: "Say to him not to lay down his pen; he may be the instrument of great good, his pieces are extensively read and assure him that one person at least has long and will always feel a deep interest in whatever comes from his hand."[98]

Despite her happiness with her success, Terhune was devastated when a family friend revealed her as the author of the Remer pieces. Her discomfort appears to have derived from more than one cause. Despite her use of a pseudonym, she had transgressed the antebellum sense of propriety that barred women from all forms of public expression.[99] These strictures had lessened by the late 1840s, but Terhune also experienced the trepidation of any novice writer submitting his or her work to the reading public.[100] Finally, as Karen Manners Smith has pointed out, Terhune's correspondence reveals another source of intense discomfort: in his more acerbic moments, "Robert Remer" had made pointed remarks about Richmond citizens whom he identified only by

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[97] Presbyterians formed a large proportion of the intelligentsia in the city, and they had the most extensive communications network of any denomination of the period. Fred J. Hood, *Reformed America: The Middle and Southern States, 1783-1837* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1980), 27.
[98] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 100; Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 31 August 1849, p. 135 of typed transcript
[99] This dilemma of antebellum women writers is explored at length by Mary Kelley in *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in America* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). Kelley discussed Terhune's use of pseudonym on pages 131-132.
[100] Peter Wallace notes that by the 1850s it was common for women to write for religious newspapers, although their contributions usually took the form of children's columns, poetry, and letters to the editor. Wallace, "The Bond of Union" (Ph.D. diss.), Appendix, 1; Harland, *Autobiography*, 240.

their initials, not an adequate disguise in every case.[101] Thus, the unmasked Terhune attracted a degree of public notoriety that mortified her. Despite these various causes for chagrin, she assumed that others, even her close friend "Eppes" Dance, would find her reticence about her authorship mysterious. After her identity had been revealed, Terhune wrote to Dance, "I do not expect others to understand the feelings that induce me to keep this secret, but . . . I would rather anything else that my bosom guards in secret should have been proclaimed.[102]

Ginny's mortification did not put a halt to her writing career, nor did it induce her parents to prohibit further publication. Her parents, in fact, had increasingly accommodated their daughter's desire to write. They provided her with a cozy office of her own in their rental house, and took an interest in the productions of "Robert Remer."[103] Samuel Hawes was proud of his daughter's intellectual abilities, which he had fostered. Judith Hawes at first looked askance at Ginny's tendency to prefer writing to housekeeping, and impressed on her the need for every woman to become skilled in the practical art of sewing (that teenaged Ginny took her mother's admonitions to heart is evident in her later career, when she turned to writing books of domestic advice).[104] Still, when the Hawes family moved to a new house in October 1848, and Ginny mourned the loss of her "sweet little study," it was Judith who consoled her by giving her the spacious back parlor for her new office.[105]

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[101] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 102.
[102] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 10 October 1849, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[103] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 29 September 1848; Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 99.
[104] Judith Anna Smith Hawes to Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune), 5 December 1842, Tms of letter is included with Terhune's "Diary"; Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 91
[105] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 9 October 1848, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

In addition to accepting Ginny's passion for writing, the Hawes family had become increasingly receptive to fiction as a legitimate form of literature. Ginny's tutor at Hampden-Sydney may have influenced her whole family when he encouraged her to read Sir Walter Scott.[106] Certainly by the 1840s the Hawes family had developed a taste for Marryat, Cooper, and Dickens. They were not unique in this respect, for some Southern Presbyterians were gradually relaxing their cultural strictures, including their disapproval of fiction, in the middle part of the nineteenth century. The Reverend Hoge was part of this trend, as he found the time to read "some poetry, and now and then a novel."[107] It was in the context of this growing acceptance that eighteen-year-old Ginny discontinued her "Robert Remer" column, and turned instead to first polishing, then publishing the fiction she had kept hidden in her desk.

She began with her short stories. Her first venture was "Marrying Through Prudential Motives," a piece she had written two years earlier. As its title suggests, it was a sober cautionary tale against the dangers of yielding to passion. Ginny decided to submit it in secret to her mother's favorite magazine, *Godey's Lady's Book*. She used the pseudonym of "Mary Vale," a name suggested to her by her own initials, and hinting at her desire to "veil" her identity.[108] She received no response from *Godey's*, and similar ventures met with no greater success. Years later, recalling these discouraging years, Terhune wrote, "It was balm to my mortified soul to reflect that nobody was the wiser for the ventures and the failures."[109]

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[106] Harland, *Autobiography*, 98.
[107] Moses Drury Hoge to his uncle, Drury Lacy, 3 December 1853, in Peyton Hoge, *Moses Drury Hoge*, 115.
[108] Harland, *Autobiography*, 240.
[109] Harland, *Autobiography*, 240.

In 1853, Terhune decided to try again. She entered a short story titled "Kate Harper" in a contest sponsored by the Sons of Temperance.[110] To her surprise and delight, the story won first prize and was published in the organization's weekly paper, the *Southern Era*. It was with the submission of this story that Terhune adopted the pseudonym she would use throughout her career, Marion Harland. This *nom de plume* bore some resemblance to her real name, Mary Hawes, and the ambiguous gender of 'Marion' may also have guided her choice. In addition, of course, it was the pseudonym she associated with the beginning of her literary success as a writer of fiction. For the next two years, she submitted poems and short stories to the *Southern Era* as 'Marion Harland'.[111] In November of the same year, *Godey's* agreed to publish her short story "Only a Quick Temper," and followed this up with the publication of "The Thrice Wedded" in July and August of 1854.[112]

This literary affirmation spurred Ginny to a more ambitious effort. At age sixteen, she had begun to write a novel that was a combination of romance and evangelical conversion story. Now she brought out the manuscript of *Alone*, re-examined it, and read portions aloud to her sister Mea and brother Herbert. Their enjoyment of her work was an "Open Sesame" for her, and she immediately began to revise the whole novel.[113] Terhune's father had by this time become a stern but dedicated supporter of her writings. With his support, Ginny shyly submitted her manuscript to Adolphus Morris, a

[110] Although Presbyterians had traditionally sanctioned the moderate use of alcohol, the denomination had been influenced by the temperance movement that had gained strength in the early 1800s, as alcohol consumption was increasingly linked to poverty, disease, and violence. Terhune's first two novels promoted abstinence, but by the time she wrote her third novel she had moved toward acceptance of drinking in moderation.
[111] *Autobiography*, 240.
[112] This was the beginning of a long relationship with *Godey's*, the principal publisher of Terhune's short stories until the late 1870s. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 187.
[113] Harland, *Autobiography*, 242.

local bookstore-owner and publisher, and a friend of her father's.[114] To her despair, the publisher rejected the manuscript with a curt note that advised against private publication. As Terhune tells the story in her autobiography, it was her father who saved both her novel and her career. That evening, she presented the rejection letter to him as he relaxed in front of the fire with his cigar and the evening paper. He remained silent for a minute, while she laid her head on his knee, mourning for the book she called her "bantling." When she looked up, Mr. Hawes had rolled the letter into a spile and was using it to relight his cigar. After a few leisurely puffs, he exclaimed, "I believe in that book! I shall send it back to Morris, to-morrow, and tell him to bring it out in good style and send the bill to me."

Ginny, knowing her father's aversion to financial risk, was shocked. "But you may lose money by it!"

"I don't think so," he replied. "At any rate, we will make the experiment."[115]

Ginny awaited the outcome of this latest of "Mr. Hawes's experiments" with great trepidation. Her anxiety for her bantling's reception was somewhat relieved when she learned that the first short story she had submitted for publication, "Marrying Through Prudential Motives," had not only been published in *Godey's* in March 1853 (the manuscript had been lost for a period), but copied and published in Europe as well. *The Albion*, a New York literary magazine that specialized in English literature, had then taken the story from an English journal and republished it in December 1853. This error prompted the publisher of *Godey's* to sue *The Albion* for piracy, but Terhune was elated

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[114] Smith, "Marion Harland," Ph. D. diss., 159, 165-166.
[115] Harland, *Autobiography*, 244-245.

to discover that she was already an internationally published author. She interpreted it as a sign of divine encouragement given her at a time of need.[116]

As it turned out, Mr. Hawes's experiment was a success. The publisher's initial expectations had been modest. Morris promoted *Alone* as a book that would appeal to Virginia readers largely on account of its local color. The author herself shared this expectation, but the novel soon reached a wider audience.[117] A succession of Morris advertisements in the *Watchman and Observer* tells the story. On March 14, 1854, a few modest lines introducing "A New and Interesting Virginia Book" nestled between an ad for "New Spring Goods" and another for a "Manual of Missions." The author was identified as the creator of "Robert Remer's Letters." By September 28, Morris was proclaiming that *Alone* had sold the "second thousand in three weeks," and the ad included a number of enthusiastic reviews in various Northern newspapers. Among the friendly reviewers, no doubt to Terhune's delight, was *Godey's*, which opined that the novel displayed "greater evidence of talent than any of our lady writers have brought out for many a day." On December 21, Morris trumpeted the "TRIUMPHANT SUCCESS OF **ALONE**" adding that seven thousand copies had already been called for. Such vague language suggests an element of puffery, and indeed the young author had been aware from the start that booksellers might "laud the work too highly" in order to boost their

[116] In her autobiography, Terhune wrote that her story had been translated into French, then retranslated into English by a British journal, from which *The Albion* copied its story. This is mistaken, as the story published in *The Albion* is identical to that which had appeared in *Godey's*. Harland, *Autobiography*, 247-248; *Godey's Lady's Book* 6, No. 20 (March 1853), 229-236; *The Albion* 12, No. 49 (3 December 1853), 579-580.
[117] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 9 March 1854, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

sales.[118] Nevertheless, the novel was among the most popular of 1854, and its striking success led to its being taken up by the rising young New York publishing firm of Derby and Jackson, who carried it into its eighteenth printing by the end of 1856. Terhune's "bantling" remained in print for half a century.[119]

Alone was the beginning of a notable career that would span nearly seventy years. Terhune was astonishingly prolific, publishing books almost annually, as well as numerous short stories and articles. After the Civil War, she would become well-known as a writer on domestic advice, and also venture into historical writing, biography, and travel essays. In the antebellum years, however, she concentrated on evangelical fiction. The success of *Alone* was matched by Terhune's second and third novels, *The Hidden Path* (1855), and *Moss-side* (1857). Sales of *The Hidden Path* had reached 15,000 by the end of 1855, and *Moss-side*, although a bleaker tale that hit the market during the Panic of 1857, was equally successful.[120]

The newly-minted celebrity took her fame in stride. While thrilled with her success, she also professed a certain modesty concerning her literary abilities. While anxiously awaiting the printing of *Alone*, she wrote to a close friend, "You will read it and like it, if only because I wrote it. Whether others will cavil at the religious tone, and ridicule the simplicity of the narrative, remains to be seen."[121] Some years later, when

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[118] Ibid.; Nina Baym has noted the difficulty of obtaining reliable sales figures for nineteenth-century books. Baym, *Woman's Fiction*, 301.
[119] Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: MacMillan, 1947), 320; Wright, Mary Hudson, "Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune ('Marion Harland'): Her Life and Works," (Ph.D. diss.), George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tenn., 1934), in Smith, "Marion Harland," (Ph.D. diss.), 175-6. Derby and Jackson was also the publisher of Evans's early novels.
[120] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 18 October 1855, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke; Mary Forrest, *Women of the South Distinguished in Literature*, 198.
[121] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 9 March 1854, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke. The "religious tone" did not put off either the reading public or critics. The reviewer for the

her reputation was well-established, Terhune still demurred when told that she occupied an important literary niche. "I know my place," she replied, "But the niche is small, and it is not high up. All that I can hope is to fill it worthily, such as it is."[122]

Terhune was, nevertheless, delighted with the social as well as financial rewards that attended literary success. Her new career brought her into the world of the New York literati, and she plunged into the whirl of receptions, dinner parties, concerts and theater with gusto. It was during this period of the mid-1850s that she shed some of her Presbyterian strictures. She attended the opera and was entranced; she abandoned "temperance" and learned to enjoy fine wines (in moderation). Confident and quick-witted, Terhune was an engaging conversationalist. Her tendency toward sharpness sometimes intimidated and even alienated others, but she was also kindly and capable of strong affections. Her correspondence indicates both a deep attachment to her friends and a tendency to be bossy. While she was not pretty, Terhune's genial disposition and vivacious manner made her attractive. She was of medium height, slender in her youth, with a warm complexion and thick dark hair that framed a broad face and square jaw. Her eyes, dark grey in color but sparkling with warmth and humor, were perhaps her

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Southern Literary Messenger wrote approvingly, "The religious matter, so far from spoiling the story, is, on careful reading, obviously essential to the preservation of its unity. . . . The religion, however, has not that sentimental tone which is common to novels, in which it is brought in as subservient to the main design of pleasing. With this author it is an active power rather than a passive sentiment, and a subject to be believed and acted upon, as well as thought about, and talked of." This same reviewer had earlier described *Alone* as "not exactly a novel," but rather a "skillfully planned and deeply interesting story" in which "the religious element is predominant." This critic, then, associated novels with a shallow religiosity, and found Terhune to be a more substantial writer, precisely because of her treatment of religion. Review, *Southern Literary Messenger* 20, No. 9 (September 1854), 571-572.

[122] Harland, *Autobiography*, 263-4. Terhune's admirer was Frederick Swartout Cozzens (1818 – 1869), a New York City humorist who had achieved great popularity during the 1850s and 1860s.

most appealing feature.[123] Mary Terhune was not particularly vain, but she had a young woman's natural interest in clothing and ornaments, and in young men. Yet, still single in her mid-twenties, she was obliged to confront the possibility that she would lead a life of, as the evangelicals termed it, "single-blessedness."

The prospect, on the whole, did not appeal. In her early novels, Terhune explored the potential for contentment and accomplishment in the single life, but she believed that marriage offered the deepest happiness for women and men. Moreover, a true marriage could not be tainted by pecuniary motives or the desire for social status. Despite her Presbyterian confidence in prudence and sober judgment, Terhune was a romantic, and her romanticism deepened as she moved from adolescence into young womanhood. Marriage, in her eyes, could be grounded only on a profound and all-encompassing love. It was also a sacred commitment, indissoluble once undertaken.

Alas, eligible young bachelors who could both fulfill Terhune's ideals and match her for brilliance were scarce. As a teenager she had made a jest of the matter. When asked about her conquests from a summer in the country, she would answer, "Oh, somewhere about a dozen, their ages varying from nineteen to ninety." However, when a more persistent examiner asked her whether she had found the right one, she ran over the list in her mind and could only answer, "I hope not, madam." "Truth will out," Ginny later commented ruefully on her admission.[124] As she grew older, and was painfully aware of her plain looks, the fear of remaining single began to press on her.

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[123] Frederic F. Van de Water, "Talented Family" (typed manuscript memoir, 1955 [?] in the possession of Frederic F. Van de Water III, now deceased, of Richmond, Virginia), 19-20, in Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss), 120.

[124] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 18 September 1848, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

Terhune's religious fervor and intellectuality seemed to make her a natural match for a minister, but if she had a strong attraction to the profession, she had an equally strong distaste for many of its professors. In spite of her admiration for Hoge and her liking for her tutor Howison, she found many ministers of her acquaintance, including her "Uncle Curtis," stiff and sanctimonious.[125] Moreover, the tutor who had tormented her as a schoolgirl had been a candidate for the ministry. By her early twenties, Ginny had turned down several proposals from seminarians, whom she irreverently derided as "young sprigs of divinity." Moreover, she believed she was unsuited for the self-abnegating life of a minister's wife.[126]

Virginia revised her opinion soon after meeting a handsome young minister by the name of Edward Payson Terhune. Recently graduated from the Dutch Reformed New Brunswick Seminary, Edward had come to Richmond in 1854 to serve as a substitute minister for Second Presbyterian while Hoge was on an extended vacation.[127] He was tall and athletic, blond-haired and blue-eyed, and almost the same age as Virginia.[128] His cheerful, outgoing manner and hearty laugh endeared him to parishioners, particularly women.[129] To a woman prejudiced against joining herself to a minister, Edward created a favorable impression by "swinging his cane in very unclerical style." Overhearing him compliment her, she told her parents, "If that man ever asks me to marry him, I shall have to do it! I vowed solemnly, long ago, to marry the first man who thinks me handsome, if

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[125] In her *Autobiography*, Terhune renames Uncle Curtis "Uncle Carus."
[126] Harland, *Autobiography*, 259.
[127] The two denominations were theologically compatible, for both belonged to the American Reformed tradition that included Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed and German Reformed. The Presbyterians were the largest denomination in this Calvinist tradition. See Fred J. Hood, *Reformed America*, 2.
[128] Edward Payson Terhune was born on November 22, 1830.
[129] Smith, "Marion Harland"(Ph.D. diss.), 190-191.

he should give me the chance. Let us hope this one won't!" "His cloth rules him out," replied her father.[130]

When Edward did propose in the autumn of 1855, however, Terhune overruled her objection to his cloth. The couple kept their engagement a secret initially, and as she prepared for marriage Ginny continued to write and to enjoy her newly cosmopolitan life.[131] Although she could not have known it then, her exposure to urban culture would be a good preparation for married life in which she would share in her husband's ministry to city parishes. The couple's early married life gave no hint of an urban future. They were quietly married on September 2, 1856. Only family and a few friends were present, including Ginny's close friend Virginia Eppes Dance, and Dr. Hoge who had just returned from his vacation.[132] After a honeymoon of several weeks, Virginia joined Edward at his first parish, the Village Presbyterian Church in Charlotte Court-House, Virginia.

Charlotte Court-House was indeed a village, a "rambling hamlet" about eighty miles southwest of Richmond.[133] Virginia considered the first years of her marriage as among the happiest of her life. She was very much in love with her husband, and with the help of kind neighbors the couple found themselves comfortably settled in their cozy parsonage. Richmond was close enough to enable Virginia to visit her family on occasion, and for extra company she brought her sister Alice, then fourteen, to live with

[130] Harland, *Autobiography*, 259-260.
[131] Secret engagements were customary in Richmond in this period. Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 21 July 1851, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[132] Harland, *Autobiography*, 305, 309.
[133] Ibid., 313.

her.[134] She continued to write, publishing two short stories in *Godey's* as well as her third novel *Moss-side*, which she had begun writing before her marriage. To Virginia and Edward's delight, their family grew by one on September 9, 1857, when their son Edward Hawes Terhune was born. The happy new mother wrote to Eppes, "I wish you could see my noble boy, which will be two months old to-morrow! He is very pretty, says the infallible 'Everybody'. To us, he is passing dear."[135]

The greatest trial of Terhune's early married life was the hands-on management of her household, work for which she was ill-prepared. Her mother Judith had grown up on a plantation, and even in Richmond the Hawes family had had an experienced staff of "servants," as the slaves were politely called. At the Village parsonage, Virginia had the help of three rented slaves, but rental slaves were likely to be problematic servants, and in any case much of the actual work of cooking and housekeeping devolved on her.[136] With mounting "horror," she realized how unequal she was to the task. As she wrote years later in her *Autobiography*, "I was as unlearned as the babe unborn in everything that a practical housekeeper should know. I could not make a batch of bread, or boil a potato, or broil a chop, had my eternal welfare – and my husband's happiness – depended upon it."[137] Feeling that she ought to conceal her lack of experience from Edward, she worked desperately to acquire basic cooking and cleaning skills while presenting herself as a

[134] Terhune preferred to live in a large household, and always lived with as many family members as possible. As an older woman, she claimed that she could not write unless there were other people in the house. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 219.
[135] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 8 November, 1857, in Harland, *Autobiography*, 348.
[136] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 221.
[137] Harland, *Autobiography*, 339.

competent and confident housewife. Her husband, much to her wonderment, was duly deceived, or at least pretended to be.[138]

As a desperate housewife, Terhune sought the assistance of five popular cookbooks of the era, only to find that conscientiously following their instructions failed to produce the desired results. A supportive neighbor cheerfully explained the mystery: "All written by old maids, or by women who never kept house. . . . I wouldn't give a guinea a gross for their books. Make your own! *I* do!"[139] The neighbor lent Virginia her collected recipes, and Virginia followed her advice and began to compile a record of her successful culinary and housekeeping projects so that, gradually, she acquired the genuine expertise that became the basis for her later literary career as an author of domestic advice books.

For Terhune, the trial of housekeeping did not lie only in her lack of skill. She also missed the intellectual and cultural pursuits for which her new domestic vocation left her little leisure. In her first domestic advice book, published in 1871, she wrote of this intense sense of deprivation, addressing herself to readers she imagined were similar to herself in background. ". . . you often say to yourself, in bitterness of spirit, that it is a mistake of Christian civilization to educate girls into a love of science and literature, and then condemn them to the routine of a domestic drudge."[140] Despite her own evident bitterness, Terhune nevertheless concluded that domesticity was the central vocation of every married woman, and she would later urge her readers to acquire the expertise they

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[138] Ibid., 339.
[139] Ibid., 339-340.
[140] Marion Harland, *Common Sense in the Household: A Manual of Practical Housewifery* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1871; reprint, New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1873), 14 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

needed to fulfill it. "Do not scoff at the word 'profession.' Call not that common and unclean which Providence has designated as your lifework."[141] It was a belief that she would maintain throughout her life. Literary and artistic endeavors, intellectual pursuits were legitimate for a married woman, provided that her pursuit of them did not lead her to neglect her husband and children. Still, Terhune averred, the sphere of wife and mother, "*properly filled*," was wide enough to fulfill the aspirations of "every reasonable woman."[142]

Happy in her new domestic sphere and hard-earned competence, Terhune was perturbed when her husband decided to seek a new position. She had pledged before their marriage that she would never attempt to influence him in any decision related to his profession. That promise weighed heavily on her when Edward received two offers, one from the Third Presbyterian Church of Richmond, the other from the First Reformed Church of Newark, New Jersey. As he wrestled with the decision, he asked for her help but she refused, insisting that only God could guide his decision. Yet, as she later confessed in her *Autobiography*, "I wanted to go to Richmond *horribly*!" and she prayed mightily that God would guide Edward there. She was crushed when her husband informed her that he had settled on Newark.[143]

The Terhunes moved to Newark in February 1859. At the time, neither Virginia nor Edward had any presentiment that civil war loomed. When the war broke out, Virginia concluded that her husband's choice had been "providential." As a Northerner

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[141] Ibid., 15.

[142] Marion Harland, *Eve's Daughters, or Common Sense for Maid, Wife and Mother* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881, 1885), 269. Italics in original.

[143] Harland, *Autobiography*, 352-354. Edward's friend the Rev. Joseph R. Duryee writes in a eulogy to Rev. Terhune that he had chosen Newark from his conviction that the modern city would be the battleground between Christianity and "the powers of evil." Joseph R. Duryee, D.D., Appendix, in *Marion Harland's Autobiography*, 492.

who was morally opposed to secession, he would have been unable to remain in Virginia as a matter of principle, while his parishioners would have regarded him with suspicion.[144] This event strengthened her evangelical conviction that God works through providences, large and small.

Although Virginia Terhune was in a secret state of "high revolt" after her husband announced his decision, she also had a propensity for making the best of a situation. Even before the move, she cultivated an apologetic for the "Middle States" (as opposed to Yankee New England) at a time when sectional tensions were straining the nation to the breaking point.[145] Once in Newark, she recovered from a three-month bout of homesickness and became attached to her new home. In her *Autobiography* she writes warmly of First Reformed as an "Ideal Parish," whose members were invariably kind and supportive of their young pastor and his wife.[146] The couple settled into an elegant house on Newark's central park and hired a full staff of servants.[147] Five months pregnant at the time of her move, Virginia gave birth to her second child, Chrissy, on June 13, 1859.[148] The Terhune household now numbered five, for Alice had moved with her sister to Newark.[149]

With their combined income, the Terhunes were well off, and both had an appetite for luxury. They spent their money freely on themselves and their frequent

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[144] Ibid., 356, 388.
[145] Ibid., 356.
[146] Ibid., 357.
[147] During their seventeen-year stay in Newark, the Terhunes lived in a series of houses on the central park, each more spacious than the last. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 246.
[148] 'Chrissy' was the child's baptismal name. It was common practice in the mid-1800s to christen children, especially girls, with diminutive names. As an adult, Chrissy took the name of Christine Terhune (Herrick). Van de Water, "Talented Family," in Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 245-246.
[149] The reasons for Alice's move to Newark are unclear. However, her sister enjoyed having a large family around her and was attached to all of her family members. In a few years, Alice's presence in the household would lead to a marital crisis for the Terhunes.

guests: fine foods and wines, fast horses and expensive cigars for Edward, lavish dinner parties. Some of Edward's parishioners were critical of their pastor's high living, but he was unapologetic, arguing that love for God might well include an enjoyment of God's material creation. He remained highly popular with his congregation, the majority of whom were themselves well-to-do, and a number of male children born during his tenure were christened "Edward Terhune."[150]

The Civil War came as a shock to the Terhunes, especially to Virginia. From the time of her childhood, she had been accustomed to hearing dire reports that the "good Ship of State" was about to run aground, and even as the Lower South states seceded and established the Confederate States of America, she remained convinced that this crisis, too, would blow over. A fratricidal war in "the land beloved of the Lord" was unthinkable to her.[151] It was not until the fall of Fort Sumter on April 14, 1861, that reality sank in. Then, as she later wrote, "A gulf seemed to open at my feet."[152] The Terhunes were on a visit to Richmond at the time, and witnessed the feverish crowds cheering secession.[153] Among the celebrants was her sister Mea, now married and the mother of an infant boy. She had pinned a Secession cockade on her child's breast, and placed a Confederate flag in his hand. Mea's husband, a Scottish immigrant by the name of John Miller, was an ardent secessionist, and Mea had adopted his views. She was the only member of the Hawes family to embrace the Confederate cause with enthusiasm. Virginia and Edward, sick with horror, pretended not to see her.[154]

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[150] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 244, 246-7.
[151] Harland, *Autobiography*, 360, 365-366, 370.
[152] Ibid., 371.
[153] Virginia formally seceded on April 17, 1861.
[154] Harland, *Autobiography*, 371.

Despite the depth of the crisis, the Hawes family continued to hope that civil war might yet be averted.[155] Virginia and Edward shared their desperate optimism and returned to Newark as they had originally planned, taking Alice with them. Despite their hopefulness, Virginia experienced a weird sense of unreality as she viewed the crowd on the train platform at Richmond. "The familiar streets and houses were seen, as through the bewildering vapors of a dream; men and women glided by like phantoms, and there was a shimmer of red-and-orange light in the air – the reflection of the glowing west – that was vague and dazing, not dazzling."[156] Virginia's father and brother Horace waved to them as the train lumbered out of the station. It was, as the Terhunes later learned, the last train to leave Richmond for Washington.[157]

The Civil War years were perhaps the most painful of Virginia Terhune's life. The first personal blow dealt her was the failure of her publisher, Derby and Jackson, as a consequence of the panic of February 1861. This was a fiscal as well as a professional crisis for the Terhunes who, in their enjoyment of their new wealth, had set little aside for emergencies. Their parishioners quietly provided them with financial help until they recovered.[158] Virginia continued to write through the war years, and her works remained popular.

A far greater trial for Virginia was her anxiety for her family. Communication was difficult, for the Postmaster General had cut off mail delivery to the Confederacy, but the family was able to exchange the one-page letters permitted under the "flag-of-truce"

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[155] According to Terhune, this "sanguine incredulity" was characteristic of Union supporters in the South, and persisted until the Battle of Manassas. Harland, *Autobiography*, 382.
[156] Harland, *Autobiography*, 383.
[157] Ibid., 382.
[158] Smith points out that this is an indication of the high esteem and affection the First Reformed Congregation had for the Terhunes, who might have been faulted for their improvidence. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 254-255.

ships. From these, Virginia Hawes learned that her favorite brother Samuel had joined the Confederate Army on April 19, 1861, and served in the Second Company, Richmond Howitzers. Her youngest brother Percy also enlisted at the age of only fourteen, serving as a courier. Almost every day, the Newark papers published lists of casualties in Lee's army. Virginia scanned these columns with her "heart rolling over in sick thuds."[159] Nor was the eldest, Herbert, out of danger. He had just been graduated from New Brunswick Seminary when the war broke out, and chose to return to Virginia where he served as a minister in Amelia County, where the Hawes family had once lived. Newly married and strongly opposed to secession, he did not enlist, but his rural home was raided twice by Union cavalry, and several times by stragglers from the Confederate army. His family also lived in fear that he would be conscripted by the Confederate army.[160]

When death came, however, it was not the soldiers in the family who were struck down. On September 14, 1861, the Terhunes' son Eddie died suddenly of diphtheria. "My bonny, bonny boy!" mourned Virginia even decades later, "who had never had a day's illness until he was stricken by that from which there was no recovery!" Edward and baby Chrissy also fell ill with the same disease, and Virginia and Alice bravely nursed them back to health.[161] Later, Virginia learned that her paternal grandmother, who had lived in the Hawes household for years, had died in the same month. She had taken ill after seeing Horace, her favorite grandson, leave for military service.[162]

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[159] "Book for Horace Hawes Harrison," typescript of Samuel Horace Hawes's wartime diary, with brief typescript introduction written by his son. Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia; Harland, *Autobiography*, 397.
[160] T.C. Morton, "Memorial of Rev. H.H. Hawes, D.D.," newspaper clipping, n.p., n.d., in Hawes and Smith family genealogy, Katherine Heath Hawes Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond; Harland, *Autobiography*, 396-397.
[161] Harland, *Autobiography*, 390.
[162] Ibid., 391.

The war years brought Virginia another hardship of a more intimate nature. Her sister Alice had lived with her since her marriage, and become extremely attached to her family. Alice was by then twenty-one, a rather plain young woman (to judge from a surviving photograph), but extremely bright, affectionate, and, like her sister, a talented writer.[163] Her health, however, had declined since the move to Newark, and the family blamed the cold, damp climate of the city for her severe throat ailment. Virginia's parents demanded that Alice return to Richmond, and in late 1862 the approaching winter made the move seem "imperative." An additional incentive to sending Alice home arose around the same time: Virginia became convinced that her husband had developed feelings for Alice that were more than brotherly. Accordingly, on a foggy October night, Edward took Alice to the shores of the Chesapeake Bay to be smuggled across the water in an "unlicensed ferry," that is, a smuggler's rowboat. Concealed from federal gunboats by the fog and dark, with its oars muffled, the boat crossed the Chesapeake Bay, and Edward waited on the shore until convinced that it must have reached the Confederate shore without detection. The next flag-of-truce letter from Richmond, arriving four months later, informed Virginia that her sister had arrived home safely and begun to recover her health, only to succumb to the smallpox that in late 1862 had spread from Richmond's military hospitals to the civilian population.[164]

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[163] Alice was strongly attached to her nephew Eddie and, like Virginia, was especially fond of her brother Horace. After Eddie's death, she wrote Horace, whom she called "Hardie," that he (Horace) was now her closest tie on earth. "I know he is happy in the Savior's bosom; I would not have him live to suffer as I do in losing him, but O, Hardie, it is hard, very hard, to learn to live without him. I loved him so tenderly, and his warm, pure affection for his 'dear auntie' was one of the greatest treasures of my life." Alice Hawes to Samuel Horace Hawes, 11 November 1861, Katherine Heath Hawes Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond. Photograph of Alice also in Katherine Heath Hawes collection; Harland, *Autobiography*, 395; Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 270-271.

[164] Richmond ordered and paid for widespread vaccination, and the epidemic was eventually brought under control. According to Terhune, the Hawes family doctor had ordered that all members of the family be re-

The exact nature of Edward's and Alice's relationship cannot be known, although short stories published by both Virginia and Alice give some idea, from different perspectives, of the hurt suffered by all three members of the triangle.[165] If the event created a crisis for the Terhunes' marriage, they were able to reconcile. They continued to love each other and their long marriage was, on the whole, a happy one. However, Virginia retained a sense of grievance for the remainder of her marriage and, whatever she saw or believed she saw, she apparently blamed Edward rather than Alice. According to her son Albert, she complained to him about his father's conduct years later, when he was a teenager and young man.[166]

The Civil War created an intense psychic conflict for Terhune, as she explained years later in her autobiography. Her patriotic loyalties were strong and lay entirely with the Union; she prayed fervently for victory for the Federal army, yet the soldiers to whom

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vaccinated. Alice, however, refused (perhaps unwilling to be scarred again) and fell ill with varioloid two weeks later. Harland, *Autobiography*, 392-4; Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 267-270; Virginius Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 178.

[165] Terhune wrote of a love triangle very similar to her own in "Leah Moore's Trial." This short story appeared in *Godey's* in October and November 1863, which means that Virginia must have sent it to *Godey's* prior to June 1863. In this story, a devoted young wife must watch helplessly as her husband's love is gradually stolen by his 23-year-old orphaned cousin. The husband, although sincerely attached to his wife, does not understand why she is hurt by what he regards as an innocent affection between cousins. However, he marries his cousin shortly after his wife dies of a broken heart. The short story was re-published in *Husbands and Homes* (1865). Alice apparently told her side of the story in "Yule," a novella published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*. In "Yule," the relationship between two formerly loving sisters is shattered when the older accuses the younger of attempting to steal her fiancé's affections. After the older sister rejects her fiancé, the younger finally marries him. Marion Harland, "Leah Moore's Trial," *Godey's Lady's Book* 67 (October 1863), 307- 319, (November 1863), 415-428. Alice Hawes, "Yule," *Southern Literary Messenger* 35 (January and February 1863), 14-22, 79-91.

[166] Toward the end of his life, Albert Terhune wrote to his nephew Fritz Van de Water that his mother "used to spend hours" complaining to him about what his father had done, at one point saying, "If my brother Horace knew what I know, he'd KILL Edward Terhune!" Albert wrote Fritz that he had been relieved to read a letter his mother had written to his maternal grandmother a few months after Alice had left, in which she stated that Edward was "if possible, dearer and better and nobler than ever. He is *** [sic] the best man I know." This comment, in Albert's view, proved that his mother's story about Edward and Alice had been untrue. Albert Payson Terhune to Frederic "Fritz" Van de Water, 18 November 1839, Albert Payson Terhune Papers, Special Collection and Archives, Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey; see also Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 268, 271-272.

she was personally attached all fought on the opposite side. She had "cousins by the score, and friends and valued acquaintances by the hundred" in the Confederate army.[167] Terhune also grieved in sympathy with the parishioners of First Reformed, as the casualties mounted and Edward conducted funeral after funeral for members of his own congregation.[168] The widows and orphans of the fallen suffered economic hardship as well as their bereavement, and struggles intensified as the Northern economy declined. Virginia became involved with various organizations for the relief of soldiers and their families, including the Sanitary Commission and the Christian Commission. Years later, she would acknowledge that her participation in these organizations was prompted not only by altruism but by the need to preserve her own sanity.[169] Karen Manners Smith has argued that these activities brought Terhune into contact with the working class and increased her awareness of the problems experienced by women less privileged than herself. This new consciousness would influence her post-war writings.[170]

In the midst of the grief and deprivation of war, life went on for the Terhunes. Their third child, Alice, was born on March 7, 1863, a stormy winter day in the bloodiest year of the war.[171] Still mourning the loss of Eddie, Virginia found it "an unspeakable comfort to be able once more to talk of 'the children,'" while Edward fell particularly in love with his lively second daughter. She was their first child to have Virginia's brunette hair, for Eddie and Chrissy had the Terhune family's blond hair and blue eyes. For

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[167] Harland, *Autobiography*, 396.
[168] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 265.
[169] Harland, *Autobiography*, 396.
[170] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 309.
[171] Strikingly, Alice was named after her deceased aunt, another indication that Mary Virginia and her husband had been reconciled.

Virginia, Alice brought "such a wealth of balm and blessing as seldom endows parents and home by reason of a single birth."[172]

In May of 1864, Virginia received a letter from her brother Horace informing her that he had been taken prisoner on the final day of the Battle of Spotsylvania Court-House, and was being taken to Fort Delaware. She was relieved rather than anxious, grateful that Horace had been removed from danger.[173] He was, in fact, far from safe, although his sister did not learn the details of his circumstances until later. A second lieutenant, Horace Hawes was among the six hundred Confederate officers who were transferred in August 1864 from Fort Delaware to Morris Island in Charleston Harbor. The captives were deliberately placed in a location that left them vulnerable to shelling from the Confederate batteries defending Charleston. After two months, they were shipped to Fort Pulaski, Georgia, and there they remained during the severe winter of 1865. Almost miraculously, none of the prisoners was killed by shells on Morris Island, but disease, malnutrition and exposure reduced their number to 290. Horace did not write his "Sis Ginnie" while at Fort Morris ("It would have distressed you uselessly," he later explained), but he corresponded with her from Pulaski, and she and Edward were able to visit him after he had been returned to Fort Delaware in March.[174]

In her diary, Terhune recalled her exultation on learning of the end of the war: "Had another woman in the land – now, more than ever and forever, "God's Country" –

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[172] Harland, *Autobiography*, 395.
[173] Harland, *Autobiography*, 399.
[174] This group of officers later came to be known as "The Immortal 600," the title of an account of their captivity written by John Ogden Murray, one of the survivors. Conditions at Fort Pulaski were comparable to those of Andersonville, Georgia, the notorious Confederate prison for Union soldiers. George W. Content, "Death Before Dishonor," *Official Fort Delaware Society Webpage*, http://www.del.net/org/fort, 1997, 5/27/06; Samuel Horace Hawes, "Diary, 1861-65," Katherine Heath Hawes Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond; Harland, *Autobiography*, 399-401.

such cause as I to return thanks for what had been in the last month?" Days later, her joy was shattered on learning of Lincoln's assassination. She had opposed his election prior to the war, but now Virginia wept for the president she had come to love during the years of struggle. Still, she rejoiced in the reunion with her family (Horace was freed on June 1, after he had taken the requisite Oath of Allegiance to the United States), and in the birth of her third daughter, Virginia Belle, on May 21. With the return to ordinary life, Virginia felt that her youth had been restored.[175]

Through all of the dark days of the war, Terhune had continued to write energetically. She found a new publisher, Sheldon and Company, and her works, both novels and short stories, still sold well.[176] Terhune's novels took on a more complex character during this period as she began to move away from the formula of the evangelical romance: the trials of an isolated but intelligent and courageous heroine, who in the end is rewarded with a happy marriage.[177] As early as 1853, she had explored grim themes of betrayal, shattered marriages, and early death, unsweetened by a happy ending, in her short stories. These tales were based on the darker aspects of her own life, as well as the experiences of her friends and acquaintances. By the 1860s, Terhune had begun to develop similar themes in her novels, and if she still provided her readers with a happy ending, the tales nevertheless had a gloomier cast.

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[175] A supporter, like her family, of the now defunct Whig Party, Virginia had favored John Bell of the Constitutional Union Party. Harland, *Autobiography*, 360-361, 403-405.

[176] Despite the personal strain on her during this period, Terhune's output was prodigious. Smith has suggested that she was seeking to make up for the loss of income following the demise of Derby and Jackson. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 275.

[177] Terhune's pre-war novels fit into the antebellum popular genre usually called "sentimental" or "domestic" fiction. Nina Baym, while rejecting these terms as derogatory and overly narrow, has characterized antebellum "woman's fiction" (Baym's term) as formulaic. Novels of this genre portrayed women or young girls cast upon their own resources in a difficult world. In each case, the heroine grew in strength and goodness through her trials, and was at the end rewarded with marriage to a wealthy and equally noble husband. See Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction*.

Nemesis (1860) tells the story of a woman who, embittered by the early death of her husband, seeks revenge on those she holds responsible for his demise. The novel is a an elaborated and altered version of a tale Terhune had already told in "The Thrice-Wedded," published in *Godey's* in July and August of 1854. *Nemesis* creates a tension between faith in Providence, including the workings of divine wrath, and the title character's belief in "Destiny." Although her daughter provides the requisite happy ending by marrying her gallant suitor, the would-be "Nemesis" is warped and almost crushed by her own thirst for vengeance. Of Terhune's next three novels, *Miriam* (1862), *Husks, or The Empty Heart* (1863), and *Helen Gardner's Wedding Day; or Colonel Floyd's Wards* (1863), two have similarly ambiguous endings. The heroine of *Husks* marries a good man partway through the novel, then drives him away. The couple is reconciled only after the death of their daughter. In *Helen Gardner's Wedding Day*, a murder is necessary to bring about a resolution to a romantic tangle. *Sunnybank*, published in 1866, tells the story of a Virginia family divided by the war, and is pro-Union while also deploring the devastation wrought by war. *Sunnybank* won Terhune much critical acclaim and was highly popular, but the novel was denounced by Southern critics, who castigated the author as a traitor to the (now lost) Confederate cause.

There was a "Sunnybank" in Virginia's real life as well. For several years, she and her husband had been retreating into the hills of rural New Jersey for their summer vacations, and they fell in love with a green, secluded valley overlooking Pompton Lakes, in present-day Wayne. They immediately purchased the land from its owner, who had been in the process of cutting down the forest, and built what Virginia called their "summer cottage" on the lake's edge. The "cottage" was actually a good-sized house,

picturesque and rather odd. It had multiple gables and deep porches, and was painted a deep chocolate brown. A garden was planted around the house, part of the nearby land converted to farmland and pasturage, and the remainder of the 24 acres maintained as woodland. The Terhunes provided lavish nourishment for the wild birds that Virginia had always loved, and over the years the birds at Sunnybank became almost tame.[178] This idyllic retreat became the family's residence from May to October of each year, with Edward commuting to his congregation in Newark. Sunnybank, designated "The Place," would also become the setting for many of the popular dog stories written by Virginia's son, Alfred Payson Terhune.[179]

The notion of a "cottage" may not be Terhune's only fiction in connection with Sunnybank. In her *Autobiography*, published in 1910, Terhune places the discovery of the site in June of 1865, after the war's end, and she mentions the presence of "baby Belle," born in the spring of that year. Karen Manners Smith, however, has noted that the county registry of deeds dates Edward Terhune's purchase of the property as October 19, 1864. Smith suggests that the inaccurate date in the autobiography, if not an error, may have been Terhune's attempt to conceal from her readers the unpalatable fact that she and her husband had constructed a lavish house for themselves while the country was in the final, devastating months of the Civil War.[180] An error is possible, for Terhune's

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[178] According to Virginia's son Albert, his parents "began to keep open house for the birds" from the time they moved in, scattering bread crumbs on a daily basis and hanging up suet in the winter. Albert and his wife Anice continued the practice when they inherited Sunnbank. Albert Payson Terhune, "Our Sunnybank Bird Chums," in *The Terhune Omnibus*, 2nd ed., ed. Max J. Herzberg (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937), 279-280, 291.
[179] Harland, *Autobiography*, 406-7; Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 279-283; Albert Payson Terhune, *Lad: A Dog* (E.P. Dutton & Company, 1919; reprint, New York: Puffin Books, 1993), and other books.
[180] By 1998, Smith had concluded that the autobiographical account was a deliberate falsification. Smith, "Half My Heart in Dixie," in *Beyond Image and Convention*, 128; Passaic Country, New Jersey, Registry

memory, although unusually sharp, was not infallible. She did, however, mingle fiction with fact on occasion, either for the sake of appearances or for sheer love of a good story. Moreover, "Sunnybank" is only one of a number of names that appear in both Terhune's personal life and in her fiction, signs of the free interplay between the world of her lived experience and that of her imagination.

In the years after the Civil War the mistress of Sunnybank became, in a sense, the mistress of the Hawes family, certainly its wealthiest and most prominent member.[181] The torch passed to her generation with the sudden death of the family patriarch, Samuel Pierce Hawes, on Christmas Eve day, 1866. Samuel had enthusiastically promoted his daughter's literary career, and he had seen his faith in her ability thoroughly vindicated. Virginia repaid his loyalty with an intense, lifelong devotion to his memory. If her adolescence had been soured by his erratic temper and mortifying insults, she forgot or was willing to overlook the pain he had caused in her gratitude for his support of her vocation as a writer, and his personal absorption in her books. Toward the end of her life, Terhune dedicated her *Autobiography* to him "with reverent tenderness."[182]

Terhune's literary success continued unabated after the war. A number of her short stories published in *Godey's* were republished by Sheldon in book form, including *Husbands and Homes* (1865) and *The Christmas Holly* (1866). Yet something of the

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of Deeds, Register B3, 47, in Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), footnote 11 to Chapter X, 601. Harland, *Autobiography*, 406-407.

[181] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 288-9. Of Virginia's siblings, the most socially successful was Samuel Horace Hawes (1838-1922). Horace became a business partner to his father, and president of the family grain and coal business after Samuel Pierce Hawes's death. He served as an elder in the Second Presbyterian Church, and as president of the Richmond Chamber of Commerce for several terms. "S.H. Hawes, 84, Dead in Home, Funeral of Prominent Citizen to Take Place Tomorrow From Second Presbyterian Church," newspaper clipping in Hawes and Smith family genealogy, Katherine Heath Hawes Papers, n.p., n.d., Virginia Historical Society, Richmond; Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 289.

[182] Harland, *Autobiography*, epigram.

grimness and disillusion of the war years remained in Terhune's writing. In 1867 she published a new novel, *Phemie's Temptation*, in serial form in *Godey's*. The following year, *Ruby's Husband* was published by Sheldon.[183] Both are grim tales of wretched marriages, and *Phemie's Temptation* is significant for its sharp feminist awareness of the economic and social wrongs suffered by women.[184] She also connects those wrongs to alcohol abuse, for the husband of the heroic Phemie Rowland becomes unfaithful and abusive as a consequence of his heavy drinking.[185] In both of these novels, Terhune was torn between her belief in the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage, and her empathy for people trapped in miserable unions. She did not resolve this inner conflict in either work, for while she could not accept divorce, neither could she find a satisfactory resolution for the human tragedies she depicted. Historian Carolyn De Swarte Gifford has characterized the 1870s as a decade in which women increasingly acknowledged the gap between traditional ideals of womanhood and the actual experience of many women.[186] Virginia was wrestling with this tension in the 1860s. In the end, she would remain faithful, in the main, to the domestic ideology and womanly ideal she had embraced in her antebellum youth.

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[183] Karen Manners Smith has classed both works among Terhune's "dismal" novels, tales of misery unrelieved by any sense of moral or personal resolution. She also describes *Phemie's Temptation* as the most feminist of Terhune's works. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 303-309.
[184] Ibid., 303-309.
[185] Alcohol consumption, which had declined during the antebellum decades, rose again during the war years and afterwards. Women's concerns about the effects of male drunkenness on their wives and children would give rise to the prohibition movement by the 1880s. Terhune, who had shed her teetotalism during the 1850s, nevertheless remained sensitive to the social damage wrought by alcoholism. Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, "Frances Willard and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union's Conversion to Woman Suffrage," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 123.
[186] Ibid.

In keeping with that ideal and its exaltation of women's domestic role, Terhune devoted herself to the mothering of her children and the maintenance of her household at the same time that she sustained her vocation as a writer. Her responsibilities as a mother increased with the birth of a fourth daughter, Myrtle, on February 2, 1869, and her second son and last child, Alfred Payson Terhune, on December 21, 1872. Other women of her social status often delegated much of this work to domestic employees, but Virginia considered her personal involvement with the daily care of children and home a moral duty. At the same time, she shouldered the responsibilities of a pastor's wife, which included teaching Sunday school, holding teas at the couple's home, heading the Ladies' Committee, and providing various forms of practical assistance (including, for a time, an employment bureau) to needy female members of Edward's congregation. In 1871, she helped to found a YWCA in Newark.[187]

It was, in all, a formidable burden, but Mary Virginia Terhune was a woman of formidable energy and personal discipline, and a great believer in "system" and "order." Over the years, she established a rigorous "system" for herself, as well as her family and household staff, that enabled her to fulfill her various responsibilities. Karen Manners Smith has described Virginia's daily routine: she arose before anyone else in the family, and wrote for an hour, then joined her family for breakfast and prayers. While washing the family china and silverware, she listened to her children's English and French lessons, gave orders to her servants, then retired to her study to write until noon. After the noon meal, she took a brief nap, then ate an apple and devoted the afternoon to whichever responsibilities were most pressing (her children's music lessons, writing, or

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[187] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 298-299, 315.

parish work). Evenings were often devoted to entertaining guests, but Virginia also found some quiet time for reading and talking with her husband or, if a deadline loomed, for writing.[188] The system could not always function smoothly, but Virginia had the flexibility to tolerate interruptions as they arose, and the ingenuity to combine tasks when possible. When Chrissy was an infant, she tied a string between the leg of her desk and the cradle, so that she could rock her child while she wrote.[189]

Motivated by her sense of accomplishment in the domestic sphere, and by a desire to assist other young wives who were struggling as she had struggled, "Marion Harland" began in the 1870s to write in a new genre, that of domestic advice. Her first full-length work in this new arena was *Common Sense in the Household: A Manual of Practical Housewifery*, first published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1871. In her introduction, Terhune addressed her readers as if they were personal friends who, being a little younger and/or less experienced in the art of housewifery, might benefit from the lessons she herself had learned through trial and error. She urged these friends to study household management as a "profession," and not to despise even its monotonous and malodorous aspects.[190] The body of *Common Sense* was devoted almost entirely to cooking recipes (Virginia thoughtfully marked the most foolproof ones with a small cross), with a few chapters on household management and "sundries."

For all its straightforward and pragmatic focus, Terhune's first cookbook was a product of her new sense of authorial mission, her desire to provide both practical and

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[188] As per the southern custom Terhune learned from her mother, the care of the china and silverware was not to be entrusted to servants. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 314-5, 320-321.
[189] Sarah K. Bolton, "Mary Virginia Terhune ('Marion Harland')" in *Successful Women* (Boston, D. Lothrop Company, 1888), 94, 97, in Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 248.
[190] Harland, *Common Sense in the Household: A Manual of Practical Housewifery*, 15.

moral support to harried young housewives and mothers. Housewives still lacked adequate advice manuals, in Terhune's view, and *Common Sense* was designed primarily to fill that gap. To judge by the sales figures, her readers were delighted with their new mentor. The "manual of practical housewifery" sold a million copies and remained in print for over half a century.[191] Terhune herself was confident of the value of her new venture, despite the initial lack of support from her publishers as well as her husband. When Edward, puzzled by her departure from the tried and true track of novel-writing, commented that she seemed to take more pride in *Common Sense* than in all of her earlier works, she responded, "It will do more good than all of them put together."[192] Yet Virginia continued to write novels, publishing *True as Steel* in 1872, *Jessamine* in 1873, and *From My Youth Up* in 1874. These were succeeded by a second cookbook, *Breakfast, Luncheon and Tea*, in 1875. For the remainder of her career, "Marion Harland" created both advice books and works of fiction in roughly equal proportions, but she eventually became better known for the former.[193]

The moral aspect of Terhune's "domestic advice" vocation would become more pronounced in some of her later works, but it was foreshadowed in a brief essay she published in *Godey's* in December 1865, titled "A Christmas Talk with Mothers." In this "Christmas letter," she urged young mothers to see the nurture of children as a God-given mission, and to attune themselves to their infants' individual needs. For the first time, she also publicly raised the issue of abortion, suggesting that some of her readers might

[191] Harland, *Autobiography*, 344; Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 327, 336.
[192] Harland, *Autobiography*, 344-5; Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 328.
[193] Of the 65 titles Terhune published after 1870, 27 were household advice manuals or pamphlets (some written in collaboration with her daughters), while 21 were novels or collections of short stories. In addition, Terhune wrote travel and historical essays, and made several ventures into biography. Karen Manners Smith provides a comprehensive list of Terhune's published works at the end of her dissertation.

secretly approve of the "abomination" even as they castigated her for daring to write about it.[194] "A Christmas Talk" demonstrates Terhune's fondness and strong empathy for children. She ends by advising her readers to let their "babies" enjoy childhood to the fullest, and not to deprive them of the small joys that, although trivial to sober-minded adults, were of immense importance to them. In particular, she insisted, "Never deny the babies their Christmas!"[195] Terhune, herself a great lover of Christmas, had already made a similar point in a short story, "Nettie's Prayer," that had appeared the previous month in *Godey's*. In 1866, the two pieces were published together in a volume entitled *The Christmas Holly*. The union of these two works in one book is illustrative of the single sense of mission that undergirded both Terhune's fiction and her advice literature, and it suggests a reason for her shift in emphasis from the first to the second. Advice literature enabled her to speak to her readers directly and explicitly, and perhaps the new genre was better suited to the utilitarian temper of the late nineteenth century. What Terhune had lost in artistry she had gained in clarity.

Ironically, shortly after Terhune launched her career as a health-conscious domestic expert, her own health deteriorated. Grief saps strength, a process Virginia had depicted more than once in her fiction, and it is likely that the succession of bereavements she experienced in the late 1860s and early '70s, on top of her usual demanding schedule, exhausted her. Her infant daughter Myrtle died on September 30, 1869, only six months after her birth. When Myrtle was two months old, Virginia's milk had given out following a fever. A great believer in breast-feeding, Virginia was nevertheless obliged

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[194] Marion Harland, "A Christmas Talk With Mothers," in *The Christmas Holly* (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1867; reprint, University of Michigan, The Michigan Historical Reprint Series, n.d.), 48 (page citations are identical in original and reprint editions).
[195] Ibid., 85.

to give her baby cow's milk, and she was certain that this "artificial feeding," combined with the stress of teething, had brought about her daughter's death.[196]

Virginia and Edward grieved for Myrtle, but they were still more devastated when their second daughter Alice, then ten years old, died on New Year's Day, 1874, after a period of illness. The sprightly, mischievous "Brownie" (so-called for her brown hair and eyes) had been a favorite of both family and friends. After her death, Edward withdrew into his study for hours at a time, while Virginia continued her punishing schedule, and eventually assuaged her anguish by writing about Alice in the novel *My Little Love* (1876).[197] Virginia sustained a third blow in July of the same year, when she learned that her mother had died. Not only did she mourn for her mother, but she was also shaken by a sense of her own mortality. As she wrote years later, "My mother's going had struck down a barrier which kept off the cold blast from the boundless Sea of Eternity. I could not shake off the fancy for many weeks."[198]

Virginia was later convinced that this morbid "fancy" was in fact a symptom of her own serious illness, which she termed "nervous prostration." She experienced hemorrhaging from her lungs in late 1873 and again in the spring of 1874, yet kept this a secret for two years as she continued her rigorous routine of writing, family responsibilities, and church work. She was operating, she later believed, on sheer will-

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[196] Harland, *Autobiography*, 418.

[197] Virginia Belle, the Terhunes' third daughter and Alice's special playmate, was the only family member Edward allowed in the study during these times. A sensitive and anxious child, "Belle" herself experienced Alice's death as a religious crisis as well as a wrenching personal loss. She was finally consoled by a vision of Alice, dressed in white and radiantly happy, smiling at her. Belle did not share this experience with her mother until both were much older women. "I do not doubt that God let you see her, darling," Virginia responded then. "Thank you for telling me of it." Virginia Van de Water, *Heart of a Child: Some Reminiscences of a Reticent Childhood* (Boston: W.A. Wild Company, 1927), 70, 76-80; Harland, *Autobiography*, 418-419.

[198] Harland, *Autobiography*, 420.

power. It was a neighbor familiar with the signs of consumption who finally raised the alarm with Edward. Frightened, and chagrined that he had not realized how ill his wife was, Edward immediately brought several physicians to examine her. Their grim prognosis was that Virginia had, at best, three months to live, and should if possible spend the approaching winter in southern Europe.[199]

It was a fearful justification for a voyage that Virginia had wanted to take for years, but the two years that the Terhunes spent in Europe did bring about her full recovery.[200] Their children accompanied them, as did the family's beloved maid Rose O'Neill, a woman so accomplished in her work that Virginia referred to her in her writings as "The Invaluable."[201] At the time of their departure their daughter Christine was seventeen, Belle eleven, and "Bertie" an irrepressible four-year-old. Free from household responsibilities, and with her strength returning, Virginia began to write in a new genre, the travel essay. *Loiterings in Pleasant Paths*, published in 1880, was based on her experiences abroad.

When the Terhunes returned to the United States in 1878, they lived for a year in their "summer cottage" at Sunnybank, after which Edward accepted a position as pastor of a Congregational church, the Old First Church in Springfield, Massachusetts. Unhappy in Springfield, Virginia once again put her energies into her increasingly diversified writing.[202] First came a cookbook, *The Dinner Yearbook* (1878), full of

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[199] Harland, *Autobiography*, 419-422; Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 355-357.
[200] Terhune's malady may not have been consumption, and she may have exaggerated its severity. Karen Manners Smith has noted that during the same summer that Terhune was diagnosed as mortally ill, she had traveled with her husband to Lake Superior, and with the entire family to the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 373, 383.
[201] Harland, *Autobiography*, 425; Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 381-382.
[202] Virginia found most of the inhabitants of Springfield as bigoted and cold as the proverbial "Yankee," and it was not until she prepared to leave that she learned how much love she had inspired. Early in her

savory recipes the author had acquired in Europe. Another advice book, *Our Daughters: What Shall We Do with Them?*, was published the same year as *Loiterings*, and in the early 1880s Virginia developed a new interest in history and biography. In 1883 she published a work of historical fiction, *Judith: A Chronicle of Old Virginia* (she would not venture into straight biography until 1892-1900, and then with mixed success).[203]

In 1881, Terhune published the volume that would become her *magnum opus* in the domestic/moral advice department. *Eve's Daughters, or Common Sense for Maid, Wife and Mother* was first published by Scribner's, then by Anderson and Allen in a subscription edition the following year. It was republished by Scribner's in 1884. *Eve's Daughters* is an extended discussion (448 pages) of the physical, intellectual, and moral desiderata of educating girls and women for life. Written in the same warm, informal style as *Common Sense in the Household*, it contains much social commentary as well as practical advice on the raising of "our girl" (whom Terhune imagined as a kind of upper-middle-class everygirl of reasonably good character and intelligence) from infancy to adulthood and marriage. Like its cookbook predecessors, *Eve's Daughters* was a success, selling 20,000 copies in two years and receiving plaudits from both book reviewers and the medical profession.[204]

Eve's Daughters shows the thinking of the mature Terhune. She had by then raised Christine to adulthood, and she was proud of her daughter's physical strength and intellectual abilities. She had also largely recovered her ideological equilibrium, which

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stay there, she had taken over a bible class for young men. Her students, beneath their crust of reserve, had grown to love her and they were devastated when they learned that she and her husband were moving to New York. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 419-421.

[203] Terhune published *The Story of Mary Washington* (George Washington's mother) in 1892, *William Cowper* in 1899, and *John Knox* and *Hannah More* in 1900. These last two biographies were severely criticized for their historical inaccuracies, and after this experience Terhune avoided the genre.

[204] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 440-441.

had been shaken by the Civil War and the succeeding years. Still critical of the social injustices she saw, and influenced by the cultural changes of the postbellum period, she nevertheless remained generally conservative. She affirmed a legitimate place for women's talents outside of the household (as indeed she had done during the antebellum years), while also insisting that woman's domestic role, "*properly filled*" (emphasis in original) was spacious enough to satisfy "every reasonable woman."[205] She showed a strong interest in the "scientific" aspects of child-raising, even sounding at times like a social Darwinist. This emphasis accorded with both the intellectual climate of the late nineteenth century and Virginia's own predilection for "order" and "system." At the same time, Terhune remained a devout Christian, although her evangelicalism was now less formulaic and more restrained. She emphasized that the human body was not merely an intricate scientific wonder but the temple of God. Finally, she continued to teach her readers that motherhood was woman's highest vocation and the source of her greatest power. Terhune was, to the end, a firm believer in the antebellum doctrine of feminine influence, which she thought rendered women more powerful than men. "The destinies of the races who shall people the globe in the year of Our Lord 1950," she wrote, are held by the boys and girls of To-Day – preeminently by the latter."[206]

Terhune continued to promote these ideas for the remainder of her lengthy career. She produced cookbooks, books on parenting, and other domestic advice books, sometimes co-authored with her daughters. She even established her own magazine, *The Home-Maker*, and an associated publishing firm, in 1888 (she resigned as editor when *The Home-maker* absorbed *Women's Cycle* in 1890). Terhune published syndicated

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[205] Marion Harland, *Eve's Daughters*, 269.
[206] Ibid., 96.

columns in several magazines, most notably the Philadelphia *North American* from 1899 to 1911, and the *Chicago Tribune* from 1911 to 1917. From the 1880s, she was a frequent contributor to *Ladies' Home Journal*, the leading women's magazine of the day. Beginning in the 1890s, Terhune began a successful summertime career as a traveling lecturer on women and the family. She lectured with her friend and fellow writer Margaret Sangster, and her audiences were composed exclusively of women, conditions that accorded with her sense of propriety. When asked why she contented herself with the "hack-work" of domestic advice writing, Terhune responded, in precociously gender-inclusive language, that she enjoyed the work that brought her into intimate contact with Americans from across the country. "Women, boys, and girls, and housefathers – no less than housemothers – tell me of their lives, their successes, their failures, their trials, and their several problems." These communications not only inspired her columns but led her to form an interstate "Helping-Hand Club" of volunteers who assisted the indigent. Terhune loved this expanded maternal role. "After eight years' active service in the field so strangely appointed to me that I cannot but recognize (and with humble gratitude) the direct leading of the Divine Hand, I say, frankly, that I have never had such fulness [sic] of satisfaction in any other sphere of labor."[207]

The "hack-work" was, in Terhune's view, an extension of woman's maternal vocation to the entire society, and in this sense it resembled the broadened concept of feminine responsibility that had led many conservative advocates of woman's rights to embrace the cause of woman suffrage. In particular, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union under the leadership of Frances Willard had formally endorsed woman suffrage in

[207] Harland, *Autobiography*, 483-484.

1883. The WCTU's "Ballot for Home Protection," as its name indicates, was a call for women to defend the home, rather than a demand for political equality.[208] Its advocates joined their new desire for woman suffrage to their traditional faith in womanly purity, often wearing intertwined yellow and white ribbons to show their allegiance to both ideals.[209]

There was much in this approach to appeal to Terhune. Although no longer a strict adherent of the temperance cause, she was keenly aware of the damage done to families through alcoholism. She retained the lessons she had learned in the Civil War era on the vulnerability of women to exploitive and callous men. She also, of course, heartily concurred with the WCTU's vision of woman's nature, and with its Protestant evangelical piety. Moreover, Terhune had become a personal friend of Willard's. She had met her in 1876, shortly before the Terhune family left for Europe, and was impressed by Willard's "sweet candor" and "ineffable womanliness."[210] The two women corresponded with each other through the 1880s, and it was probably during this period that Terhune seriously contemplated joining her own influential voice to the growing cry of "Votes for Women![211]

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[208] Noting that woman suffrage was "distinctly a minority movement in the nineteenth century," Ellen Du Bois has compared the original woman suffrage crusaders to a guerrilla band, the WCTU to an army. Ellen Du Bois, "The Radicalism of the Woman Suffrage Movement: Notes Toward the Reconstruction of Nineteenth-Century Feminism," in *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998), 39.
[209] Gifford, "Frances Willard and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union's Conversion to Woman Suffrage," in *One Woman, One Vote*, 120.
[210] *Aubiography*, 290; Edward Payson Terhune, "Diary," August 1877, Edward Payson Terhune Papers, Manuscripts Division, Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
[211] Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 152, 154. In her February 23 presidential address to the National Council of Women, at that organization's first triennial meeting in 1891, Willard solicited funds for a monument to Mary Washington, mother of George Washington and gifted, according to Willard, with a "supreme genius for motherhood." Describing the project as a "reverent and patriotic undertaking," she requested that donations be sent to her "honored friend and Virginia's illustrious daughter, Mrs. Mary Virginia Terhune (Marion Harland)."

In 1894, however, Terhune publicly disavowed the suffrage cause. Then living in New York City, she sent a letter to the Protest Committee of the Brooklyn Women's Anti-Suffrage League, which gleefully forwarded the entire text to the *New York Times* for publication:

> As one who desires to promote the best interests of her fellow-women, I would add my name to the list of those who protest against the imposition of political responsibilities upon our sex. After long and careful studies of the subject, I am convinced that the majority of American women are neither willing nor ready for enrollment as active citizens of state and nation. Nor do I believe that the gift of the franchise to women is the remedy for the evils depicted by the proposed alteration in the State Constitution. With earnest wishes for the success of the noble enterprise, I am sincerely yours,
>
> Mary Virginia Terhune.[212]

The letter is ambiguous in its argument (what if the majority of women were to become "willing and ready" at a later time?), and Terhune did not devote great energy to the anti-suffrage cause. After a few public statements, she dropped the matter and concentrated once again on her writing, her own chosen medium for creating an impact on her society.[213]

(Terhune's biography of Mary Washington would be published the following year.) This was the only explicit funding request in a speech in which Willard sought to create as broad an appeal as possible to an audience of diverse religious and political beliefs. Frances E. Willard, "Address of Frances E. Willard, president of the Woman's National Council of the United States (founded in 1888), at its First Triennial Meeting, Albaugh's Opera House, Washington, D.C., February 22-25, 1891" (Library of Congress, *Votes for Women: Selections from the National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, 1848-1921*, 19 October 1998, http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/nawshome.html, 2 May 2006), 29; National Council of Women of the United States, "The First Triennial Meeting will be held at Albaugh's Grand Opera House, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, February 22, 23, 24, and 25, 1891." (Program.) Pamphlets in American History, WO 247, text-fiche.

[212] "Planning Their Campaign," *New York Times*, 28 April 1894, p. 9. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 504, n. 35.

[213] New York State would not approve woman suffrage until 1917, but it was the first state east of the Mississippi to do so. Karen Manners Smith speculates that Terhune's views may have altered by the early 1900s, as did those of her friend and fellow writer Margaret Sangster. Sangster had initially opposed woman suffrage but endorsed the cause in 1910. Terhune issued no public statements on suffrage after the

Although Terhune had come to see her advice writing as the means through which she might work the greatest good, she had not abandoned fiction. The child who had lulled herself to sleep by making up stories had become a consummate storyteller in maturity. She still wrote fiction, and much of her non-fiction, travel, and historical essays in particular, also had the evocative charm of a tale well-spun.[214] However, her novels were fewer and more widely spaced than in her early career, and a number of them had the bitter quality that had characterized her works of the late 1860s. Gone with the happy endings was the almost mystical romanticism that had characterized her antebellum novels. Fairies had flitted through the woods in Terhune's childhood imagination, and they had danced in the heart of the heroine of her 1857 novel, *Moss-side*, at its sunny conclusion.[215] By the post-war years, however, pragmatism had finally conquered "fancy." In *Eve's Daughters*, "Fairy Land" was merely an adolescent girl's jejune notion of young adulthood.[216]

Where Terhune recovered the magical quality of her earliest novels was in the stories for children that she began publishing in the 1890s. As was often the case with her fiction, autobiography served as her starting point. Among her most popular works were two collections of tales she told to delight her own grandchildren, *When Grandmamma Was New: The Story of A Virginia Childhood* (1899) and *When Grandmamma Was Fourteen* (1905). These stories have elements of pain, even horror in

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1890s, and by the 1910s, as ratification of the 19th Amendment drew near, she was in failing health and increasingly withdrawn. Smith, "Marion Harland," diss., 505, 545-547.

[214] Examples include *Some Colonial Homesteads and Their Stories* (1897) and *Where Ghosts Walk: The Haunts of Familiar Characters in History and Literature*, Series I (1898) and II (1910).

[215] Marion Harland [Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune], *Moss-side* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1857; reprint, New York: The Federal Book Company, n.d.), 352-353 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

[216] Marion Harland [Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune], *Eve's Daughters, or Common Sense for Maid, Wife and Mother* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881, 1885), 120.

them, yet they also reveal the author's longing for the Sunny South of her childhood, and for a certain lost innocence.[217] The vision of an enchanted world, although repressed, remained alive in Mary Virginia Terhune.

As early as 1874, the year of her mother's death, Mary Virginia Terhune had begun to think of herself as part of a passing generation. She later dismissed this early intimation of mortality as a "fancy," but the fancy reappeared five years later in *Eve's Daughters*, published when Terhune was fifty years old. "The sun, with the young, shines upon the landscape before them," she wrote. "For her who gave them birth it is the track overpast, 'in purple distance fair,' that draws her backward, longing glances as she walks on into the lengthening gloom of her own shadow."[218] In the following chapter, however, Terhune compared the life of an aging but still queenly matron to Indian summer: "She ought to be worth more to her family and to the world than at any past date, bringing, as she may and ought to do, the sheaves of Autumn in place of the perishable fruits of Summer."[219]

Virginia's own Indian summer was a long one and productive one, though crossed by shadows of sorrow.[220] In 1884, the Terhunes moved to Brooklyn where Edward had accepted the pastorship of the troubled Bedford Avenue Reformed Church.[221] Having

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[217] Nina Baym has argued that, several years after the Civil War ended, the domestic novel, which she terms "woman's fiction," disappeared as a distinctive genre. Its elements of feminine heroism and romance separated to become two new genres: didactic girl's fiction and the gothic romance, respectively. Terhune's turn from adult to children's fiction supports this thesis, although her lively stories avoid pedantry. Baym, *Woman's Fiction*, 296.
[218] Harland, *Eve's Daughters*, 298.
[219] Ibid., 304, 318.
[220] For a detailed account of Terhune's later years, see Karen Manners Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), Chapters 15 to 18.
[221] According to his son, Edward Terhune enjoyed the challenge of resuscitating a dying church. Albert Payson Terhune, *To the Best of My Memory* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930), 40-41, in Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 425.

successfully revived this church, he transferred to the Puritan Reformed Church, also in Brooklyn, in 1891 (the Terhunes would live the remainder of their lives in New York City). Edward's health was declining by the 1890s, but his wife remained energetic and healthy. In 1892-93, she made journey to the Holy Land in the company of her son, touring Lebanon, Syria and Palestine on horseback (she was then 63 years old). On this trip, she fulfilled a long-held desire to celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem.[222]

Each of Virginia's surviving children married, had children of their own, and were published authors. Christine married James Frederick ("Fred") Herrick in 1884, and had four children, two of whom lived to adulthood. After Fred's death from typhoid fever in 1893, Christine and her surviving children Horace and James Frederick (Eric) moved in with the Terhunes. Christine would live with or near her mother for the rest of her life, and from this time on she supported her family as a writer and editor. Virginia Belle married Frederick Van de Water in 1889 (despite her father's complaints about the inconvenience of having two "Freds" as son-in-laws).[223] The couple had three sons, Frederick Fritz ("Fritz"), Edward Terhune, and Sterling. Albert, to his parents' dismay, went through a period of reckless rebellion as a youth. He entered Columbia College in 1889, and was graduated in 1893 despite his poor performance as a student. He married Lorraine Margaret Bryson in 1898. Lorraine died ten months later, giving birth to the couple's daughter, Lorraine Virginia (the child, though premature, survived and was raised by her grandmothers). In 1901, Albert married Anice Morris Stockton. Of the three Terhune children, Albert had the most successful career as a writer, becoming the

[222] Terhune took this journey as a correspondent for the *Christian Herald*. She later developed a lecture series and wrote a book, *Home of the Bible* (published by Monarch in 1895), based on the essays she wrote for the *Herald*. Albert Payson Terhune published *Syria from the Saddle* (1894), based on the same trip.
[223] Harland, *Autobiography*, 448.

author of highly popular dog stories.[224] Many of these stories were set in the family home of Sunnybank, which Virginia deeded to Albert in 1909. Although Albert was more attached to Sunnybank than were either of his sisters, his sole inheritance of the estate exacerbated pre-existing tensions between the Terhune children.[225] Despite Virginia's adulation of the joys of family harmony, her daughters had never gotten along well with their willful, tempestuous brother, and the Terhune family did not much like Anice.[226]

In 1895, Edward Payson Terhune retired from full-time ministry, exhausted and ill. The Terhunes made another trip abroad in 1897-8, this time in hopes of restoring Edward's health. He made a temporary improvement. Upon their return to New York, the Terhunes lived in rented apartments in Manhattan. Virginia was actively involved in her work as a syndicated columnist and author, teaching herself to type when an injury to her wrist made writing too painful. Even as she hauled in the sheaves of her own Indian summer, however, she saw her generation in the family passing away. Her sister Myrtle died in 1893, Mea in 1900, her brother Herbert in 1906. In 1907, her husband Edward succumbed to cancer after a long illness. After this the grieving Virginia lived with her daughters, alternating between Christine in New York City and Belle at Kanesata, her house in rural New Jersey.

Some time after her husband's death, Virginia began writing an autobiography. It was published by Harper and Brothers in 1910 as *Marion Harland's Autobiography: The Story of a Long Life*. The account, written in the same warm and informal style as her

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[224] The best-known of Albert Payson Terhune's many books is *Lad: A Dog* (1919).
[225] Edward Payson Terhune was dead by then. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 417, 419, 529, 532.
[226] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 516.

advice books, illustrates the importance of her youth to the elderly woman as she looked back over her life. It is dedicated to her father, and 367 of the 489 pages are devoted to the pre-Civil War period, about three quarters of the book. Terhune herself wrote in her introduction that she wished to preserve for future generations a picture, based solely on her personal experience, of a way of life now vanished.[227]

Terhune was also preparing for her own death. In writing her *Autobiography* she had re-lived what she described as a rich, full life. She described her most cherished memories in the words of the Psalmist: "They have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage."[228] During the 1910s, Virginia's health declined and she became increasingly withdrawn. In 1914 she published *Looking Westward*, an essay on the dignity and worth of old age. She continued to write, even after being diagnosed with glaucoma in 1917. Her last novel, *The Carringtons of High Hill*, was dictated after she had gone totally blind. It is a plantation novel set in the Old South, and written in her old style.[229]

In 1921, sensing that the end was near, Virginia persuaded Albert to take her for a visit to her family's former house in Richmond, at 506 East Leigh Street.[230] Albert, knowing that the former Hawes home was now a seedy Salvation Army shelter, was reluctant. After paying the superintendent to clear the residents out, he and Anice brought Virginia to the home where she gave them a tour of house and garden, describing their charms from memory. Albert and Anice, who had deceived Virginia into believing that the house still belonged to a private family and was well maintained, almost choked

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[227] Harland, *Autobiography*, ix-x.
[228] Psalm 119:54. Harland, *Autobiography*, 488.
[229] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 559.
[230] The house was demolished in the late 1960s to make way for the Richmond Stadium.

as they pretended to admire the lovely flower garden, with the jasmine summer house where, Virginia told them, Edward had proposed to her. They were looking out across "a ghastly dirt expanse strewn with muck and garbage." Depressed by the experience, Albert later found consolation in the idea that his sightless mother, her inner vision aglow with the light of "a hundred golden memories," had seen the house more clearly than he had.[231]

The end came slowly. After returning to New York from that visit, Virginia became ill with angina and was confined to bed. By January she had developed pneumonia. She remained alert, and when Horace Hawes died in February, her children decided not to tell her for fear that the news would kill her. She lingered until June 1, when she fell into a coma. On June 3, 1921, "Marion Harland" completed her pilgrimage.

[231] Albert Payson Terhune, *The Book of Sunnybank* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1934), 78-79, in Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 562.

Augusta Jane Evans Wilson: The Crusader

Although more familiar to scholars than Mary Virginia Terhune, Augusta Jane Evans (later Wilson) is in many ways less knowable. She produced a much smaller body of work, left no diary or autobiography, and few of her family papers have survived. William Perry Fidler's biography of Evans, published in 1951, is still considered the definitive account of her life.[232] Evans may best be understood as a literary crusader, but hers was a paradoxical, if not contradictory, quest. As a young woman, she had burst on the literary scene, fired by a determination to "combat skepticism to the day of my death."[233] She also believed, however, that woman ruled over the world "from golden thrones shining in the blessed and hallowed light of the hearth," and as she aged she was increasingly content in her hearthside reign.[234] Augusta was, moreover, deeply conflicted about her writing vocation, which she often portrayed as more burden than gift. The struggle permeates her early novels. Her portrayals of natural beauty could be lyrical, her dialogues impishly playful, but much of her writing has a strained, wooden quality. At her best, however, Evans could envelop her readers in the dramatic chiaroscuro of her moral imagination.

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[232] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*.
[233] Augusta Jane Evans to Walter Clopton Harriss, 29 October 185[8?], in Frear, ed., "You My Brother Will Be Glad with Me," 140.
[234] Augusta J. Evans (Wilson), *St. Elmo* (New York: G.W. Carleton, 1867; reprint, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, Publishers, 1896), 453 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

Augusta Jane Evans was shaped by her anomalous childhood, one that exposed her to both high culture and frontier hardship, to the experience of privilege as well as the lowering threat of poverty. She was born in Columbus, Georgia, a town built on property only recently obtained from the Creek Indians. Her parents, Matthew ("Matt") Ryan Evans and Sarah Skrine Howard Evans, were both from wealthy and prestigious families. Matt Evans had left his father's South Carolina plantation and moved to Columbus with his brother Thomas around 1830. The two brothers founded a highly successful mercantile firm, M.R. Evans & Company, and Matt acquired a plantation of his own. Evans's biographer describes Matt as a "dreamer." Although his genial manner made him popular with friends and neighbors, he was unsteady. Once he had lost his fortune, he was never able to recover it. Sarah Skrine Howard had a reputation for both brilliance and gentleness. An oil portrait of her depicts a graceful, dark-haired woman with delicate features and immense, doe-like eyes. Sarah had grown up in her family's mansion in Milledgeville, roughly one hundred miles to the northeast of Columbus, but she often came to Columbus to visit her brother John H. Howard, a leading politician and planter. It was here that she probably met the town's newly prominent citizen, Matt Evans.[235]

When Matt and Sarah married on July 15 1834, Matt was determined that his elegant wife would live in the style to which she was accustomed. He purchased an estate outside of Columbus and constructed a lavish mansion that featured broad white columns on the outside, and mahogany woodwork and Italian marble fireplaces in the interior. Augusta, the couple's first child, was born on May 8, 1835, while the grand

[235] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 11-13. The portrait of Sarah Skrine Howard is in the possession of the Historic Mobile Preservation Society. The painter is unknown, and there is some doubt as to the identity of the sitter.

house was still under construction.[236] In light of later events, the circumstance foreshadows the young girl's early experience of life: exclusion from the coveted mansion even as it lay tantalizingly in view.

Matt Evans's business success came to an abrupt end in the depression that followed the Panic of 1837. Partly from his own lavish spending, and partly due to an economic crisis beyond his control, he was plunged into bankruptcy. In 1839 he was obliged to close his business and move out of his prized mansion, and he probably had the furniture sold at auction.[237] Like many Americans who suffered financial reverses in the volatile economy of the antebellum era, Evans decided to move his family west to rebuild his fortune. By this time, Augusta had a younger brother, Howard, born in 1837.

The Evanses went first to Russell County in eastern Alabama. In the early 1840s, they lived in a small house in Oswitchee (present-day Oswichee, roughly twenty-five miles southwest of Columbus). The family continued to grow. Augusta's second brother, Vivian Rutherford, was born in1840, and her sister Caroline, whom the family called "Carrie," followed in 1842. A second sister, Sarah ("Sally"), arrived in 1844.[238] Matt Evans's fortunes made little improvement during these years, and the family lived frugally. They nevertheless retained a sense of refinement, and their cramped budget still allowed them to cultivate a beautiful flower garden. Young Augusta received quite a good education from her learned mother and from the family library. She was an earnest, bright, frail child who read voraciously. She had a special love for poetry, history and

[236] Ibid., 14. The house would later be known as Sherwood Hall, after its third owner.
[237] Ibid., 19.
[238] The years for Augusta's siblings' births are approximate. Fidler describes their age in relation to Augusta. Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 38.

geography, and was fascinated by science and philosophy. According to her biographer, Augusta was also gifted with a photographic memory.[239]

In 1845, Matt Evans decided to move further west in hopes of improving the family fortunes. This time the Evanses made the long trek to Texas, where business was booming even as the U.S.-Mexican War loomed. They arrived in Houston in the summer of 1845, and remained there for several weeks as Mrs. Evans gave birth to her sixth child, Mary Elizabeth ("Mary Eliza"). After another short stay in Galveston, the family finally settled in San Antonio, probably in early 1846.

The three years that Augusta lived in San Antonio made a strong impression on her. Always a great admirer of beauty, she fell in love with clear, brilliant light of the Texas sky. She also, despite her strongly anti-Catholic convictions, was attracted to the mystical quality of Spanish Catholic culture. In her first novel, *Inez: A Tale of the Alamo*, she described a San Antonio dusk in rapturous terms:

> *"Italia! oh Italia! thou who hast*
> *The fatal gift of beauty."*
>
> *Art* [sic] *rivaled here. Thy gorgeous skies have floated hither, and hover like a halo round the town. The sun had set; the glowing tints faded fast, till of the brilliant spectacle naught remained save the soft roseate hue which melted insensibly into the deep azure of the zenith. Quiet seemed settling o'er mountain and river, when, with a solemn sweetness, the vesper bells chimed out on the evening air. . . . Will you traverse with me the crooked streets, and stand beneath the belfry whence issued the holy tones?*[240]

[239] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 20-22.
[240] Augusta J. Evans (Wilson), *Inez: A Tale of the Alamo* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1855; reprint, Chicago, M.A. Donohue & Co., n.d.), 22 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

The remains of the old Franciscan monastery known as the Alamo, and the tale of the desperate battle there, likewise captured the young Augusta's imagination. Augusta learned little of Spanish culture, however. For the sake of both safety and propriety, she was largely homebound. San Antonio was very much a frontier town, rugged and often dangerous. Drunkenness, smuggling, and street brawls were common, and tensions were high between Mexicans and Americans. Still a large majority of the population in 1840, the Mexicans had been steadily forced off of their land by Anglo American settlers (as well as European immigrants) who had migrated to the city in large numbers since the Texas War of Independence (1836-37). Juan Seguín, mayor of San Antonio from 1840 to 1842, complained that Mexicans were regularly victimized by American adventurers, whom he called the "scum of society."[241] The mores of San Antonio were likewise unappealing to a genteel Southern family. The journalist Frederick Law Olmsted, traveling through the area in the 1850s, described the women of San Antonio as seductive in dress and relaxed in morals.[242] Finally, there was the danger of Comanche attacks, which were so frequent as to make farming risky. White settlers heard horrifying stories of women and children raped, beaten, sometimes killed by Comanche warriors, and the number of reported attacks increased in the late 1840s. In all, Augusta and her mother

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[241] David Montejano, *Anglos and Americans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 26-28.

[242] "The common dress was loose and slight, not to say slatternly. It was frequently but a chemise, as low as possible in the neck, and sometimes even lower, with a calico petticoat." Olmsted added that married women, though modest, were "sometimes seized by a strong penchant for someone other than their lord," with the result that their children displayed a wide variety of complexions. Frederick Law Olmsted, *Our Slave States*, vol. 2, *A Journey Through Texas*, *or A Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier: With a Statistical Appendix* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1852), 161-162.

were probably unhappy in San Antonio, and her biographer speculates that they prevailed on Matt Evans to move back east.[243]

In late1848, the Evans family moved one last time, this time to the bustling cotton port of Mobile. Alabama's oldest city had been growing rapidly as a trading center since the 1820s, when steamboats began to transport cotton from the central parts of the state to the Gulf Coast, and thence to the northeastern United States or to Europe. Planters sold their goods through professional middlemen, most of whom represented Northern or foreign firms. In the late 1840s, the construction of the Mobile and Ohio ("M and O") Railroad was expected to bring boom times to the already vibrant city, and rumors of fortunes to be made attracted newcomers like Matt Evans.[244] Evans did in fact achieve a modicum of success during his first few years in Mobile. He found work as a factor for a cotton merchant, becoming part of the city's growing mercantile class, and the family rented a cottage just outside the city. Devout Methodists, the Evanses also joined the prestigious St. Francis Street Methodist Church in downtown Mobile.[245] Augusta was even able to attend a seminary for young ladies for a time, although she later withdrew because of her frail health. Matt needed his steady income, for his family had grown to ten with the birth of Randolph in 1848, and of Anna Virginia, the youngest child, on August 6, 1850.[246]

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[243] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 32.
[244] Harriet E. Amos Doss, *Cotton City: Urban Development in Antebellum Mobile* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 196; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 36-38.
[245] Fidler erroneously states that the Evans family moved to Mobile in the summer of 1849. According to the church register, Matthew R. Evans, Sarah S. Evans and Augusta Evans were received into the church on December 8, 1848. *The Official Membership and Church Record, The St. Francis Street Methodist Church, Mobile, Alabama, 1840-1912*, Records of the St. Francis Street Methodist Church, Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon College, Montgomery, Alabama.
[246] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 38.

This period of relative prosperity for the Evans family was short-lived. The first blow hit in the same year as their arrival: they lost much of their personal property in a fire that destroyed their rental home. In the 1850s, Matt Evans's health began to fail, and his income suffered. Mobile's volatile economic conditions in the mid-1850s, which culminated in the Panic of 1857, may have added to the family's difficulties. The city's business elite had a habit of leaving during the sweltering summer months, slowing its development. Moreover, Mobile had a seamy underside that Evans Wilson would have found threatening: brothels and gambling houses as well as the illegal foreign slave trade. City services focused on the needs of the business sector, ignoring the overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions that, together with the hot, extremely humid climate, made less well-to-do inhabitants vulnerable to disease. Upper-class Mobilians tended to downplay the magnitude of the problem during the 1850s, and likewise Evans's novels, with their rarified prose, throw a veil over the most sordid aspects of the city that was the unnamed setting for her early novels. Yet Evans's stories provide a picture of the deprivation suffered by much of the population, in the form of orphans being hired out as domestic help (an actual practice of Mobile orphanages) and dedicated Christian heroines risking their safety to bring material help and spiritual comfort to families racked by poverty, disease, and alcoholism.[247]

Augusta Evans played the role of both sufferer and ministering angel during the difficult decade of the 1850s. In fragile health herself, she was also strong-willed, courageous and conscientious. Not only was she a devoted nurse to her ailing father, but she also volunteered to tend victims of the yellow fever epidemics that periodically swept

[247] These themes are present in *Beulah* (1859) and *Macaria* (1864). Amos Doss, *Cotton City*, 87, 95, 136, 150, 167, 230; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 38.

antebellum Mobile, putting herself at high risk of infection in the process.[248] These experiences, and her service as a volunteer nurse during the Civil War, would lead her to take a lifelong interest in nursing and the provision of hospital care for the needy.

Despite these demands on her time and energy, Augusta found time to continue her education under her mother's supervision. She read widely in philosophy and developed a passion for the arts as well as literature. If Evans, with her mother's support, was able to nourish an appreciation for high culture even while living on the frontier, cosmopolitan Mobile provided opportunities for refining that taste. Mobile was a winter resort town for wealthy Alabamians in the antebellum years. It boasted a number of theaters, and a salon society headed by the elegant socialite Mme. Octavia Walton Levert. Construction of a first-class hotel, the Battle House, began in 1852. From 1830 on, Mobile had also developed a more modest version of carnival culture of New Orleans, complete with "mystic societies" of which the "Cowbellian de Rakin Society" was the oldest and most prominent.[249] Matt Evans, in his Mobilian heyday, was a member of this society.[250]

Augusta loved music and, although a devout Methodist, she had no moral objections to the drama, provided that she considered the content was elevating. Yet in the 1850s Mobile's cultural life probably did little more than whet her appetite. Her family's limited economic status excluded her from the city's high society, while her education and privileged background (still strong in family memory) prevented her from fitting in comfortably in with her economic peers. As she grew to maturity in a culture

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[248] The heroine of *Beulah* takes the same risk. Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 39.
[249] Amos Doss, *Cotton City*, 45-46, 65-67.
[250] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 37.

that emphasized marriage and motherhood as the only truly satisfying vocation for women, Augusta must have been aware that her circumstances diminished her chances of finding a suitable husband.

Augusta's intellectual gifts and intense personality, in part the product of her unusual upbringing, probably also contributed to her isolation. She does not seem to have had intimate friends prior to her success as a published author, although she was close to her siblings and had maintained contact with her extended family in Georgia. She loved her father, but she especially adored and revered her mother, the gentle, pious, cultured woman who had taught her Cowper's poetry even while on the trail to Texas. Later in life, Evans told a friend that she owed all of her accomplishments to her mother's influence.[251]

Given her serious, restless mind and her family's economic need, it is unsurprising that the teenaged Augusta conceived of a project that could provide an outlet for the first and relief for the second. At the age of fifteen, she began to work in secret on her first novel, *Inez: A Tale of the Alamo*. According to her close friend, Rachel Lyons Heustis, she worked on the manuscript late at night after the rest of the family had gone to bed. She may have been motivated by diffidence about her literary ability, or she may have doubted the propriety of a woman's writing for publication, despite the fact that, by the 1850s, women had established themselves as successful authors of popular literature. Possibly her main motive for secrecy was her desire to present her first production as a surprise gift to her father.

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[251] J. McCoy, M.D., "Mrs. Augusta Evans Wilson, The Author of Beulah, St. Elmo, Vashti, Infelice, Macaria and Inez – Her Home and Her Health." Unidentified Mobile newspaper clipping, March 20, 1885, Augusta Evans Wilson Papers, Historic Mobile Presentation Society, Mobile, Alabama; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 21, 25.

Augusta's secret, however, was exposed. Minervy, the family cook, saw her light burning in the wee hours of the morning, and the housemaid noticed the prodigious amount of lamp oil she was using. Minervy, aware of Augusta's fragile health and slender appetite, thought it incumbent on her to notify her mistress.

"Miss, you's always worrying about that Augusta Jane, and a-complaining she's so weakly, and don't eat nothing, and nothing I cooks don't suit her, and there ain't no reason on this yearth for it, but because she is too perlitical!"

"Too perlitical!" replied Mrs. Evans. "Why, what do you mean?"

"Well, ma'am, it is just that she is too perlitical. I sees her light a-burning every morning of the world 'fore day, when I is making out my rolls, and Sylvy say her lamp done burn clean empty every day: and I tells you she is 'tirely too perlitical!"[252]

Happily for Augusta, her mother became her co-conspirator. She was allowed to complete her novel over the course of several years, and on Christmas Day, 1854, she presented the manuscript to her father as a gift. *Inez: A Tale of the Alamo* was privately published the following year, probably at the expense of Evans's uncle, Augustus Howard.[253] It was a curious hybrid: part historical romance, part anti-Catholic tract. In addition to helping her family, the young author hoped to educate her readers about the "perfidious system of Papacy," that "sworn foe to liberty, ecclesiastical or political."[254] In this ambition she was part of a nationwide Protestant evangelical reaction against the

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[252] Rachel Lyons Heustis, quoted in "Mrs. Wilson in War Times," *Mobile Daily Register*, 10 May 1909, p. 2.
[253] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 45.
[254] David Reynolds has described the anti-Catholic novel as the product of "xenophobic outrage" exacerbated by high rates of Catholic immigration. Evans (Wilson), *Inez*, 135; David Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction: The Emergence of Religious Literature in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 180.

massive wave of Catholic immigration in the antebellum years.[255] The anti-Catholic novel was, in fact, a popular genre in its own right. It first appeared in the 1830s and reached its heyday in the 1840s, becoming increasingly salacious and sensational.[256] *Inez* may be considered a late, fairly benign addition to this canon.

Inez probably did little to accomplish either of Augusta's goals, for it was awkwardly written and sold poorly.[257] This early novel is of interest, however, in that it reveals its author's intellectual and religious seriousness.[258] Eschewing the sensationalism of popular anti-Catholic fiction, Evans attempted to provide her readers with an educated refutation of Catholic teaching, exploring such issues as the uniqueness of Christ's mediation, saintly intercession, the authority of the Church Fathers, Marian veneration, the practice of Confession, the Petrine doctrine, purgatory, indulgences, and miracles.[259] Although her presentation was highly unbalanced, Evans believed that she was dealing in plain facts. She repeatedly had one of her heroines remind the other, "Florry, we are searching for truth."[260]

Although Protestant evangelical truth emerges largely victorious in *Inez*, truth would soon become much more elusive in Augusta's own life. It is quite likely that her investigation of Catholicism in *Inez* contributed to her questioning the Methodist faith in which she had been raised. Living in Mobile, a historically Catholic city that still had a large Catholic population in the 1850s, may also have added to the young author's

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[255] Religious historian Sydney Ahlstrom has called the 1850s "the most violent period of religious discord in [America's] history." Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 555, 559.
[256] Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction*, 180-186.
[257] *Inez* appeared in only one edition when it was first published. Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 44-45.
[258] Literary scholar Nina Baym writes approvingly that *Inez* gives proof of Evans's passion for "pure ideas" and her confidence in women's intellectual powers. Baym, *Woman's Fiction*, 282.
[259] Evans (Wilson), *Inez*, 105-16, 130-43.
[260] Ibid., 113.

religious questions. In addition, Augusta had been studying skeptical philosophers and romantic poets whose spirituality was pantheistic rather than Christian in nature. Whatever the cause, the budding writer experienced a full-fledged crisis of faith around 1855, and for a time abandoned Christianity altogether.

The surviving record that comes closest to an autobiographical account of this spiritual struggle is a letter that Augusta penned to a young Methodist clergyman, Walter Clopton Harriss, on January 29, 1856. In this highly excited communiqué (many words are underlined, almost every phrase ends in an exclamation point), Augusta tells her friend that her soul that been in a state of tumult when he last left her, on the first of January. "My sleep that night! How troubled! Tortured! As you know, my mind was darkened . . . I was almost at that grim goal of speculation, where I believed nothing." She then assures her "brother" that "a green and sunny path" has led her back to her God. Driven to mental exhaustion by her philosophical wanderings, she has decided to rest upon the "rock of ages," and to accept spiritual solace according to God's timing.[261]

Evans remained anchored upon her rock for the remainder of the year, although she occasionally felt threatened by the return of doubts. Nevertheless, she assured Harriss in October of that year that her restoration to the faith was permanent. "Do not imagine, my Friend, that my old state of mind has returned. No. No. Believe me, that can never be again."[262] In a later letter, written in October of 1857 or '58, Augusta informed Harriss that she planned to hand in her letter of membership to her pastor, the

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[261] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harriss, 29 January 1856, in Frear, "You My Brother," 129.
[262] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harriss, 12 October, 1856, in Frear, "You My Brother," 136.

Reverend A. S. Andrews.[263] She remained in the Methodist Church for the remainder of her life.

The Reverend Harriss, who played an important role in this critical period of Evans's life, was by all accounts a gifted and popular preacher, and an affectionate friend. He was five years older than Evans, and apparently served as her spiritual mentor as she struggled with religious doubts. There is no record of how he and Evans met, but he was able to inspire confidence in a young woman whose closest associates had, until that time, apparently been members of her own immediate family.[264] In her letters to Harriss, Evans repeatedly calls him her "Brother" (a Methodist custom) and "Friend." There may have been a romantic attraction as well. Harriss's own correspondence reveals a man who was gentle, reverent, deeply attached to his family, and mildly flirtatious. He was also intellectual and fiery in his convictions, qualities that could only have recommended him to the equally passionate Augusta.[265] Perhaps most important for his role in Augusta's life, he himself had experienced a crisis of faith during which he

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[263] A. S. Andrews was almost certainly Dr. Allen Skeen Andrews (1824-1898), pastor of St. Francis Street Methodist Church in 1857 and 1858. Evans was evidently unaware that she was already a member of the church, as the church register contains no record of her having withdrawn her membership. Augusta Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harriss, 29 October, 185[8?], in Frear, "You My Brother," 139; Records of the St. Francis Street Methodist Church; Franklin S. Moseley Personal Data Sheets. The St. Francis Street Church records and Moseley Date Sheets are housed at the Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon College, Montgomery.

[264] Fidler suggests that Harriss and Evans met while the former served as chaplain at the Navy Yard in 1853-1854. His chaplaincy, however, was at the Pensacola Navy Yard, located in Warrington, Florida. Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 55; Franklin S. Moseley Personaly Data Sheets, Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon.

[265] Harriss cultivated the friendship of at least one other literary lady besides Augusta Evans. In a letter to his sister Adelia, written from Marianna, Florida, around 1857 (when Adelia was about thirteen), he stated that he planned to visit "the Misses Keane" in Georgia. "Now won't it be nice to have three beautiful young ladies making love to me and I to them for a week? One of them is a literary woman, that is, writes for publication; won't I sit beneath the moonlight, take her hand in mine, and talk poetry? It is very easy to convince myself that my health needs a trip like this. My people are very good to me and never object to my going if I am always in the pulpit on Sunday." Walter Clopton Harriss to Adelia Branch Harriss, 10 May 1857 (?), typescript mss, Walter Clopton Harriss Papers, Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon College, Montgomery, Alabama.

had wrestled with skeptical philosophy. "My belief in Christianity is in part the result of a mental, or rather a dialectic struggle," he wrote a close friend in 1865, a year before his death. "I have passed through several stages of infidelity; I have arrived at that point from which I can see how revelation harmonizes with philosophy in its latest results and sublimest forms."[266]

If this statement reveals common elements in the religious experiences of Evans and Harriss, it also indicates points of contrast. Evans's own spiritual homecoming was intuitive and emotional rather than intellectual.[267] It involved a decision to eschew philosophy and rest on "the Ararat of dependence! of 'blind faith'!", instead of Harriss's reconciliation of theological and philosophical knowledge.[268] This difference suggests a limit to Harriss's guidance of Evans. She was apparently influenced by him, and found comfort in his empathy, but she was not directly persuaded by his arguments. If a romantic attraction was present, it did not come to fruition. Finally, nowhere in her later writings does Evans credit Harriss with converting her or shaping her sense of Christian mission.[269] She remained deeply attached to her mother (who apparently was able to tolerate her daughter's spiritual wandering), and she always described her mother as the

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[266] Walter Clopton Harriss to Francis Mitchell Grace, 5 March 1865, part of a letter by Grace to the *Christian Advocate*, dated 9 February 1867. "[From the Christian Advocate] The Late Reverend Walter C. Harriss," newspaper clipping, n.d.n.p., Walter Clopton Harriss Papers, Methodist Archives Center, Montgomery.

[267] Michael O'Brien has noted Evans's ultimate rejection of purely intellectual reasoning: "So seriously does Evans take ideas, and so clearly does she enact them, that one can forget that she grounded philosophy on psychology." O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 1169.

[268] Augusta Jane Evans to Walter Clopton Harriss, 29 January 1856, in Frear, "You My Brother," 130-131.

[269] The Harriss descendents have preserved a tradition that their "Uncle Watt" converted Evans, but there is no verification of this in Evans's letters to Harriss, and no mention of Harriss at all in Evans's later correspondence. A Harriss descendent, Joyce Jones, writes that Evans offered Harriss's widow $4,500 for his personal library after his death, and the Alabama Conference of the Methodist Church offered $5,000 for the same. Sarah Harriss, however, refused to sell. This letter is the only record of a relationship between Evans and Harriss after 1858. Joyce Jones to Franklin S. Moseley (Methodist historian), 12 May 1960, Walter Clopton Harriss Papers, Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon.

formative influence in her life. Indeed, Evans's conviction that feminine influence was a more powerful influence than male leadership may well have been rooted in her personal experience.

Evans's searing experience of spiritual desolation, and her return to her Methodist faith, provided her with a new, exalted purpose for her life. She shared her sense of mission with Harriss:

> Now as I write I am strong and well: strong in body, strong in <u>faith</u>, strong in hope for a life of usefulness; strong in a resolution to combat skepticism to the day of my death, and <u>if</u> <u>possible</u> help others to avoid the stormy path I have trod, ere I was convinced of the <u>fallibility</u> of human <u>Reason</u>.[270]

She would accomplish this mission through the medium of religious instruction that she had already chosen, that of the popular novel. Evans's second novel, *Beulah*, was semi-autobiographical. Set in an unnamed Southern city (one that bore a remarkably strong resemblance to Mobile), *Beulah* is the story of a plain but intelligent and spirited young woman, Beulah Benton, who resolves to make her own way in the world. Like Evans, Beulah reads skeptical philosophy and loses her faith in the process. She finally regains her faith and marries the man she loves. He is himself an unbeliever, but Evans suggests that, in the end, he may be led to faith by his wife's example.

In contrast to Evans's first literary effort, *Beulah*, published by Derby and Jackson in 1859, was an immediate and spectacular success. It sold 22,000 copies in the first nine months and received high praise from most of its reviewers.[271] The appeal of this second novel lies partly in the dramatic improvement in Evans's writing. Her prose is more

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[270] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harriss, 29 October 185[8?], in Frear, "You My Brother," 140.
[271] Fidler, 74, 79-80.

graceful, her dialog more natural and at times delightfully funny, and her characters have greater depth. Moreover, Evans's religious thought had grown more complex and nuanced as a result of her passage through spiritual anguish. *Inez* had been a didactic exercise. *Beulah* was written from life and, consequently, came to life for its readers. The novel also owed its popularity to the fact that Evans's subject matter resonated with antebellum Americans. Evangelical Christianity was robust in that era, but skepticism had also increased from the 1840s on, and many who retained their Christian beliefs nevertheless experienced confusion and uncertainty.[272]

With *Beulah*, Evans met the goals she had set for herself in writing *Inez*. She had achieved popularity and, presumably, a measure of influence over her devoted readers, and she had brought her family's financial woes to an end.[273] With her new wealth, she purchased Georgia Cottage, the house the Evans family had been renting.[274] She traveled twice to New York, where James Cephas Derby introduced her to the city's socialites and literati, as he had done with Mary Virginia Terhune a few years earlier. She made plans for a long-desired trip to Europe. It was during her first trip to New York that Evans met one of her closest friends, Rachel Lyons (later Heustis), of Columbia, South Carolina.

The young novelist, then twenty-four years old, was a slender, graceful, serious woman with a fair complexion and brown hair. Although she was not considered pretty, her bright eyes, musical voice, and lively manner rendered her attractive, and she was often described as elegant. She had, according to her biographer, an unusual physical

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[272] James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 141, 163.

[273] Evans reportedly treasured letters from six formerly dissolute men who testified that *Beulah* and *St. Elmo*, Evans's fourth novel, had converted them to Christianity. Rachel Lyons Heustis, quoted in "Mrs. Wilson in War Times," *Mobile Register*, 10 May 1909.

[274] Located in Summerville, a former suburb of Mobile, Georgia Cottage still stands at 2358 Springhill Avenue, well within the city. The house is privately owned.

feature that her contemporaries politely forbore to mention: her eyes were polychromatic, one brown, the other blue. Socially, the quick-witted and learned Miss Evans was adept, although some of her acquaintance found her gaze too keen for their comfort.[275]

It was in New York that Evans met and became engaged to a scholarly young journalist. James Reed Spalding, a correspondent and editor with the New York *Morning Courier and Enquirer*, shared Evans's passion to spread Christian influence via the printed word. [276] James Derby described him as "a grave, taciturn man, of large frame and powerful intellect"; the publisher considered him a "great soul."[277] If so, Spalding resembled Evans's fictional heroes, and the two appeared well-matched in intellect and temperament. The engagement was, nevertheless, surprising in view of the sectional tensions that gripped the nation on the eve of the Civil War, for Evans was a passionate Confederate patriot while her fiancé leaned politically in the direction of the Republicans. In the same year that he met Evans, Spalding would become founding editor of the New York *World*, which began publication in January 1860. Essentially a religious paper, the *World* supported President Lincoln's prosecution of the war.[278]

Augusta's engagement was, in fact, short-lived. Toward the end of 1860, as the nation hurtled toward war, she ended her engagement to Spalding. In November she wrote an indignant letter to her aunt, denying that her former fiancé was "Black Republican," and expressing her anger that the news of her engagement had spread outside the family. "Think of having the whole matter in the mouths of gossips, at such a

[275] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 82, 157.
[276] Fidler misspells Spalding's name as 'Spaulding.'
[277] Derby, *Fifty Years Among Authors*, 726.
[278] The *World* continued publication until 1931, and became highly influential, but also took on a more sensationalist cast, after its purchase by Joseph Pulitzer in 1882.

time as this. If he [Mr. Benning, the family friend who had announced Evans's marriage as a fait accompli] had merely mentioned the possibility of my marriage, and not branded his name as "Black Republican" I would not have been so grieved. To have my name so associated by the members of the Legislature in Millegeville [sic]!"[279]

Evans's concern for her reputation among Georgia politicians is significant. Just days before she had penned her irate epistle, the state legislature had met to debate the possibility of secession.[280] Evans, a Georgia native who maintained contact with her family there, considered herself "a most uncompromising secessionist," and she was anxious that her Confederate credentials be above question.[281] The Civil War years, moreover, were the most politically conscious and active of Augusta's life. She volunteered her services not only as an organizer and nurse (common activities for Confederate women), but also as a propagandist. Moreover, she carried on a lengthy correspondence with two noted Confederate leaders, General P.G.T. Beauregard and Alabama congressman J.L.M. Curry, tendering her views on military and political subjects. (Augusta's commitment to "separate spheres" ideology had never precluded an interest in politics.) Her general tone in these letters is self-assured, although she

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[279] The 'Mr. Benning' of this letter is almost certainly Henry Benning of Fort Benning, Georgia, who would at the time have been in Milledgeville, along with much of the rest of Georgia's political leadership, giving speeches on secession. Augusta Jane Evans, probably to Mary Howard Jones of Columbus, Georgia, sister of Sarah Howard Evans, 26 November 1860, in Rebecca Grant Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters: The Correspondence of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 23.

[280] Milledgeville was then the state capitol of Georgia. The legislators debated from November 7 (several hours before they had received confirmation of Lincoln's electoral victory) to November 20. Deciding that such a grave matter should be debated by the citizenry, the legislators unanimously voted to hold a secession convention, which they scheduled for January 16, 1861. Georgia would leave the Union on January 19, eight days after Alabama seceded. William W. Freehling and Craig M. Simpson, eds., *Secession Debated: Georgia's Showdown in 1860* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), xi-xviii.

[281] Augusta Jane Evans to Mrs. L. V. (Lucy Virginia) French, 13 January 1861, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 28.

occasionally expressed diffidence or frustration over the limits of her contributions as a woman. "It is not my privilege to enter the ranks, wielding a sword, in my country's cause," she wrote General Beauregard, "but all that my feeble, womanly pen could contribute to the consummation of our freedom, I have humbly, but at least, faithfully and untiringly endeavored to achieve." Such an acknowledgement of womanly weakness, however, was conventional, and in the same letter Evans also suggested that woman's sphere might resemble Pascal's, "one of which the centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere."[282]

Evans's career as propagandist for the South predated the war. In October and November of 1859, she published a series of four articles in the Mobile *Daily Advertiser*. The first two were entitled "Northern Literature," and the second "Southern Literature." In these pieces, Evans depicted Northern culture as cold, mercenary and manipulative, Southern culture as warm, humane, and heartfelt.[283] It was a standard apologetic for the South in the increasingly divisive climate of the 1850s, and Evans had expressed similar views in her correspondence with Harriss in 1856.[284] After the war had started, Evans published additional articles in support of the Confederacy, including an open letter to historian John Lothrop Motley, published in the *Mobile Advertiser and Register*, and "The Mutilation of the Hermae," published in the *Gulf City Home Journal*. In this second article, she described the damage mysteriously inflicted on statues of Hermes in

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[282] Augusta Jane Evans to P.G.T. Beauregard, 4 August 1862, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 42.
[283] Although the articles are unsigned, Fidler states that they are almost certainly the work of Evans. They appeared in the *Advertiser* on October 11 and 18 ("Northern Literature"), and October 30 and November 6 ("Southern Literature") of 1859. For a discussion of these articles, see Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 70-72, and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, ed., Introduction, *Beulah*, xxii-xxiii.
[284] "O thank God for this beautiful world! I would not be a cold-blooded, colder-hearted, narrow-minded, soul-bound Northerner, for all the jewels in Golconda! Take them as a class, and they have no more use for Nature, than a Hindoo idol, save the strictly utilitarian end!" Augusta Jane Evans to Walter Clopton Harriss, 22 April 1856, in Frear, "You My Brother," 133.

Athens, prior to the Athenian campaign against Sicily in 415 B.C.E. She then compared this sacrilege to the mutilation of the United States Constitution by Northern politicians.[285] Articles such as these, commenting on contemporary culture and public affairs, were Evans's sole published work apart from her novels.

Evans's major literary production during the war was a third novel, *Macaria; or Altars of Sacrifice*. *Macaria* bears the marks of the stressful conditions under which the author wrote it. The novel was scratched out on wrapping paper between nursing stints (Evans had turned a building on her property into a hospital), auxiliary activities, short trips, and entertainment of visitors at Georgia Cottage. Although actual fighting did not take place in the vicinity of Mobile until 1864, Evans worried for the safety of her brothers Howard and Vivian, who were serving in the Third Alabama Regiment. Still, she found the time and energy to pen a novel that would both glorify the Confederacy and, once again, serve as a witness to Christianity.

Repetitive and often strained, *Macaria* often bears a closer resemblance to its oldest sibling, *Inez*, than to *Beulah*. Evans was once again writing from an ideological stance, rather than drawing inspiration from a personal odyssey. She herself, however, considered her new production "on the whole, superior to "Beulah."[286] Many of her readers, both Northern and Southern, evidently shared her approbation.[287] The novel, published in separate editions in the Confederacy (1864, by West and Johnson) and the

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[285] The *Advertiser* had merged with the *Mobile Daily Register* in 1861. Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 21 August 1861, *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*; "The Mutilation of the Hermae," 9 November 1862, *Gulf City Home Journal*.
[286] Augusta Jane Evans to J.L.M Curry, 15 July 1863, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 68.
[287] "My new book brings me many letters of congratulations, and I am much gratified and rejoiced at the flattering criticisms upon it," Augusta wrote her friend Rachel Lyons on May 1, 1864. "Every one pronounces it superior to 'Beulah', and I trust when you have carefully read it, you will give me your opinion frankly considering its merits and defects." Augusta Jane Evans to Rachel Lyons, 1 May 1864, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 102.

Union (1864, by Michael Doolady), sold well given the exigencies of wartime.[288] One Union general in Tennessee, George H. Thomas (known as the "Rock of Chickamauga"), famously prohibited his troops from reading *Macaria* and, pronouncing it "contraband and dangerous," burned every copy he could find.[289] Part of the appeal of the novel certainly lay in its author's careful use of actual Civil War events for her highly romantic story (she obtained a detailed account of the battles of Bull Run [Manassas] from her friend General Beauregard).[290] Yet *Macaria* was not merely a propaganda novel, nor a wartime drama. It was, like all of Evans's work, a tale of Christian conversion. From a literary point of view, *Macaria* is significant in that it breaks with the antebellum formula for popular domestic fiction: the happy ending with the heroine's marriage to the hero. In a bow to an all-too-common reality of the war, Evans decided that her hero would be killed in battle, while her two heroines remained unmarried and opened a school.

Like those of most of her fellow Confederate patriots, Evans's spirits sank as she saw the tide turn against the Confederacy in the final years of the war. She maintained a heroic belief that the righteous cause would ultimately triumph, despite earthly defeat, and her letters to her friend Rachel Lyons even have a gay quality as she describes her enjoyment of gardening and of the company of military officers.[291] In July 1864, however, Augusta's brother Howard was badly wounded and subsequently became ill with typhus. She traveled to Columbus, where Howard was hospitalized, and brought

[288] William Perry Fidler states that the earliest edition of *Macaria* was printed by Walker, Evans, and Cogswell in 1863, using wrapping paper and wall paper. Since no copy of this edition has ever been located, the 1864 edition by West and Johnson is considered the first edition. Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 106; Drew Gilpin Faust, "A Note on Editions of *Macaria*," in *Macaria*, by Evans (Wilson), xxvii.
[289] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 107.
[290] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 106.
[291] Augusta Evans (Wilson) to General Beauregard, 14 December 1863, and Augusta Evans (Wilson) to Rachel Lyons, 18 March 1864, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 89-90, 100.

him back to Georgia Cottage where she nursed him devotedly. "I am almost worn out with watching and anxiety," she wrote Rachel Lyons, "but trust the worst is over and our dear sufferer will rapidly improve." Howard survived, but his arm and shoulder were paralyzed and his memory impaired by the typhoid fever. He would eventually recover his memory and some use of his arm, but he remained permanently disabled.[292] His convalescence, and Augusta's care for him, intensified a strong attachment between brother and sister that would endure throughout their lives.

At the end of the Civil War, Evans, like most Mobile citizens, was exhausted and impoverished, her earnings from *Beulah* having been decimated by her expenses during the war. She was also desolate, feeling that she had lost her homeland.[293] She wrote to her friend J.L.M. Curry, "Sometimes I shudder at the bitter, bitter feelings I find smoldering in my heart. I believe I loved our cause as a Jesuit his order, and its utter ruin has saddened and crushed me, as no other event of my life had power to do."[294] Hopeless about the future of "this so-called Republic," she considered removing permanently to Europe or Mexico.[295]

Instead of exiling herself, however, Evans remained in Mobile and undertook various activities to memorialize her beloved lost cause. She considered a campaign to designate April 15 as a memorial day to the Confederate dead, raised funds for a memorial monument to slain Confederate soldiers in Mobile, and undertook to write a

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[292] Augusta Jane Evans to Rachel Lyons, 24 September 1864, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 105; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 122, 146.
[293] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Hon. J.L.M. Curry, 7 October 1865, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 109.
[294] Here is the first positive reference to Catholicism in Evans's writings. Augusta Jane Evans to J.L.M. Curry, 7 October, 1865, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 109.
[295] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Mrs. J. K Chrisman, 3 February 1866, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 116.

history of the Confederacy. In preparation for this last project, the author's first and only attempt at writing history, she had General Beauregard send her official documentation and records from his military service. These efforts produced little more success than the cause which had inspired them. Evans never pursued the "Memorial Day" proposal. The monument was not erected until 1874, and it was a simple shaft of granite, not the grand memorial in Talladega marble that Evans had envisioned. She had hoped the monument would be erected in a beautiful public park on the outskirts of the city. Instead, it was placed in Magnolia Cemetery, a municipal cemetery, where it was overshadowed by the more elaborate "Confederate Rest" memorial. As for her epic history of the Confederacy, Evans reluctantly abandoned the project on learning that former Confederate vice-president Alexander Stephens had taken on the same labor.[296]

With her zeal for the Confederacy, her elite social status, and her high idealism, Evans might be thought a prime candidate to become a life-long devotee of the "Lost Cause." In 1866 she certainly considered the defeat of the infant nation a blow from which she could never recover. "I feel as if my heart were inurned," she wrote a friend, "with my country's flag, and my people's freedom. I am not patient, – I am not reconciled, I am not philosophically or religiously resigned – and I never shall be!"[297] Yet Evans did, over time, become resigned to what she recognized as a permanent defeat. She never joined the organizations founded at the end of the nineteenth century to promote the "Lost Cause," such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and she

[296] Augusta Jane Evans to Curry, 15 April 1866, and to unidentified recipient, 20 June, 1866; Augusta Jane Evans to Beauregard, 20 November, 1867, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 117-118, 125,144; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 120-121; "The Story of Magnolia Cemetery," *Welcome to Mobile, Alabama: The Official Website of the City of Mobile, Alabama*, 1999-2006, http://www.cityofmobile.org/parks/magnoliacememtery.php, 7/2/2006.

[297] Augusta Jane Evans to unidentified recipient, 20 June, 1866, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 125.

finally relinquished her bitterness toward Northerners. In her last full-length novel, *A Speckled Bird* (1902), Evans would portray a permanently embittered ex-Confederate, the war widow Mrs. Maurice, as a noble but overly rigid woman.

If Evans had lost her country, she retained her faith and her sense of religious mission. As early as the beginning of 1866, she had begun to work on a fourth novel.[298] This latest project was, like *Inez* and *Beulah*, a combination of romance and conversion story. It contained a new element, in that Evans made her male protagonist an anti-hero. He was not only a skeptic (prior to his return to the Christian faith), but depraved and cruel. Evans engaged in cultural commentary in this new work, but apart from launching an occasional dart at the United States as a "*soi-disant* republic," she eschewed politics. She wrote rapidly, and by December of 1866 advance copies were already in the hands of reviewers.[299]

St. Elmo, published by G.W. Carleton in 1867, created a sensation when it appeared, and it remains Evans's best-known novel.[300] According to Evans's biographer, this newest novel "ranked after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as the most astonishing American literary bonanza up to that time." According to the New York Daily *Tribune*, Carleton reported in December of 1866 that it was unable to keep up with orders, and claimed in March of 1867 that a million people had read the novel.[301] Sales figures for the nineteenth century are unreliable, but one gauge of the popularity of *St. Elmo* is the late nineteenth-century vogue in naming places, persons, and things after the novel.

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[298] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 125; Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to unidentified recipient, 20 June 1866, in Sexton, ed., 125.
[299] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 127.
[300] Like Mary Virginia Terhune, Evans Wilson had been obliged to find a new publisher after the failure of Derby and Jackson.
[301] New York Daily *Tribune*, 13 December 1866 and 28 March 1867, in Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 129.

Steamboats, hotels, and railway coaches were dubbed "St. Elmo," as were a punch, a cigar, a camellia, and several prize-winning dogs. A large number of children were christened "Edna Earle" or "St. Elmo" in honor of the novel's heroine and hero, and a number of family estates were given the name "Le Bocage," after St. Elmo's family home.[302]

With the spectacular success of *St. Elmo*, Evans regained her earlier wealth.[303] She would remain wealthy to the end of her life, yet her early experience of deprivation left a lifelong mark on her. Long after she had made her fortune, she avoided investing in real estate, and she was always careful to carry a purse containing a hundred dollars.[304] A letter Evans wrote to her publisher, George W. Carleton, in the 1880s reveals by its elaborate coyness both her ongoing sense of financial insecurity and her discomfort in discussing money:

> And now my dear Sir, can you possibly goad your imagination to conjecture what prosaic memory flutters through my brain at the approach of the 1st of July? Pray do not deem me hopeless mercenary and ignobly avaricious, because I carry the virtue of punctuality to the infallible perfection of never forgetting when payments of filthy lucre are due. The height of my ambition, (as regards sublunary matters) is to attain that sublime niche in financial architecture where I can with supreme contempt banish every thought of the existence of the 1st of July!![305]

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[302] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 128-129.
[303] Her poverty had been considerably alleviated in late 1865, when with the aid of her friend and former publisher J.C. Derby she received royalties from sales of the northern edition of *Macaria*. She received no royalties for the southern edition, as the publisher had gone bankrupt during the war. Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 106-107, 123.
[304] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 20.
[305] The letter has no year, but it makes reference to Mary Virginia Terhune's *Loiterings in Pleasant Paths*, published in 1880. Augusta Evans Wilson to George W. Carleton, 25 June 1880+, Augusta Evans Wilson Papers, Overbury Manuscript Collection, Barnard College Library, New York, NY. The letter is printed in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 164.

An additional shadow lay over Augusta's post-war years: her father's health had continued to deteriorate during the war, and by 1866 he was a virtual invalid. Augusta nursed him as she had for years, and continued to shoulder responsibility for the family's financial well-being. Evans's biographer suggests that the need to earn money, given Matt Evans's disability, was one reason Augusta set aside her ambition to write a history of the Confederacy and returned to writing novels, a proven source of revenue. In addition, her brother Vivian, although unhurt during the war, had difficulty finding remunerative employment in Reconstruction-era Mobile.[306] It is likely that novel-writing was associated in Augusta's mind with financial distress. It is also possible that Matt's professional failures, which were in part the consequence of his poor judgment in business matters, aroused some unexpressed resentment in his daughter. Her fictional heroes are forceful, passionate men of keen intellect, quite unlike her genial and easygoing father. However, Augusta was loyal to her father, and appears to have loved him. She would dedicate her fifth novel, *Vashti* (1869), to him.

In the late 1860s, Augusta was once again being courted. Her newest suitor was Colonel Lorenzo Madison Wilson, a widower and prosperous businessman. He was a handsome, imposing, but kindly man in his sixties; his light blue eyes, dark hair and vigorous manner made him appear much younger. Wilson's grand estate, Ashland, was located on Springhill Avenue near Georgia Cottage, and the Evans and Wilson families had been friendly for a number of years. Augusta had helped to nurse the first Mrs. Wilson through her fatal illness of 1862, and the families seem to have become closer in

[306] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 124-125. In addition to grief for her father, Evans was heartbroken when Vivian's one-year-old daughter and her namesake, Augusta (Gussie) Evans, died in January of 1867. Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 147.

the mid-1860s. By early 1868 Miss Evans and Col. Wilson were courting.[307] Evans, however, refused to marry while her father lived, in deference to Matt Evans's opposition to his daughter's marrying a man four months older than himself. Matt, however, was nearing the end of his long illness, and he died on August 27, 1868.

On December 2, 1868, Augusta Evans married Col. Wilson. Following her wedding, a quiet ceremony at Georgia Cottage, the new Mrs. Wilson moved into the spacious Ashland mansion, where her husband lived with his youngest daughter Frances (Fannie), aged thirteen. Lorenzo had three older children: Albert Wilson, aged twenty-five and married, Mary Wilson Cox, aged twenty-one and also married, and Louis Madison Wilson, nineteen, who married only a month after his father's re-marriage. The new stepmother appears to have been on good terms with her stepchildren, and she became particularly close to Fannie whom she helped to raise.[308]

The Wilsons appear to have been contented in their marriage. Augusta and her husband shared a love of gardening and of animals, and they cultivated flowers together at their estate, even developing some new varieties of camellias. Augusta enjoyed her role as mistress of magnificent Ashland, and she continued to follow her avocation as a volunteer nurse, sang in the choir at the St. Francis Street Methodist Church, and supported a number of Mobile charities (she contributed to the founding of the Nonsectarian Infirmary of Mobile).[309] Lorenzo did have some masculine predilections that his wife disliked and portrayed as dissolute in her fiction: he was fond of horse-racing and cock-fighting. Fidler suggests that Augusta's personal standards were more

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[307] "Colonel" was an honorary title, used by all except Augusta. Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 148-149.
[308] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 151.
[309] One pink camellia the couple bred was quite unusual in that it had a fragrance. It was named "Augusta Evans Wilson." Ibid., 153-156, 160, 173.

relaxed than those of her novels, for she continued to believe that art should portray an elevated rather than a realistic view of life. In real life, if she could not approve of some of her husband's pastimes, she could at least tolerate them.[310]

Lorenzo, for his part, may have been somewhat uncomfortable with his wife's authorial career, but he was evidently proud of her success and the income her books could command. By the time of her marriage, she had almost completed her fifth novel, *Vashti*. Once the beautifully written manuscript was finished (Evans Wilson's handwriting was almost flawless), Lorenzo had it bound in leather. He then eagerly displayed it to visitors at Ashland. When Augusta received an astonishing advance payment of $15,000 for *Vashti* from her publisher, Carleton, her husband carried the check downtown to show off to his business friends. Augusta decided to send the full amount to her mother as a gift, and Lorenzo, loath to relinquish his trophy, had a facsimile made before depositing it in his wife's name.[311]

"Evans-Wilson" (the hyphenated name appeared on a number of her published works) continued to write novels after her marriage, although at a much slower pace. *Vashti: or Until Death Us Do Part* had been published in 1869, *Infelice* appeared in 1875, and *At the Mercy of Tiberius* in 1887. These novels explored variations on the same themes that had been central to the novelist's earlier works: skepticism vs. faith, the nature and role of women, the power of both nature and art to elevate the soul. *Vashti* resembles *Macaria* in that it has one hero and two heroines, and all three are denied a happy marriage. The title character is caught in a miserable marriage, but refuses to consider a divorce from her deceitful and dissolute husband. As the subtitle indicates,

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[310] Ibid., 136, 158.
[311] Ibid., 167-168, 172.

Evans Wilson was taking a religious stand for the sacredness and permanence of the marriage bond, and she was part of a larger reaction against the rising rate of divorce in the postbellum era.[312] *Vashti* also contains a conversion drama similar to that of *St. Elmo*, but with the gender roles reversed. The second heroine, Salome, is so malicious and self-centered that she herself comes to believe that she is demon-possessed. She is eventually converted through the influence of the serenely Christian hero, Ulpian Gray. It was the first time the author had created a wicked female protagonist. *Infelice*, the least known of Evans Wilson's novels, is a melodrama about an actress who uses her art to expose her bigamous husband. Augusta dedicated the novel to husband and her mother. *At the Mercy of Tiberius*, which Evans Wilson dedicated to her then-deceased mother, is a mystery story with a degree of realism and local color that was unusual for the author. Evans Wilson usually avoided regional references in an attempt to produce novels that would have universal appeal.

The slowing of Evans Wilson's authorial career appears to have been caused by a combination of factors.[313] From her teenaged years, she had been committed to a wide variety of activities and interests, including nursing, church, and charitable work as well as writing and vociferous reading, and she had never been strong. Like many of her

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[312] Norma Basch, *Framing American Divorce: From the Revolutionary Generation to the Victorians* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999), 80.

[313] The decline in Evans-Wilson's production has been variously interpreted by scholars. Her biographer Fidler notes the variety of her activities, her health limitations, and her domestic responsibilities. Mary Kelley notes that she was no longer goaded by financial necessity, and argues that she accepted the traditional housewifely role. Drew Gilpin Faust, quoting Evans's letter describing her decision to abandon her history of the Confederacy, argues that Evans-Wilson's belief in female self-sacrifice led her to "strangle" her literary ambitions. Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 175, 181-182l; Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 174. Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to P.G.T. Beauregard, 20 November 1867, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 144-145; Faust, Introduction, *Macaria*, xxvi.

fictional heroines, Augusta had a tendency to overwork to the point of exhaustion.[314] In 1870, her health deteriorated to the point where her husband demanded that she cut back. She subsequently spent shorter hours in writing and study, and gave up nursing in favor of encouraging younger women to take up nursing as a vocation.[315] Augusta also had responsibility for managing Ashland; she accepted her domestic role and moreover took great pleasure in cultivating flowers and managing the livestock on the estate. In addition, the financial need that had originally motivated the teenaged Evans to take up her pen was no longer present, even if she retained a subjective sense of financial insecurity.

Evans Wilson's religious motivation for writing, of course, remained. In the vivid memory of her personal struggle with skepticism, she had vowed to combat this spiritual "upas tree" (the reputedly poisonous tree was one of her favorite metaphors) until death, but her crusader's zeal may have cooled over the years. It is also true that Evans Wilson's solution to the crisis of belief, that is, her decision to rest on the "Ararat" of faith, offered limited possibilities for artistic development. Her later novels address some of the social and political issues of the age, including divorce, labor strife, and woman suffrage, but she did not wrestle at length with the great intellectual challenges to religion in the late nineteenth century: the growing divide between science (particularly Darwinism) and faith, and the increasing acceptance of German higher criticism.[316]

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[314] Beulah Benton and Edna Earle routinely work well into the night, to the point where they are in danger of death. Beulah and other heroines, such as Irene Huntingdon (*Macaria*) and Vashti Carlyle, also court exhaustion and death by long stints of nursing patients suffering from dangerous diseases.

[315] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 173.

[316] Evans Wilson did challenge Darwinism in a couple of passages in *Infelice*, arguing against the theory on intellectual and humanitarian grounds. On an intellectual level, she argued that materialistic science, an ideological "fetiche," failed to address the most basic questions of causality and resorted to abstruse language in order to conceal this failure. On an emotional level, she argued that abstract arguments about

Having counseled her readers to rest on Christian revelation, the author may have felt that she had said all she had to say.

Finally, there are numerous indications in Evans Wilson's work that writing was a moral and personal struggle for her. If the heroines of *Beulah* and *St. Elmo* are portraits of their creator (and both characters resemble the author in temperament and behavior), Evans was ambitious for fame. Ambition, however, was problematic for Augusta, both in terms of her domestic ideology, which asserted that woman's true mission was to exert quiet influence in the home, and of Christianity, with its emphasis on the need for humility and self-sacrifice. In both novels, the heroines are depicted as driven, rather than energized, by their yearning for fame. Beulah and Edna are haunted by the specter of death even as they achieve a solid literary reputation. Both heroines marry men who demand that they give up their writing or, from a different perspective, offer them the opportunity to do so. Given her intensely aesthetic sensibility, Evans Wilson must have found some satisfaction in her literary craft. However, there is little of the sprightly creativity that marks a born storyteller like Mary Virginia Terhune. Evans Wilson seems to have labored over her novels out of a powerful sense of duty, both fiscal and religious, and she probably associated her writing with her experience of poverty and spiritual

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the gradual progression of the species provided no consolation to those grieving the loss of a loved one. "Tormented by aspirations which neither time nor space, force nor matter will realize or satisfy," she exclaimed, ". . . we are invited to seize upon the Barmecide's banquet of 'The Law which formulates organic development as a transformation of the homogenous into the heterogeneous'; and that 'this universal transformation is a change from indefinite homogeneity to definite heterogeneity; and that only when the increasing multiformity is joined in increasing definiteness, does it constitute Evolution . . .' Does this wise and simple pabulum cure spiritual starvation?" Augusta Evans Wilson, *Infelice* (New York: G.W. Carleton, 1875; reprint, New York: A.L. Burt Company, n.d.), 135-136, 184-187 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

anguish.[317] In short, it is quite possible that the famed authoress Augusta Jane Evans Wilson did not particularly like to write. At least, she may have found the process more burdensome than rewarding.

Evans Wilson experienced a series of personal bereavements in an otherwise peaceful married life. In 1871 her stepson Madison quarreled with Braxton Bragg, nephew of the Confederate general of the same name, over the Wilson family's use of mules belonging to the Spring Hill Railroad. The dispute led to Bragg's firing a shot at Madison and killing him. His widow and two daughters came to live at Ashland after his death. The younger Bragg had been courting Augusta's sister Virginia at the time of the duel, and the couple became engaged. Augusta, who had sided with her husband's family in the quarrel, initially opposed the match, although her attachment to her sister eventually induced her to accept her brother-in-law.[318]

A far deeper blow to Augusta was the death of her mother in February of 1878 following a period of illness. Sarah Evans had continued to live at Georgia Cottage after Augusta's marriage, and had been a daily visitor to Ashland. Augusta's emotional attachment to her mother had not diminished, and in an 1885 interview she described herself as emotionally dependent on her devoted parent: "I fear that I shall never see the time when I can do without my mother. . . . . I grew up at her side, she was always with me, and I can not learn to live without her love and counsel."[319] Evans Wilson was

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[317] Michael O'Brien encapsulates Evans's message to her readers, as expressed in *Beulah*, as "go for God and duty." O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 1161.
[318] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 174-176.
[319] J. McCoy, M.D., "Mrs. Augusta Evans Wilson, The Author of Beulah, St. Elmo, Vashti, Infelice, Macaria and Inez – Her Home and Her Health," newspaper clipping, 20 March 1885, Augusta Evans Wilson Papers, Historic Mobile Preservation Society, Mobile, Alabama. The McCoys, lifelong friends of Evans-Wilson, are listed in the membership registry of St. Francis Street Methodist Church. Records of the St. Francis Street Methodist Church, Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon.

unapologetic about her attachment. In her 1902 novel, *A Speckled Bird*, she has her heroine Eglah Kent voice her conviction that such dependence was both natural and desirable. "Women who outgrow the need of their mothers repel me, like museum 'freaks.'"[320]

In 1891, Augusta suffered a third devastating loss when her husband died on October 7 at the age of eighty-three. Feeling unable to live at Ashland without Lorenzo, she eventually moved to a house at 255 State Street in downtown Mobile.[321] She was then fifty-six. Her beloved brother Howard joined her, and the pair would share a home until the end of their lives. In 1894, Augusta and Howard moved to 930 Government Street, also downtown. Here, Augusta wrote her last works, *A Speckled Bird* (1902) and the novelette *Devota* (1907). Augusta dedicated *A Speckled Bird* to her "kind readers" who "have desired and asked me to write again," suggesting that she did not write out of personal desire.[322] If her loyal readers desired an Evans-Wilson novel written in her traditional style, they were not disappointed. *A Speckled Bird* is the story of a young woman devoted to her father, who finally finds romantic love. The conversion theme is less overt than in the author's earlier works, being subtly blended with the love story. It is, withal, a deeply religious work. In this novel, Evans Wilson also explores the questions of woman suffrage, which she opposed, and labor relations. She demonstrates considerable sympathy for laborers, depicting their resort to violence as a tragic but natural reaction to their exploitation by harsh and unscrupulous employers.

[320] Augusta Evans Wilson, *A Speckled Bird* (New York: G. W. Dillingham Company, 1902), 254.
[321] Ashland was destroyed by a fire in 1926.
[322] Evans Wilson, *A Speckled Bird*, epigram.

Evans-Wilson dictated her last short novel, *Devota*, to her niece Lilly Bragg. She was then seventy-two and in poor health, and her eyesight was failing. Although she had originally intended the work for magazine publication (a first for Mrs. Wilson), she consented when her publisher G.W. Dillingham asked her permission to produce the work in book form.[323] *Devota*, only thirteen thousand words long, came out as an ornately decorated volume with large print and mauve-tinted pictures by the popular illustrator Stuart Travis. The story is vintage Evans Wilson, a romance between an elegant hero and heroine, accompanied by a political discussion of capital punishment (which the author opposed) and lush descriptions of natural beauty.

Evans Wilson was by this time near the end of her life. Her decline was probably hastened by her grief over Howard, who passed away on June 5, 1908. Her niece Virginia Bragg and three of her children moved into her home after Howard's death, but Augusta from this point on talked as if she were quietly waiting for her own end. By the spring of 1909 she sensed that death was imminent, and on May 9 she died suddenly of a heart attack.[324]

Evans-Wilson's funeral was a lavish affair, reportedly the largest in Mobile up to that time. For years, she had been considered Alabama's premier author, and she was the literary *grande dame* of her adopted city. Lengthy obituaries appeared in newspapers across the country.[325] Her estate was divided between her relatives and her favorite charities, including the St. Francis Street Methodist Church, Protestant Orphan Asylum,

[323] Dillingham was the successor firm to Carleton.
[324] Ibid., 214-215.
[325] Ibid., 214-215.

and Non-Sectarian Infirmary.[326] Her body was laid to rest in Mobile's Magnolia Cemetery, next to her brother Howard.

[326] "Augusta Evans Wilson's Will," 13 May 1909, newspaper clipping, n.p., Augusta Evans Wilson Papers, Historic Mobile Preservation Society, Mobile, Alabama.

Separate Spheres:

The Relationship of Terhune and Evans Wilson

Mary Virginia Terhune and Augusta Evans Wilson had much in common. Both had achieved literary fame as young women in the 1850s, and they shared a powerful evangelical motive for writing. Each enjoyed continued popularity over the course of a lengthy career, and they explored similar themes of love and faith, feminine identity, and the capacity of both nature and art to uplift the human spirit. They met at least once, they respected each other as authors, and there is no evidence of a professional rivalry. With the exception of the Civil War years, when Evans Wilson rejected Terhune, each woman seems to have entertained a cordial personal regard for the other. Terhune and Evans Wilson did not, however, cultivate a close friendship. The two authors, each considered literary stars of the South, shone from separate corners of the sky.

Evans Wilson came to Terhune's notice with the publication of her first successful novel, *Beulah*, in 1859.[327] Five years older than Evans Wilson both in age and in literary stardom, Terhune welcomed her fellow-author with open arms, privately and publicly. Privately, she traveled from Newark to New York in late 1859 expressly to

[327] It is possible that Terhune was aware of *Inez*, which received a very brief review in the Richmond Presbyterian weekly, *Watchman and Observer*, in which it was described as "a sort of Know-Nothing tale." The commentator added that the Catholic "abominations" described in the novel were undoubtedly true. Since *Inez* was published anonymously, Terhune would not have known of Evans by name until the publication of *Beulah*. "Inez, A Tale of the Alamo," brief entry in "Literary Department" section, *Watchman and Observer* (Richmond), 1 March 1855.

meet the young Evans who, in the wake of *Beulah*'s triumph, was visiting the city.[328] Publicly, Terhune issued a glowing commendation of *Beulah*: "I pronounce it the best work of fiction ever published by a Southern writer . . . No American authoress has ever published a greater book."[329]

The two women impressed each other favorably at the time of their meeting. Evans Wilson later described Terhune to a friend, ". . . I was fascinated by a sort of 'bonhomie', indescribable but irresistible. She impressed me as a genial, impulsive, noble-souled, warm-hearted Southern woman, par excellence . . ."[330] Decades later, Terhune described Evans Wilson in her *Autobiography* with equal warmth: "Meeting Augusta Evans, of *Rutledge* and *St. Elmo* and *Beulah* . . . I was forcibly reminded of my Dorchester friend [popular novelist Maria Cummins] . . . Both were quietly refined in manner and speech, and incredibly unspoiled by the flood of popular favor that had taken each by surprise. Alike, too, was the warmth of cordiality with which both greeted me, a stranger, whom they might never meet again."[331]

This warmth, however, dissolved in the hostilities provoked by the secession crisis and Civil War. It was not to be expected that Evans, who had dissolved her engagement over political differences, would maintain her friendship with the pro-Union Terhune. Her praise of Terhune, quoted above, was in fact a rueful "confession," for by 1862 Evans had learned "with painful emotions of mingled shame and indignation" that her fellow novelist had "deserted the cause of her native state, of the bleeding South, who

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[328] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Janie Tyler, 14 March 1862, quoted in Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 87-88.
[329] Publisher's advertisement of *Beulah*, New York *World*, 14 June, 1860.
[330] Evans (Wilson) to Janie Tyler, 14 March 1862, in Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 87-88.
[331] Terhune erroneously ascribed *Rutledge* (1860), written by Miriam Coles Harris, to Evans. Harland, *Autobiography*, 285.

had felt so proud of her genius . . . [and] remained at the North, living contentedly among the oppressors of the *only free* people left upon the American continent."[332] Significantly, as Terhune scholar Karen Manners Smith has noted, Evans assumed that Terhune was swayed in her politics by her husband's Republicanism. She did not realize that Terhune's personal convictions had always been unwaveringly pro-Union.[333] "I have been told her husband voted for Lincoln," Evans wrote, "but I am amazed that she ever for one instant suffered his abolition views to distort and discolor her own."[334] To Evans, it was unthinkable that a "Southern woman, par excellence" could oppose secession.

Evans probably continued to reject Terhune for as long as her intense bitterness over the defeat of the Confederacy lasted. By the 1880s, her feelings toward her Unionist colleague had thawed, to the point where she was willing to read her writings. She then expressed surprise upon encountering Terhune's darker side. In a letter to her publisher, George W. Carleton, Evans wrote:

> I saw from the papers that Mrs. Holmes had gone to Europe for quite an extended tour.[335] Happy Mrs. Holmes! I sincerely hope she will enjoy her foreign travel more than "Marion Harland" seems to have done, judging from the savage bitterness of the book "Loiterings in Pleasant Paths."[336] Mrs. Terhune is usually so genial, I was surprised at her last crusade.[337]

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[332] Evans (Wilson) to Janie Tyler, 14 March 1862, in Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 87-88.
[333] Manners Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 297.
[334] Evans (Wilson) to Janie Tyler, 14 March 1862, Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 87-88.
[335] Mary Jane Hawes Holmes, another popular novelist of the era. She was not related to Virginia Hawes Terhune.
[336] Carleton published a number of Terhune's books as well as Evans's. *Loiterings in Pleasant Paths*, however, was published in 1880 by Scribner's. Evans's reference to this book provides a clue to the timing of this undated letter.
[337] Evans's surprise indicates that she did not read Terhune's "dismal" post-war novels, such as *Phemie's Temptation*. Augusta Jane Evans Wilson to George W. Carleton, 25 June 1880+, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 164.

Terhune could indeed be acerbic as well as genial, and Evans's comments, while focused on the former, are hardly exaggerated. *Loiterings in Pleasant Paths* describes the two years the Terhunes spend traveling in Europe in the early 1870s. Despite its idyllic title, the account mixes sunny episodes with gloomy, in roughly equal proportions.[338] Moreover, Terhune is often highly critical of British and Europeans, and her humor has a biting quality that may well have struck Evans Wilson as "savage." She lampoons European and especially English ignorance of America, gives a spirited but cutting defense of her country, and is disdainful of many foreign manners and customs. The "Average Briton" is "smug and rotund; in complexion, rubicund; complacent of visage, and a little rolling in gait, being duck-legged." Italians fare as poorly, despite the beauty and grandeur of their country. They are maudlin and manipulative, their Catholicism degraded and absurd. All of this may account for Evans Wilson's reference to Terhune's "crusade."[339] The difference in sensibility also reflects the fact that Terhune

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[338] This journey was designed to help Mrs. Terhune recover from a life-threatening illness, and the tone of many passages gives the impression that its author was fighting depression. It appears, too, that the malicious tendencies Terhune had sought to exorcise as a teenager (through her "holocaust") had been resurrected during this period of prolonged convalescence.

[339] Terhune's account of a conversation with a sympathetic English friend will convey something of her pro-American apologetics:

> "Americans are accused of over-sensitiveness and boastfulness. Is it natural that we should submit tamely to patronage and criticism from those who calmly avow their 'excessive ignorance' of all that pertains to our land and institutions? Can we respect those who assume to teach when they know less upon many subjects than we do? A celebrated English divine once persisted in declaring to my husband that Georgia is a city, not a State. Another informed us that Pennsylvania is the capitol of New England . . . Don't laugh! This is all true, and I have not told you the tenth. The Silver Bill! I have never met another Englishman who knew anything about it!"
>
> My friend laughed, in spite of my injunction.
>
> "It is not 'natural' for Americans to 'submit tamely' to any kind of injustice, I fancy. But be merciful! . . ."

Marion Harland, *Loiterings in Pleasant Paths* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1880), 5, 131.

remained an ardent American patriot, while Evans's capacity for intense devotion to country had died with the Confederacy.

Whatever Evans's misgiving about Terhune at the time of her letter to G.W. Carleton, a second letter written in 1887 shows that she had by then renewed her friendly acquaintance with her colleague. In a brief but friendly business letter to the manager of the American Literary Bureau, a New York publishing company, Evans asked him to present her "kindest regards" to "Mrs. Terhune."[340] There is no evidence of a close friendship, for this letter is the last reference to Terhune in Evans's surviving correspondence, while Terhune's endorsement of *Beulah* and her brief but complimentary description of Evans in her *Autobiography* are the only references to Evans in her papers or published works.

The relationship between the two literary stars, then, ended where it had begun: in mutual professional respect and an affable but not close personal relationship. They had of course always been widely separated by geographical distance, as well as regional and political differences. Even if this had not been the case, however, an intimate friendship between the two would have been unlikely, for they differed vastly in temperament. The strong contrast in their approach to writing reflects this difference, despite the similarity of their literary themes and many of their values. Terhune told stories throughout her life, almost by compulsion. She wrote daily, and when grieving or confused, she wrote through her grief and confusion. She communicated her convictions with a passion equal to that of Evans Wilson, but at times when she could not discern the moral of life as she observed it, she wrote "stories without morals." Evans, while her crusading passion

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[340] Augusta Jane Evans Wilson to Mr. W J Bok, Manager Literary Bureau, 25 July [1887], in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 167.

cooled over the years, remained the idealist. In times of bereavement or confusion, she ceased to write until she had discovered some meaning in her trial, and could convey this resolution to her readers.

Ultimately, the difference separating these two popular authors has a theological quality. Evans Wilson was committed to a pristine heavenly vision, and she challenged her readers to elevate themselves to its level. For today's reader, the rarified atmosphere of Evans Wilson's fiction is too thin. Perched on those heights (so thinks the reader), the crusading author could not breathe life into her narratives. Terhune, too, had a transcendent vision, but when she met with muck she splashed through it doggedly, often angrily, but in company with her equally bespattered readers, until able to reclaim the vision she had almost lost. It is this tolerance for muddiness that makes much of Terhune's writing accessible still, to the grimy denizens of the savage and bitter modern age.

CHAPTER III: SHARING THE VISION:

TERHUNE, EVANS WILSON, AND THE EVANGELICAL IDEAL

Mary Virginia Terhune and Augusta Evans Wilson may be said to *represent*, in every sense of the word, the evangelical culture of the mid-nineteenth century. As well-known public figures of their time, they symbolized and consciously stood for its beliefs. As artists, they sought to present those beliefs in ways that would influence their readers. Terhune and Evans Wilson were, in a sense, elected representatives, for their readers voted them into office by eagerly purchasing their novels. If they were often pious and didactic, their audience did not take offense, for they were preaching and teaching by invitation, and the tales they told confirmed what the majority of their readers already believed. At the same time, Terhune and Evans Wilson played a leadership role in their evangelical culture: their medium of the novel put flesh on the bones of doctrine, and their artistry was sufficient to breathe life into their tales. They not only reflected their evangelical culture, they invigorated it. Thus, like many a popular politician and minister, Terhune and Evans Wilson were both shaped by, and shapers of, the society they lived in.

In many ways, that society was not merely an American subculture, but America itself. Since the beginning of the Second Great Awakening at the turn of the eighteenth century, decades of revival had greatly increased the numbers of church buildings and

ministers, and steadily added to the rolls of church memberships. The majority of Americans were not regular church-goers, even during this heyday of "Christian America," yet the dominant culture was evangelical in color and many non-evangelicals shared in its values.[341] On a larger scale, "Christian America" was one energetic province of an international "evangelical empire" that spanned much of the English-speaking world in the early nineteenth century.[342] That "empire" had outposts in continental Europe as well, for Terhune's evangelical tales were published in published in France and Germany as well as England.[343]

Conversion

In its essential characteristics, nineteenth-century evangelicalism differed little from its modern counterpart. It emphasized personal conversion, belief in the Christian scriptures as divine revelation, and the importance of spreading the faith by word and example. The Christian life was seen as rooted in the conversion of the individual heart, and conversion was often understood as a fairly standardized process. It typically involved a strong conviction of personal sin and anxiety over one's salvation, a decision to turn one's life over to God, and a distinct experience of God's grace that marked the beginning of a new life in Christ. The second of these stages implies that human will was integral to the conversion process, and this belief marked a widespread rejection of orthodox Calvinism, which had denied any role for human agency. The popular

[341] Religious historian Mark Noll has argued that the "ethos" of the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century was evangelical. Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 220-222.
[342] As Noll has noted, British and European travelers to America were almost invariably impressed by the religious fervor of Americans. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the U.S. and Canada*, 221.
[343] Publisher's advertisements for *Nemesis*, *World* (New York), 18 August 1860, 22 August 1860.

Presbyterian evangelist Charles Grandison Finney (1792 – 1875) explicitly taught that conversion could be produced through human means, and this heterodoxy eventually led to the 1837 schism of the American Presbyterian Church into "New School" and "Old School" factions.[344] Yet the heretical belief in human free will thrived even in such an Old School stronghold as Richmond, Virginia, as Mary Virginia Terhune's writings amply attest.

Evangelist and storyteller though she was, Mary Virginia Terhune was highly reticent about her own conversion experience. This near silence, however, is itself an indication of the importance of this event held for her, for she was always reserved about the most deeply personal aspects of her life. "Marion Harland" did write the story of her conversion at some point toward the end of her life, but she did not publish it. Her daughter Christine found the manuscript among her mother's papers after her death, and had it published in the Presbyterian magazine *The Continent*. The essay was entitled, "When I Was Only Twelve."[345]

Terhune's conversion experience took place during her stay at Hampden-Sydney College, in the fall of 1842 and winter of 1843. She was then on the verge of adolescence and was deeply impressed by the intense religious and intellectual atmosphere at the college and its associated divinity school, Union Theological Seminary. The atmosphere was intensified by a revival that was taking place in the area at that time. According to

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[344] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 460-461.

[345] In actuality, Terhune was probably a couple of months shy of twelve. She describes the incident as taking place during the autumn, and she was at Hampden-Sydney in the fall of 1842 and the winter of 1843 (her diary includes a letter from her mother dated 5 December 1842). By the fall of 1843, Terhune was at Mrs. Nottingham's school in Richmond, whence she wrote a letter to her friend Virginia Eppes Dance on October 15, 1843. Judith Anna Smith Hawes to Mary Virginia Hawes, 5 December 1842, at beginning of Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," p. 2 of Tms of letter; Mary Virginia Hawes to Virginia Eppes Dance, 15 October, 1843, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

her memoir, Terhune was also affected by the belief, widespread in her Presbyterian culture, in "the absolute necessity of a certain process of conversion." This belief led its adherents to apply a certain amount of pressure to those deemed unconverted, often accompanied by the fearful prospect of hellfire. "The gentlest and most charitable of Christians believed in hell as devoutly as in heaven," Terhune later recalled.

The pressure to convert increased, Terhune explained, as young people approached an unspecified "age of accountability," and at Hampden-Sydney the intelligent twelve-year-old found herself successively challenged by her former tutor James Naylor, the church pastor "Dr. Swanson," and her current tutor Robert Reid Howison, who preached an uncharacteristically stern sermon on the destruction of transgressors (probably based on Psalm 37:38) just as his young charge became increasingly apprehensive over her fate. Even her gentle sister Mea, who had never spoken to her before on the subject of her soul, counseled her to "give my heart to the Saviour."

Ginny believed in her need for conversion, and also in the threat of hellfire, a prospect that had terrified her even when she was a small child. Emotionally, however, she resisted. When Naylor accused her of being "ashamed" of Christ, she protested inwardly. "In the bottom of my shivering soul I knew that I loved the Friend of sinners. Had I been called upon at that instant to choose between 'confessing' this love, or going to the stake, I should have given my young body to be burned." Howison's fierce sermon sent her to her Aunt Rice's home feeling "sullen, discouraged, resentful." She refused to read the four tracts that had been given her that day, each urging her to a spiritual

"awakening." Her own spirit only sank further at suppertime, as she looked about the table and "reflected that I was the only unregenerate creature there."

The turning point came in the small hours of the morning, when Virginia was alone. She awoke suddenly at about four o'clock, slipped silently to the window, gazed out upon a breathtakingly beautiful nightscape, and experienced an inner transformation:

> The harvest moon was bright; the world was still; from the garden there arose the scent of dew-drenched roses. The stars were dying before the spreading glory of the eastern horizon.
>
> "My Father made it all!"
>
> The quotation came, unbidden, to thought and lips, and with it revelation. In the exaltation of the instant I fancied I could see that Father's face and on it a smile of affectionate amusement! There was no irreverence in the imagination:
>
> "You have been seeking me, sorrowing, and all the while I am here! The loving, pitying Father, more ready to answer than you are to call. Dear child! always and everywhere my child. Trust that love and rest in it! Tears and anguish and fear are doubts of it."
>
> I felt all this without formulating it.

Virginia crawled back into bed, at peace, just as the sun was rising. She recalled that her new spiritual state was apparently detected by those around her, for while they forbore to ask her what had happened, the pressures to convert ceased.[346]

In the following years, Virginia herself made continual efforts, to the point of pressure, at bringing about the conversion of one of her best friends, Virginia Eppes Dance. The two girls met while the Hawes family lived at Powhatan Court House, and Virginia spent many happy hours at Homestead, the Dance family house, in the company of "Eppes," her brother Powhatan ("Powhie"), and her parents. After the Haweses had moved to Richmond, Virginia corresponded regularly with her friend, visited Homestead in the summer, and saw her when Eppes came to Richmond. The relationship between

[346] Harland, "When I Was Only Twelve," 411, 414.

the two Virginias resembles the intense, quasi-romantic friendships described by Caroll Smith-Rosenberg.[347] Virginia expressed joy in her companionship with Eppes, longing for her when they were separated, and she wrote several poems on their friendship.

Virginia's lengthy letters to "My dear Eppes" are sometimes heartfelt and serious, sometimes chatty and playful. She frequently scolds Dance, only partly in jest, for being a less diligent correspondent than herself. The "Eppes" letters express the seriousness of Virginia's religious commitment. She often shared her religious musings, impressions of sermons she had heard, and news about Second Presbyterian Church. Her concern for the state of Eppes's soul, however, does not become evident in her correspondence until 1848, when Virginia was nearly eighteen, and it was apparently prompted by Eppes's complaints of depression and inner emptiness. The budding evangelist wrote, "My dear friend, I tell you that these longings, this constant desire are but the workings of the immortal soul within you. Is it strange that a caged eagle should pine for the pure air of heaven?" And she urged Eppes to seek the mercy of Christ. "Eppes, you will never be happy until you consent to accept the offers that he graciously extends to you. You think yourself unworthy, you say. Christ did not die for the righteous but for those who like you feel that their guilt has forfeited his mercy – You have heard this again and again, why repeat it." Virginia's anxiety for Eppes's salvation sprang from her love for her, she assured her friend: "I cannot say half that I feel. You may have thought me indifferent to your eternal welfare, but there are few subjects that weigh more heavily upon my heart

[347] Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relationships Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs: The Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, I (1975), 1-30.

than this. Never do I pray without a thought of you, my daily petition is that we who are united in all else, may no longer be divided in this."[348]

Over the next several years, Virginia repeatedly urged Eppes to convert. She believed Eppes had the freedom to choose conversion, and that she herself had the power to influence her friend's decision. Virginia's entreaties were, for the most part, solicitous and affectionate, and she often emphasized her own spiritual weakness. "Forgive me, dearest, if I have wearied or pained you," she wrote in her first plea. You know how deeply I love you. Concern for you alone has made me write this."[349] The following month, she sent Eppes a rueful admission. "I am suffering tonight with what do you think? A most woeful depression of spirits. 'Aha!' I hear you say, 'so you are not always proof against what you deprecate in others.' I plead guilty for once, but I have had much lately to make me sad. You have no idea how much I miss my sister. We have never been separated before . . ." Virginia ended this missive with a heartfelt plea: "Do come soon, very soon. I am so lonely!"[350] In 1852, she wrote another self-deprecating appeal for Eppes's conversion, "It is not as if some experienced Christian were to warn and instruct you, then you might shrink with the consciousness of inferiority and 'wounded pride' which many call humility. But from one so faulty, so unworthy, still a puny babe in leading strings, from one more sinful than yourself, you surely cannot resent my pleadings. I would have you 'come to Jesus', love – Could you but know the deep, deep fountain of peace that such an approach opens , when the babe of which I spoke

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[348] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 9 October 1848, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[349] Ibid.
[350] In response to Samuel Hawes's concerns about the family finances, Virginia's sister Mea had taken a position as an assistant teacher at a female seminary in Scottsville. Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 31 October 1848, p. 79 of Tms; Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 29 November, 1848, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

looks to Him its Parent for everything, feeling its own helplessness and His might. This is all that I can do – lie at his feet and stammer forth his name."[351]

While Virginia did not seek to terrify her friend into conversion, there were times when she hinted darkly at the dangers awaiting those whom death found unprepared. Such reflections were usually prompted by the serious illness or death of an acquaintance. In reporting the sudden death of a neighbor's young son, she exclaimed, "'In the midst of life we are in death', and how fearful a doom to those who are found unprepared!"[352] In a later letter, Virginia took a more direct tack. Reporting that her friend Ginny Dennison was close to death, she urged Virginia not to put off repentance until she was on a sick bed. "Take the word of one who has known what sickness is, and believe that neither mind nor body can bear such meditations then. There has been mortality with you too – do not these providences warn the living?"[353]

In 1852, Virginia's urgings as well as her hopes intensified. The February 14, 1852 letter (written while a revival was taking place at Second Presbyterian), contained an extended plea for Eppes's conversion. In September of that year, Virginia wrote Eppes a letter almost entirely devoted to the subject (the letter is four pages, the usual length of an epistle to Eppes). Eppes was again suffering from feelings of worthlessness and sadness, and Virginia responded: "Need I say that the blinding tears came fast as I read to the melancholy close [of Eppes's letter], that for the thousandth time a fervent prayer swelled up from my heart of heart – "Father! show her Thyself, bring her to thee!"

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[351] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 14 February, 1852, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[352] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 15 February, 1849, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[353] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 14 November, 1852, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

Virginia's mounting frustration became evident. "Oh why cannot you throw yourself in His extended arms, accept the bleeding love that our Divine Redeemer offers, freely, oh how freely! You say you are moved but still do not <u>feel</u> – how is this? surely, surely you are not still waiting for stronger convictions?" She then reminded Eppes of her earlier statement that she (Eppes) would convert if she saw a change in her brother Powhie, and she pointed out that "wild and improbable as it then appeared," Powhie had indeed converted. "Can you mistake the meaning of these striking manifestations of goodness in the Heaven of prayer?" Virginia asked her friend. She told Eppes that Mr. Hoge had recently preached a sermon on near conversion entitled, "Almost Thou Persuadest Me to Be a Christian," and that portions of it were applicable to Eppes's case. "But sermons cannot benefit you, prayers cannot advance you one step in the right path, you are literally beyond the reach of human help – but one remedy can avail, my beloved . . . . Were this my last sentence to you it should still be – "come to Jesus!"[354] In her next letter, written in November, Virginia repeated her passionate appeal. "I try to school myself not to hope or I should rather say not to expect, yet the conviction clings to me that <u>now</u> is your accepted time, that another season equally propitious can never come."[355]

Yet the apparent "accepted time" passed without producing a change in Eppes. Virginia continued to press her friend to convert, although her appeals became somewhat less profuse. The death of her beloved cousin Mollie moved her to muse that religion was the one unchanging reality in life, and to spur both herself and Eppes to "look to it

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[354] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 22 September, 1852, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

[355] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 14 November, 1852, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

for every joy, and cling to it for every comfort."[356] Despite Eppes's non-conversion, Virginia treated her as a spiritual companion, confiding in her about her own difficulties with distraction during prayer, her religious dreams, and her feelings about the success of *Alone*.[357] By the mid-1850s, she had ceased to expect an imminent change of heart in her friend.

Yet Eppes did experience a conversion, at last, in the summer of 1855. Virginia was in Glenwood, New York, at the time, staying with the family of her publisher J.C. Derby in the wake of the success *The Hidden Path*. When Eppes's letter arrived, she opened it expecting a "congratulatory epistle," and was obliged to retire to her room to weep when she realized the news it contained. She wrote back to Eppes:

> I can only say from the depths of my swelling heart, 'God is good oh! how good!' If I had you here, I could lay my head upon your heart and tell you by my tears if not by my words how fine and sweet is our new-born happiness and sympathy. I have no more fear of misunderstandings and chilled hearts – there have been such in times past, beloved, but let every act of our future lives cast another stone upon the heap which shall bury these out of sight and mind. Our love shall abide all tempests now – founded upon our Rock. I never knew how deep was my affection for you until this touch from the Divine hand has unsealed the fountain.[358]

Eppes, to Virginia's relief, had undergone the requisite "change of heart," but it may be that her friend's long struggle with doubt and depression led Virginia to question the validity of a discreet and recognizable conversion. Her novels of the 1850s indicate that she was moving away from the idea of a standardized conversion experience. The

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[356] Mollie had lived in the Hawes household. A few years older than Virginia, she had been both a mentor and a playmate. She is apparently the gentle and precociously wise "Mollie Belle" of Terhune's volume of autobiographical short stories, *When Grandmamma Was New*. Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 25 September, 1853, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[357] Ibid.; Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 7 March, 1854 and 5 June, 1854, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[358] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 18 October, 1855, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

heroine of Terhune's first novel, *Alone* (1854), experiences a conversion that adheres most closely to formula. Ida Ross, who feels herself as "alone" in the world, has become discouraged and bitter. Seeking to become a Christian, she despairingly concludes that she cannot convert and is doomed. One Sabbath day, however, she experiences conversion when her attention is drawn to the comforting words of Isaiah: "'In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee,' saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Is. 54:8). Reading this passage, Ida is able to yield herself completely to God, and experience joy and peace.[359]

Ida's friend Lynn Holmes has been less blessed. Earlier in the novel he dies suddenly of a fever, and although he expires repentant and in prayer, Terhune leaves her characters (and her readers) in doubt as to whether he has been saved, apparently because he has not undergone a definitive change of heart. Echoing her own letters to Virginia Dance, Terhune has Morton Lacy, the Christian hero of this novel, comment, "The suffering we experience in our uncertainty as to his [Lynn's] condition, should teach us to make our salvation sure, so that when our hour shall comes – if a call at midnight, we may not leave those who love us, comfortless."[360]

By the time she composed her second novel, *The Hidden Path* (1855), Terhune had already begun to depart from the emphasis on a clearly defined conversion experience. She had also left behind her grim speculations upon the fate of souls feared unrepentant. *The Hidden Path* has two heroines, the quiet, gentle Bella Conway and the brilliant, gifted Isabel Oakley. Both are portrayed as dedicated Christians, yet neither

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[359] Marion Harland, *Alone* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1854; reprint, New York: G.W. Dillingham Co., 1897), 230-231 (page citations are to the reprint edition).
[360] Ibid., 198-199, 208.

undergoes a conversion in the course of the novel. Terhune merely has Bella's mother comment that her daughter has always seemed "activated by Christian principles."[361] Both heroines grow in their faith over the course of the novel.

In Terhune's third novel, *Moss-side* (1857), she again depicts a conversion, but this time the process is gradual and no precise point of conversion can be identified. The heroine Grace Leigh, like Ida, loses her religious beliefs due to a series of losses. Realizing that she is dying inwardly, and unable to pray, she remembers that her brother had urged her to rely on a higher power. With this glimmer of hope, she asks her niece Lilly, a faith-filled child of ten, to pray for her. Lilly, shocked and grieved to learn that her beloved "auntie" is not a Christian, prays for her diligently, and from this time on Grace's conversion takes place imperceptibly.[362]

In *Moss-side*, Terhune also criticized a Christian mindset that sought to identify a direct connection between sin and suffering. As Grace lies recuperating from a severe accident, she overhears a conversation between the neighbors who are attending her. One woman expresses the conviction that the Leigh family is being punished for some hidden sin. Her companion reproves her hardheartedness, saying, "It is not for us to judge of the dealings of the Almighty."[363] The Leigh family of this novel is in fact blighted by a sinful past, but the author cautioned against both a facile identification of suffering with punishment, and a readiness to judge others. *Moss-side* shows that during the late 1850s Terhune had continued to distance herself from the traditional Calvinist emphasis on fear and judgment.

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[361] Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 3.
[362] Marion Harland, *Moss-side* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1857; reprint, New York: The Federal Book Company, n.d.), 195-196, 204 (page citations are to the reprint edition).
[363] Ibid., 182-183.

Like Terhune, Evans Wilson developed a more nuanced understanding of conversion as a result of her experiences as a young woman. In her case, this change was directly tied to her own crisis of faith. She emerged with diminished confidence in her ability to understand spiritual truth, and with a greater sense of Christianity as a mystery. Evans Wilson placed words to this effect in the mouth of Guy Hartnet, the hero of *Beulah*. At the end of the novel, married to the now-Christian heroine but still unconverted himself, he tells her quietly, "Your religion is full of mystery." "Yes; of divine mystery," Beulah responds. "Truly, 'a God comprehended is no God at all!'"[364]

The Methodist tradition in which Augusta had been raised had placed a strong emphasis on the religion of the heart, but for Augusta herself this faith that transcended rationality was a novelty. Embracing it meant going against the grain of her personal hunger for intellectual comprehension and certainty. Augusta, like her heroine Beulah, was at least as much a scientist as an artist.[365] As she explained to her friend Rachel Lyons, "The preponderance of the Rationalistic element in "Beulah's" organization, necessitated her speculative career."[366] A New York *World* review of *Beulah*, probably written by Evans's one-time fiancé James Reed Spalding, also emphasized the author's intellectual independence and sheer force of character: "The author of Beulah traced with

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[364] Augusta J. Evans (Wilson), *Beulah* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1859; reprint, New York: Hurst and Company, n.d.), 439-440 (page citations are to the reprint edition).
[365] Evans's own feminine ideal was most closely represented by Irene Huntingdon, the heroine of *Macaria*. Evans wrote her friend Rachel Lyons, "I am very glad to hear that you like my Irene. She is the noblest character I ever painted, and is my ideal of perfect womanhood." Irene, significantly, was not an a writer or artist, but a scientist and mathematician. Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson), *Macaria; or Altars of Sacrifice*, edited, with an introduction by Drew Gilpin Faust (Richmond, Virginia: West and Johnson, 1864; reprint, Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 176 (page citations are to the reprint edition). Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Rachel Lyons, 14 June [1864], in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 104.
[366] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Rachel Lyons, 17 October 1859, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 2.

a masterly, though youthful hand, the growth of an individual mind. It is a mind among those made for leadership and which therefore can take nothing for granted – can be availed of the advice and experience of no other mind."[367] Evans Wilson's eventual acceptance of faith as insoluble mystery, then, required both intellectual disillusionment and personal humility.

Like Terhune, Evans Wilson appears to have been troubled by the fate of good individuals who did not experience a clear conversion. In her first two novels she created characters who, like Terhune's Lynn Holmes, die without a definitive inner change to reassure their friends. Evans's characters are in fact more ambiguous than Lynn, for they appear emotionally unable to convert. Inez de Garcia, the title character of Evans's first novel, rejects her Catholic faith because of her hatred for the tale's villain, the hypocritical priest Alfonso Mazzolin. She is attracted to evangelical Protestantism but does not embrace it, and when she dies of a fever toward the end, she is uncertain whether God exists. Evans, however, does not suggest that the soul of Inez may be lost, but rather that she is finally at rest. The closing words of the death scene are a benediction: "Peace, Inez, to thy memory, and may the sod lie lightly on thy early grave!"[368]

The spiritual ambiguity is still more pronounced in the case of Cornelia Graham of *Beulah*. Cornelia, like Inez, rejects the faith in which she was raised, in her case the shallow Protestant Christianity of fashionable society. Evans Wilson portrays her as a cynical but good and honest woman, and she becomes a close friend of the heroine.

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[367] The review has no byline, but is probably by Spalding. Fidler has noted a strong suggestion of Spalding's romantic interest in the author at the conclusion of the article. [James Reed Spalding], "Beulah," *World* (New York), 14 June 1860, 2; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 81.
[368] Evans (Wilson), *Inez*, 270-274.

Knowing that she is dying of a heart condition, Cornelia is nevertheless convinced that it is too late for her to convert, and she adheres to this resolution to the end. On her death bed, she mocks the Christian faith in heaven as a "continuing city" (Heb. 13:14). "Ah! what is its name? that 'continuing city'! Necropolis?" Yet Cornelia's last words to her dissolute brother are a "prayer" for his reclamation, and when she dies her soul is "with its God."[369] Beulah is a thorough skeptic at this point in the novel, but her reaction to Cornelia's death is horror strong enough to drive her to prayer. "And this is death? Oh, my God, save me from such a death." At Cornelia's funeral, she wonders whether her friend is lost because she did not believe, and whether she herself faces the same fate.[370] Evans herself, however, declines to analyze Cornelia's non-conversion. She has Beulah visit Cornelia's peaceful tomb after her own return to Christianity. Its inscription says only, "Silentio! Silentio!"[371] Like Terhune, Evans had come to emphasize mystery over doctrinal certainty, and hope over fear.

This emphasis lent a quality of ecumenicism to the religious stance of both Terhune and Evans Wilson. In their thought, the notion of a precise conversion experience that clearly demarcated Christian from non-Christian gave way to a more intuitive sense of communion between lovers of goodness and truth. To some extent, this increased tolerance on the part of both young novelists was a manifestation of a trend in the wider Christian society of the period. The 1850s saw the flourishing of a common evangelical culture that easily crossed denominational lines among Protestants. The three largest evangelical denominations, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists, intermixed

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[369] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 334-335.
[370] Ibid., 335-337.
[371] Ibid., 411.

easily in their religious and social lives. One entry in Terhune's indicates that Second Presbyterian, unable to find a minister on a day when Hoge was traveling, invited a Baptist preacher to officiate.[372] Somewhat less comfortably, evangelicals also mixed with Episcopalians and Unitarians.

Terhune's diary and correspondence demonstrate her own willingness to cross denominational boundaries. They reveal that she visited Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopalian churches in Richmond with some frequency. A neighboring Baptist family, the Raglands, were among the closest friends of the Hawes family, and Terhune often went to church with the Ragland daughters, who were close to her in age.[373] In 1849 she criticized the Episcopalian liturgy as beautiful but excessively formal, lacking the heartfelt simplicity of Presbyterian worship. By 1853, however, she reluctantly acknowledged her attraction to Episcopal worship. "The Episcopal service impresses me strongly at times – this may not be a proper motive – but I have prayed that the rest of the day be given to him who made it."[374]

The young Terhune also engaged in some religious exploration well outside the bounds of evangelicalism. Her diary records, without comment, that she took "the children," probably her younger siblings, to "the Jewish synagogue" on Saturday, December 16, 1848.[375] Two years later, on Christmas morning, she accompanied "the

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[372] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," Sunday, 20 May, 1849, p. 101 of typed transcript

[373] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 1 April, 1848, 3 May 1849, 8 June, 1849, 16 September, 1849, 7, 24, and 29 October, 1849, 26 January, 1850, 3 March 1850, 8 September, 1850, 26 December 1850, and 15 May 1852, pp. 1, 97, 101, 140, 148, 151, 168, 174, 224, 246, and 325 of Tms; Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, various letters in Mary Virginia Terhune papers.

[374] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," Sunday, 8 September, 1850 and Sunday, 15 May, 1853, pp. 224, 325 of typed transcript.

[375] The synagogue may have been Beth Ahabah, founded by German Jews in 1841. In 1848 this congregation moved into a new temple on Eleventh Street between Marshall and Clay, several blocks from the Hawes home on Grace Street. Historically, Richmond had enjoyed generally cordial relationships

children" to "the Catholic church." This was probably St. Peter's, which had served as Richmond's Roman Catholic cathedral since 1834. It was located at Eighth and Grace Streets, a short walk from the Hawes family home on Grace. It is significant that Terhune, who loved Christmas, chose to visit a Catholic church on Christmas morning. She was repelled, however, by what she saw there: "senseless mummery, the bare thought of which disgusts, a body without life, a sun without light or heat."[376] Several factors may have contributed to the visitor's distaste. She would have missed the main Christmas mass, which in a Roman Catholic church would have been held at midnight. In addition, her characterization of Catholic worship as "mummery" is conventional for evangelical Protestants of the period, and her antipathy toward "Romanism" was widely held in her Presbyterian community in the antebellum era, as is evident from the frequency with which anti-Catholic articles appeared in the *Watchman and Observer*.[377] Terhune remained strongly anti-Catholic during the 1850s, although she would modify her views after the Civil War.[378]

While traveling in the North, Terhune made some additional forays, attending Unitarian and even Swedenborgian churches. The former she found dry and rationalistic, and in the end she rejected Unitarianism as "a compromise between the world and

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between Jews and non-Jews, although there was also undercurrent of anti-Semitism that became overt under the stress of the Civil War. Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," Saturday, 16 December, 1848, p. 84 of Tms; Dabney, *Richmond*, 83, 138; Gregg D. Kimball. *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 52, 112, 251.

[376] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," Saturday, 25 December, 1850, p. 246 of Tms; Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City*, 68.

[377] *Watchman and Observer* (Richmond), various articles, 1848-1853.

[378] According to Terhune's daughter, the Terhune children were taught to respect the religious beliefs of all people. Virginia Van de Water, *The Heart of a Child*. 57.

religion."[379] Terhune was, however, highly attracted to Swedenborgianism, which she found "sublime" in its simplicity, devotion, and emphasis on the Scriptures. Apparently unaware of Swedenborg's more heterodox claims, she considered the Swedenborgian faith very like Presbyterianism in its emotional power.[380] Terhune was also attracted to the Swedenborgian Church on account of a personal relationship. Shortly after the publication of *The Hidden Path*, she read a highly positive review of her novel by the former actress Anna Cora (Mowatt) Ritchie (1819-1870), herself a successful novelist and playwright. A sense of social obligation led Terhune to pay a call on Ritchie to thank her for the review. She did so reluctantly, for the Presbyterian Church condemned the theater. Ritchie had left the stage in 1854 to marry William Foushee Ritchie, a scion of the prominent Ritchie family and editor of the Richmond *Enquirer*. Terhune nevertheless felt that "an ex-actress was out of my sphere." The older woman's candor and kindness so charmed her, however, that she cast aside her scruples and the two became "intimate" friends. Terhune had learned from reading her friend's autobiography that she was a Swedenborgian, and realized that "all denominations . . . united in shutting and bolting the door of heaven in her face." She nevertheless maintained the relationship, feeling that

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[379] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 22 and 29 June, 1851, 13 July, 1851, 20 July 1851, pp. 264, 279, 288 of Tms; Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, July 1851 (n.d.) and 18 October, 1855, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

[380] The central teaching of Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1771) was that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ had already taken place in the form of the Scriptures, which read in light of their spiritual meaning were the inspired Word of God. Swedenborg claimed to have received direct revelation from heaven and to have communicated with famous men of the past, and he held antinomian views on sexuality and marriage. His thinking was highly influential in the religious turbulence of antebellum America. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 483-486; Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 10 and 24 August, 1851, pp. 299, 314 of typed transcript

Mrs. Ritchie had taught her much about Christian charity. "She opened to me the doors of a new world: broadened and deepened and sweetened my whole nature."[381]

Augusta Evans Wilson appears to have developed a broader sense of religious community as a result of the religious crisis that she underwent in the mid-1850s. Although she does not seem to have regularly visited churches of other denominations as did Terhune, she was quite willing to cross denominational lines both intellectually and in her personal relationships. Following the publication of *Beulah* she became a close friend of Rachel Lyons (Heustis), who was Jewish. The two women remained friends for the rest of their lives. Evans believed that she and Rachel were laborers in the same spiritual vineyard, and early in their friendship she urged Rachel to do "God's work" by writing distinctively Jewish fiction. "May we hold up rich, ripe purple clusters as the fruit of our labors!" Evans wrote to her friend.[382]

Evans Wilson also seems to have shed her anti-Catholicism not long after the publication of *Inez*. The anti-Catholic theme does not appear in her later works, and as early as 1865 she compared her love for the defeated Confederacy to a Jesuit's love for his order.[383] At some point, Wilson befriended a Catholic nun, Mother Mary Stanislaus, mother superior of the Sisters of the Visitation, whose convent was located close to Georgia Cottage. Her novel *Infelice* (1875) contains a positive portrayal of Catholic

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[381] Harland, *Autobiography*, 288-292.
[382] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Rachel Lyons, 29 May and 28 August, 1860, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 14, 20.
[383] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to J.L.M. Curry, 7 October, 1865, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 109.

nuns, and toward the end of her life she told her niece Lilly Bragg that she regretted having written *Inez.*[384]

Both Terhune and Evans Wilson, while retaining a strong personal identification with their own denominations, minimized denominational differences and rejected exclusive denominational claims to religious truth. Terhune was not indifferent to theological orthodoxy, but her primary criteria for evaluating spiritual validity emphasized "plain, simple, scripture truth" (which was to include a direct challenge to conversion) and indications of emotional engagement in the worshippers.[385] At a Unitarian service in Boston she searched in vain for such signs: " . . . my eye wandered over the congregation of smiling or intellectually interested faces and longed for the appearance of fervent devotion, the moistened eye and changing cheek to which I had been accustomed."[386] Evans Wilson, for her part, deprecated what she regarded as sectarian distortions of theological issues: "Turn which way I will, I see so much that is distorted, and sectarianally [sic] twisted, in the articles of various denominations, that the question very naturally presents itself. "Who is in the right?"[387] Like Terhune, Evans sought spiritual stability in scriptural revelation. Still troubled by temptations to skepticism in the mid-1850s, she endeavored to "[bask] in the light of an eternal God, and his <u>equally</u> <u>eternal</u> <u>word</u> . . ."[388] In *Beulah*, Evans makes the heroine's friend Clara an exemplar of this simple trust. When Beulah asks Clara whether her faith ever wavers, she replies, "Never; even in my most desponding moments." Clara then informs Beulah

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384 Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 33, 184.
385 Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 8 April, 1846, 14 April, 1850, 6 and 13 July, 1851, pp. 1, 178, 270, 278-9 of typed transcript (See also Hawes diary 243 on denominational differences.)
386 Ibid., 29 June, 1851, p. 265 of typed transcript.
387 Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harriss, 12 October 1856, Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon.
388 Ibid.

that she no longer envies her intellect, since it has led Beulah to lose her Christian faith.[389] Genuine conversion, then, was a matter of the heart rather than of the mind for both Terhune and Evans Wilson.

The emphasis Terhune, Evans and other women novelists of this period placed on feelings has often been derided as sentimentality. Most notably, historian Ann Douglas has identified sentimentality with feminine self-indulgence and passivity, and charged that "feminization" of the culture made possible the rise of an effete commercialism.[390] The novelists themselves, however, distinguished between shallow "sentimentality," which they also condemned, and the *deep* feelings that they considered a manifestation of an inward transformation. Far from being ineffectual, such an internal reorientation was the only means for bringing about lasting change in society.[391] Cultural transformation, according to evangelical belief, could be rooted only in the individual heart.[392]

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[389] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 216.

[390] Surprisingly, Douglas argues that "Little Eva's" death in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is essentially "decorative," because Eva dies without having persuaded her father either to free his slaves or to become a Christian. Stowe, however, clearly depicts Eva's father, Augustine St. Clare, as undergoing a conversion at the point of his death, as a result of both his daughter's and Uncle Tom's witness. As Jane Tompkins has pointed out, the power of the dead or dying to redeem the unrepentant living was a common theme in nineteenth-century literature, and a Christian death was considered a victory rather than a defeat. Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 4; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, in *Harriet Beecher Stowe: Three Novels*, Literary Classics of the United States (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1982), 352-354, 355-370; Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 127-128.

[391] One contemporary reviewer distinguished between the religion of "sentimental" novels, which aimed to please, and Terhune's *Alone*, in which religion was "an active power rather than a passive sentiment, and a subject to be believed and acted upon, as well as thought about, and talked of." Review of *Alone*, by Marion Harland, *The Southern Literary Messenger* 20, Issue 9 (September 1854), 572.

[392] Terhune's and Evans Wilson's most prominent northern counterpart would have been in complete sympathy with this conviction. As Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote in the final chapter of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), "There is one thing that every individual can do – they can see to it that *they feel right*. An atmosphere of sympathetic influence encircles every human being; and the man or woman who *feels* strongly, healthily and justly, on the great interests of humanity, is a constant benefactor to the human race. See, then, to your sympathies in this matter! Are they in harmony with the sympathies of Christ? Or are they swayed and perverted by the sophistries of worldly policy?" Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 515.

Writing as a Christian Vocation

It was with this quintessentially evangelical understanding of Christian life that Terhune and Evans Wilson settled on vocations as writers, and particularly as writers of fiction. The novel, a highly popular medium by the 1850s, engaged the sympathies of readers in the lives of characters who, for a time, became real to them. Both Terhune and Evans made liberal use of their personal experiences in composing their fiction, and Terhune in particular often took pains to inform her readers that key elements of her stories were drawn from reality. If conversion was a matter of the heart, what better means for sharing the Christian vision than through a literary form that spoke directly to hearts? Each novelist had her own emphasis. Evans Wilson, still quivering from her wrestling match with unbelief, sought to educate her readers and "combat skepticism." Terhune, with a more loosely defined sense of mission, sought to tell stories that would encourage faith and cultivate love. "I do not esteem mine fruitless labor," she wrote in her introduction to *The Hidden Path*, if I can teach Charity to one thoughtless or ignorant censor of his erring brother, or whisper of Hope and Faith to a single crushed heart – perplexed, cast down, despairing under the rough discipline of life."[393] Like Terhune's beloved pastor Moses Drury Hoge, Terhune and Evans Wilson wanted to make Christianity both believable and attractive.[394]

Popular women's fiction, pious and artificial to modern tastes, often spoke strongly to readers of the time. As literary scholars Jane Tompkins and Philip Fisher have pointed out, moreover, psychological complexity and a distinctive writing style were not considered desirable elements in this genre. Tompkins argues that women

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[393] Harland, *The Hidden Path*, vi.
[394] P.H. Hoge, *Moses Drury Hoge*, 86.

writers of this period were not creating "art for art's sake," but trying to find a way to help their readers make sense of a rapidly changing world, as well as to help bring about desirable social change.[395] Fisher makes a similar argument that popular novels performed a crucial role in the "cultural work" of changing moral perceptions, becoming "obsolete" as an art form once that task was accomplished.[396] From the point of view of the novelists themselves, most of whom were evangelical Protestants, that "cultural work" was the spread of the Gospel and the building of the Kingdom of God on earth. In this sense, the popular religious novel was one element of widespread religious enthusiasm and optimism of antebellum America.

Whatever the acceptability of stereotyping in this genre, however, it is also worth noting that this literature did not seem "unrealistic" to readers at the time. The very pious and saccharine elements that grate on the modern reader seemed natural to the antebellum reading public because (as Tompkins has also pointed out) they shared a common belief system that affirmed the value of simple faith, the truthfulness of feelings, and the centrality of religious truth in human history.[397] In short, the evangelical faith created the atmosphere in which many Americans, particularly of the middle class, lived, moved and had their being. This atmosphere made evangelical fiction seem natural to its readership.

It was, of course, possible to stretch the credulity of antebellum readers past the breaking point, as Evans Wilson evidently did with her first stilted effort, *Inez*. "There is not a natural character and scarcely a natural phrase in the whole volume," complained

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[395] Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, xi-xiii, xvii.
[396] The chief task of the sentimental novel, according to Fisher, was to instill new, humane perceptions, for example, of the humanity of children and of blacks. Repetition and stereotyping aided in the fulfillment of this task. Fisher, *Hard Facts*, 3-5, 7.
[397] Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, xviii.

the *Southern Quarterly Review*, with justice. The reading public must have concurred, for *Inez* sold poorly initially, and was republished only on the strength of the author's later reputation.[398] Yet even *Inez* won some reviewer plaudits for its "cultural work" in warning Americans against the perils of Romanism. The Richmond *Watchman and Observer* stated tersely, "This is a sort of Know-Nothing tale . . . we have no doubt that all it describes is true, and a great deal more."[399]

On the whole, however, Terhune and Evans Wilson were among the best writers in this genre, and their works were successful precisely because they did impress their readers as being true to life. Their writing was probably "true" to their audience on different levels. Terhune's humor and emotional honesty lent an edge to even her earliest works, and makes much of her writing appealing today. Her depictions of character struck many readers as both wise and subtle. " . . the story is . . a sharp anatomy of human motive," wrote one anonymous reviewer of *The Hidden Path*. "The writer is keen in observation, and skillful in portraiture – the meanesses [sic], hypocrisies, and social tyrannies to be met with everywhere, and in so many individuals, are well set forth."[400] Evans Wilson's "elevated" style, by contrast, seems to have appealed to her loyal readers as a grand though perhaps attainable vision of nobility, even as her critics repeatedly objected to her rarified dialog and ponderous erudition.

In one sense, Terhune and Evans may be seen as "preachers," their ministry of the printed word an aspect of the democratization of Christianity that had begun in the first few decade of the Early Republic. As conservative women, the domestic novelists

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[398] Review of *Inez* in *Southern Quarterly Review*, XI (1855), 541-542.
[399] *Watchman and Observer* (Richmond), 1 March 1855.
[400] Newspaper clipping, n.p.n.d., Terhune Papers, Duke.

sought a way of exercising leadership that complemented rather than undermined the leadership of male ministers. Like the popular revival leaders, moreover, their own style of leadership was essentially democratic in that it depended on their empathy for their audience, and their audience's acceptance of them.[401] The parallel between novel writing and a gentler form of preaching occurred to at least one contemporary reviewer. In its review of *Alone*, *The Southern Literary Messenger* suggested that, in the polarized political atmosphere of the mid-1850s, preaching from the pulpit had become overly politicized. ". . . it is well that some place should be found for religion, and there can be no harm if the novel should for a time quietly usurp the office of the pulpit, and that the 'still, small voice' should come from the gentler sex whose hearts are usually more deeply touched with a sense of the vital necessity of the 'one thing needful'."[402] As this opinion indicates, novel-writing was a form of Christian witness considered especially suited to the abilities and characteristics of the female sex.

Womanhood and Sexuality

Both Terhune and Evans Wilson subscribed to the "separate-spheres" ideology that was dominant among middle-class evangelicals of the mid-nineteenth century, and their sense of identity as women was central to their understanding of their vocation as

[401] In *The Democratization of Christianity*, cultural historian Nathan O. Hatch argued that popular revivalists, despite their autocratic style, were essentially democratic because they could maintain their leadership only through "the democratic art of persuasion." In his review of Hatch, Stephen J. Stein argued that Hatch's thesis could be extended well beyond the mass revival movements he studied, to the various ways in which members of other denominations and sects, and women in particular, contributed to the vitalization of democratic Christianity. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 13, 136. Stephen J. Stein, "Biblical Protestantism and Religious Populism," review of *The Democratization of Christianity*, by Nathan O. Hatch, *American Quarterly* 44 (June 1992): 265-267.

[402] Review of *Alone*, by Marion Harland, *The Southern Literary Messenger* 20: 9 (September 1854), 572.

writers. The four traits identified by historian Barbara Welter in 1966 as the signature traits of the "true woman" of the period are very much in evidence as ideals for both of these novelists, and for woman's fiction in general: piety, submissiveness (albeit with important qualifications), purity and domesticity.[403] Neither Terhune nor Evans, however, seems to have subscribed to the then-current idea that women were in fact morally superior to men. Rather, they held that the sexes were moral equals, complementary and mutually dependent. If man was the head of the family, woman was its heart, and the health of the republic depended on each sex being true to its own genius and, in the process, fulfilling its responsibilities to self, family, and society.

From the perspective of a nineteenth-century evangelical, of course, the "piety" of the "true woman" (as well as the true man) was not mere religiosity but a firm commitment to living out the teachings of the Christian faith, even at considerable personal cost. The heroines of popular women's fiction are either convinced Christians or become so in the course of the novel. They are willing to suffer in order to maintain their integrity, and that integrity is almost inextricably bound up with their Christianity (or, in the case of the unconverted Beulah, with her determination to seek only truth). Even when the heroines seek economic independence, as do Beulah and Bella Conway (the heroine of *The Hidden Path*), financial self-support is not primarily an end in itself but a means of ensuring moral freedom.[404]

The maintenance of integrity meant performing one's duty to God and others as well as to self, and Terhune and Evans Wilson saw no conflict between the two. The

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[403] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820 – 1860," *American Quarterly* 18, Number 2, Part 1 (Summer 1966), 151-174.
[404] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 158; Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 34-36.

very etymology of the word "pious" is evidence of the close connection between religious commitment and righteous conduct: it is derived from the Latin *pius*, dutiful. An emphasis on duty can be grim, and in fact Evans's insistence that she wrote solely for the sake of the good she could do may partly account for the stiff quality of much of her writing. Still, she saw duty as more than the mere performance of good deeds. Her Beulah is righteous to the point of heroism, risking her life in order to nurse victims of a yellow fever epidemic.[405] In *Beulah*, Evans also draws an explicit connection between duty and the creation of a better, more heavenly world. Midway through the novel, she has her heroine, thrilled by the radiance of a winter day, recall the lines of the Chartist poet Gerald Massey:

> *This world is full of beauty, like other worlds above,*
> *And if we did our duty, it might be full of love*.[406]

Terhune, who wrote from personal inclination as well as a sense of Christian duty, was more likely than Evans Wilson to portray the Christian woman's vocation as a source of joy. Nevertheless, she too portrayed duty as taking priority over personal desire. The heroine of *Moss-side*, Grace Leigh, performs her filial duty when she obeys her father's apparently unreasonable order that she not marry her lover Herbert Wynne. She also resists a strong temptation to believe that her father does not love her. Virtue has its eventual reward in this story, for the mystery of Mr. Leigh's refusal is revealed and resolved, and by the end the lovers are happily married.

The ideal of submissiveness takes on a more complex quality in the thinking of the domestic novelists. It is closely tied to piety and duty, to the authors' belief that

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[405] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah* 168-173.
[406] Ibid., 247-8.

living the good life meant submission to a larger reality than personal desire. Submission, in other words, was primarily to God. Submission to legitimate human authorities, including parents, husbands, church and political leaders, was for the sake of God. In the latter instance, however, both Terhune and Evans Wilson depicted considerable tension over boundaries. When the human authority required behavior that was actually sinful, the demand could and should be refused. Evans's *Inez* has two American heroines. One of them, Florence Hamilton, agrees to become a Catholic in deference to the wishes of her dying father, who has already converted (following a brain injury caused by a riding accident). Because acceptance of Catholic doctrines entails spiritual falsehood, the wiser and more stable heroine, Mary Irving, is justified in persuading Florence to return to Protestantism.

Submission in cases like Grace Leigh's, in which the demand seemed mistaken or arbitrary, but not actually sinful, was more ambiguous. In general, Terhune and Evans Wilson taught their readers that obedience was the correct response, at least where parental authority was concerned. It is partly for this reason that Evans's Beulah refuses to be adopted by her benevolent, but capricious and demanding guardian Guy Hartwell.[407] In their personal lives, however, both novelists exhibited greater flexibility. Terhune's diary reveals that at seventeen she resisted, with difficulty, her father's pressure to find work as a teacher in order to help support the family at a time of financial stress, and as preparation for an uncertain financial future. Her entries do not indicate that she opposed his wishes out of a high-minded sense of her true vocation as a writer. Rather, she simply did not want to leave home and teach, and her comments on the

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[407] Ibid., 106.

subject are suffused with self-pity. “Shall I ever be happy again!” she asked herself on September 27, 1848. “Just as I am beginning to enjoy home and society to be debarred from both is hard for one so young. I feel an unconquerable repugnance to the task, a presentiment of evil . . . I can not, I never will understand why should I [sic] dread to leave a home where I am not loved or appreciated.” At the end of November, after her sister Mea had already left for Scottsville, she was again unhappy that “that detestable subject” was being “forced” on her. “I will struggle as long as I can, and then if nothing is effected resign myself to my fate.”[408] Virginia was, to be sure, “struggling” against her father’s wishes, not his orders, and her feelings were colored by the fact that her father, during a prolonged period of anxiety over his business affairs, was often harsh and sarcastic in his treatment of his family.

Filial submission was due to mothers as well as fathers. Evans Wilson, who to all appearances enjoyed a close and harmonious relationship with her mother, does not seem to have struggled with questions of obedience. For Terhune, again, the relationship was fraught with conflict. When she burned many of her writings at the age of sixteen, it was partly in reaction to her mother’s reprimand. Judith Anna Hawes told her daughter, “in the kindest spirit,” that she was spending too much time at writing, and too little at sewing. Like her husband, Judith Anna was concerned that her daughter acquire the practical skills of life. In Terhune’s account of this same incident in an autobiographical short story, her mother also disapproved of her daughter’s lack of courtesy, as she regarded it, in avoiding guests whose small talk bored her.

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[408] Hawes (Terhune), “Diary,” 27 September, 31 October, and 29 November, 1848, pp. 74, 78, and 82 of typed transcript.

The teenaged Virginia's reaction, in both the diary and short story accounts, is almost hysterical grief. Convinced that her mother was right in her social morality, but feeling misunderstood and unloved, she determined to obey her mother's directive. She later burned a large portion of her writings (although Judith Anna had not asked her to do this) because she had concluded that they were sinful. After her conversation with her mother, Virginia wrote out her anguish at considerable length in her diary: ". . . there were one or two remarks dropped at the beginning of the conversation which have wounded me more than I can express. They implied contempt of my pursuits, and such a total misinterpretation of my character and aims as made my heart ache. The truth is, I am an anomaly to myself. . . . Instead of the high-souled, resolute being that nature intended, I am a mere non-entity, unappreciated, unloved. Unloved, there is the secret. . . My parents do not understand me. They feel, it is true, the natural affection that a parent owes a child, but the bitter truth will force itself on my mind that of all their flock I add the least to their happiness and joy, I who would gladly lay down my life for them. . ." Come to think of it, the distraught teenager concluded, she would be glad to die anyway, except that she could not be quite sure of her salvation.[409]

Both Terhune and Evans Wilson accepted male headship in marriage, and saw it as benign because their ideal of marriage also posited a kind, strong husband who loved and respected his wife. Since husbands, unlike parents, could be chosen, it was incumbent on the young Christian woman to choose her partner wisely. Moreover, the novelists agreed, she should marry only a man that she could love with her whole heart.

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[409] In this last sentiment, Terhune expressed the traditional Calvinist fear that a conversion experience might be apparent, rather than real. Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 9 February, 1847, pp. 19-20 of Tms; Harland, "I Make a Holocaust," in *When Grandmamma Was Fourteen*, 141-145.

In this, Terhune and Evans Wilson were in accord with the values of their middle-class society. Since the late eighteenth century, the belief that mutual affection was essential to marriage had become increasingly accepted, and by mid-century the idea of marriage had become highly romanticized.[410] To this, evangelicals added the scriptural teachings that husband and wife became "one flesh" in marriage, that a wife's obedience to her husband reflected the church's submission to Christ, and that a husband's love for his wife reflected Christ's love for the church (Matthew 19: 5-6, *Ephesians* 5:22-29).

In this context, Terhune and Evans asserted, wifely submission was liberating, not demeaning. Abuses certainly existed in marriage, but these were due to the individual flaws of the partners, and not to the institution itself. In *Alone*, Terhune depicted Ida Ross after her marriage to Morton Lacy thus:

> She is younger, in face and manner, at twenty-seven, than she was at seventeen. Her husband's equal in many respects, and treated by him as such – she has never endured the servile subjugation of soul, which transforms intelligent women into inane, mindless machines. In yielding to his superior judgment, when in contrariety to hers, her will has parted with none of its strength in the bend which proved its pliancy. Submission is a pleasure, not a cross.[411]

On questions of wifely submission, it is Evans Wilson who was apparently the more conflicted. Both the heroines and heroes of her early works are usually passionate, high-spirited, and tenacious. Evans evidently found these traits, which she herself possessed, both attractive and problematic. The high spirits crystallize into pride and coldness, and the tenacity warps into rigidity. Her heroines are driven by ambition, which Evans considered an aberration in a woman. Her heroes, in their impetuosity,

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[410] John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 42, 73.
[411] Harland, *Alone*, 581.

often threaten to dominate the women they love. In the case of Beulah, her period of greatest economic and personal independence coincides with the nadir of her spiritual crisis. Although living in a rented house and supporting herself as a teacher and writer, she has also exhausted herself to the point where her life is in danger, without having achieved her goal of an intellectual comprehension of the universe. As she begins to return to the faith, Beulah also gradually relinquishes her independence. Giving up her apartment, she moves in with a friendly family. The move is a prelude to marriage.

When Beulah and her "guardian" are reunited at the end of the novel, Hartwell, after a fervent embrace, exclaims, "Beulah Benton, do you belong to the tyrant Ambition, or do you belong to that tyrant Guy Hartwell? Quick, child; decide!" Beulah decides promptly: "If I am to have a tyrant, I believe I prefer belonging to you?" The question mark is significant (particularly from the once fiercely assertive Beulah), for on her wedding day she is frightened. It is the recognition that the now aging Hartwell is grieved by her fear that brings about an "instant revolution of feeling" in Beulah. From that point, love vanquishes fear (a probable allusion to 1 John 4:18), and the wife is able to devote herself to "the labor of future years," the conversion of her husband.[412] The final chapter of *Beulah*, which describes the couple's married life, makes no mention of submission.

To the proponents of separate spheres, domesticity was both a practical virtue and an ideal. In a wife, household management skills and thrift were seen as essential to the economic well-being of the family. This aspect of domesticity, however, did not receive strong emphasis in the antebellum writings of either Terhune or Evans Wilson, although

[412] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 431, 436-437.

Terhune would become a domestic advice expert after the Civil War. In the 1850s, both novelists emphasized romance and the intellectual life rather than the virtues of household management. Their heroines are teachers and writers, and such practical skills as they acquire are in the area of nursing rather than homemaking.[413]

Evans Wilson's disinterest in housekeeping may have been due to her elite upbringing as well as her preference for intellectual pursuits. She says little about cooking or sewing in her early novels, and when Beulah takes the bold step of living in her own small house (together with an elderly woman friend), she makes it clear that she will not "play cook." A "servant" will take care of the chores.[414] In the case of the middle-class though almost equally intellectual Terhune, her conflict with her mother may have contributed to her delayed appreciation of domestic accomplishments. This conflict predated the "holocaust" incident by several years. Appended to the front of Terhune's diary is a typed manuscript of a letter her mother sent her while she was at Hampden-Sydney, several years before the "holocaust" incident. Judith Anna (no anti-intellectual herself) began with the hope that her daughter would "study hard and try to improve your mind as much as possible . . ." Several lines later she wrote, "You know that I have always told you that it was very important that every female should understand the use of the needle <u>thoroughly</u> – it may seem a very trifling or rather a

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[413] In this respect, the antebellum novels of Terhune and Evans create a strong contrast to another highly popular novel of the period, Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1850). Warner's child heroine is required, as a moral duty and a religious exercise in self-denial, to overcome her repugnance to housekeeping and learn useful skills from her capable but unsympathetic aunt.

[414] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 314.

common accomplishment, but it is nevertheless a very useful one, when we come to 'the realities of life'. Try to perfect yourself in all useful occupations."[415]

By the time she published her third novel, *Moss-side*, Terhune was married and in a position to appreciate the value of "useful occupations." Nevertheless, the novel is, at best, ambivalent in its depiction of the "use of the needle." Early in the story, the heroine Grace is impressed by the patience and resignation of her paternal aunt, Agnes, which is symbolized by the older woman's meticulous darning. "My aunt was an upright fixture in her rocking-chair, which never moved while she filled it. She darned stockings the entire morning with a perseverance wearying to behold." Grace asks Agnes to teach her patience, and is surprised when Agnes replies that she herself had been impetuous as a young woman. Toward the end of the novel, Agnes has died and Grace, forbidden to marry, has taken her place as her father's housekeeper: "My corner was the same my aunt had occupied . . . my needle plodded in and out, under and over, as hers used to move. I was almost as grave, too, as she appeared to me in those days . . ."[416]

Moss-side, however, has the requisite happy ending of antebellum domestic fiction. The skeleton in the Leigh family closet is extricated and exorcised, and Grace, having become a Christian and learned patience through various trials, is able to marry her beloved Herbert. Only with the prospect of matrimony do Terhune's beloved fairies enter the narrative. It is Christmas, and they make the once-dreary house a home. They then plunge into a cheerful orgy of spiritual housework.

> The fire sang a low, but merry strain . . . The quaint chairs danced in their several places, in the wickedly mischievous gleams of rising

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[415] Judith Anna Smith Hawes to Mary Virginia Hawes, 5 December 1842, in Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," p. 2 of Tms of letter.

[416] Harland, *Moss-side*, 84-85, 311.

> flame. Christmas fairies sported in every corner, tripped in the magic ring to the chirp of the cricket.
>
> There were sprites, as active and as gay, at work in the long-closed chamber of my heart, sweeping away its dust and cobwebs; purifying the airless tomb with morning breezes and morning sunshine."[417]

The joyless Aunt Agnes was never truly Grace's, or Terhune's, model. Rocking chairs, after all, are for rocking.

For both Evans Wilson and Terhune, then, the qualities of the "true woman" were closely bound up with both Christianity and romance. Womanly virtue bore a close resemblance to the Christian virtues of reverence, chastity, and humility, qualities which, at least in principle, were required of Christian men as well as women. Where personal happiness was concerned, moreover, romance took on even greater importance than conversion. While Christianity might bring serenity and the promise of eternal salvation, it was only in romantic love that women found joy in this life. It was this belief in the power of romance that gave the ideal of domesticity its magical quality.

Both Terhune and Evans Wilson struggled with the question of whether unmarried people could be happy. Both married unusually late for women in that era (especially Evans, who was thirty-three at the time of her wedding), and both considered the possibility that they might never marry. In theory, they and other evangelicals respected the state of "single-blessedness," and believed that unmarried people could achieve a measure of contentment provided they were engaged in useful work. In *Alone*, the heroine's friends Charley Dana and Ellen Morris remain single, and the novel ends with Ida's suggestion that the Christian faith could be a "cheerful, life-giving home" for

[417] Ibid., 352.

all.[418] Evans, in a letter to her friend Rachel Heustis, suggested that literary women, though less happy than married women with children, could nevertheless find a "calm, sweet reward" in the knowledge that they were doing God's work.[419]

In the end, however, neither novelist could imagine a woman who was truly happy in the single life. The evangelical culture regarded the married state as normal, while domestic ideology conceived of men and women as complementary, each incomplete without the other.[420] Evans and Terhune both depicted heroines who found contentment in their unmarried state, but it was as a prelude to a happy marriage. Good women and men might remain single, but it was inevitably the result of unhappy circumstances or poor health, never a matter of personal choice. Charley Dana's beloved had married another man; Ellen Morris's fiancé had died. Evans's Christian heroines either marry happily (Florence Hamilton, Beulah Benton) or die holy deaths (Mary Irving).

Terhune comes closest to depicting a happy single woman in an unusual short story, "Catch the Sunshine," published in *Godey's Lady's Book* in January 1858. In this tale, an invalid married woman, moldering in self-pity, recovers her zest for life through the encouragement of a cheerful, unmarried friend, Hatty Dale, who counsels her to "catch the sunshine." At the end of the tale she is astonished to learn that Hatty cannot marry because of hereditary insanity in her family, and that her friend's sunny spirits come solely from her faith in God. "There is no gloom His smile cannot dispel," Hatty

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[418] Charley, depicted as a highly attractive and deeply good man, was based on Terhune's close friend Ned Rhodes. Harland, *Autobiography*, 203; Harland, *Alone*, 384.

[419] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Rachel Lyons, 30 July 1860, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 18.

[420] In the 1850s, a decade of intense anti-Catholicism, the Catholic ideal of celibacy was derided as unnatural.

exclaims, “except when the shadows in which we are enveloped are created by ourselves!”[421]

Both Terhune and Evans Wilson considered sexuality an integral aspect of a happy marriage. While they treated the subject with the reticence characteristic of the period, they did not exhibit the exaggerated squeamishness about anatomy that has contributed to the modern perception that nineteenth-century Americans were “repressed.”[422] Terhune certainly encountered such attitudes, for in her post-war writings she was critical of the prudery that led one of her nurses to scold her when she complained of a skinned knee, with “Fie! What a word! Little ladies haven’t knees; their feet are pinned to the bottom of their pantalettes!”[423] Evans Wilson does not issue similar complaint, and her works imply that her characters, as passionate as they are principled, will find fulfillment in marriage on every level of their being: spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical.

It is this holistic approach to sexuality that most characterizes the work of Terhune and Evans. “Sex” was not reified; rather, a romantic sexuality permeated every aspect of human life as experienced by women and men. In the essentialist sexual idealism of the mid-nineteenth century, fulfillment arose from all healthy intercourse

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[421] Marion Harland, “Catch the Sunshine,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine* 56 (January 1858), 21.
[422] Rochelle Gurstein has argued that a culture of reticence protects and humanizes, rather than denies, sexuality. In the introduction to their study of the history of sexuality in America, John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman argue that modern beliefs about Victorian sexual repression are “present-minded,” based on the Freudian-derived belief that “physical sexual pleasure, or satisfaction, is critical to human happiness.” Pointing to work by Carl Degler and Peter Gay, who argue that Victorians affirmed sexual pleasure in marriage, they characterize the nineteenth-century attitude toward sexuality as “romantic, intimate, yet conflicted.” Rochelle Gurstein, *The Repeal of Reticence: A History of America’s Cultural and Legal Struggles over Free Speech, Obscenity, Sexual Liberation, and Modern Art* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996); D’Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, xi, xiii-xiv.
[423] In one of Terhune’s short stories about her childhood, the speaker is a slave nurse, Mam’ Chloe, who is “echoing” the attitudes she has learned from the white gentry. Harland, *When Grandmamma Was New*, 32-33; Harland, *Eve’s Daughters*, 59-60, 78.

between the sexes. From this perspective, Terhune, Evans Wilson, and their fellow evangelicals were far from reticent. They discussed "sex" constantly, exploring in books, periodical literature and fiction what they considered the natural and complementary differences between men and women. Terhune, in her fiction, depicted a number of conversations between several friends of both sexes over the distinctive needs and gifts of men and women.[424] Both Terhune and Evans created intimate dialogues between their heroes and heroines, or between two women heroines, on the same subject.

Finally, Terhune's 1910 *Autobiography* contains a hint that she had found delight in physical intimacy with her husband. Re-reading a letter she wrote to Eppes a year after her marriage, she felt that she was "inhaling an atmosphere of redolent of spices beloved of our granddames," and proceeded to quote from the erotic wedding songs of the *Song of Solomon*: "Thy lips drop as the honey-comb; honey and milk are under thy tongue . . ." (Song of Solomon 4:11). While avoiding the more explicit verses from the *Song*, Terhune makes explicit the union of the erotic and the spiritual for evangelicals: "We knew our Bibles 'by heart' in both senses of the term, then, and believed in the spiritual symbolism of that perfervid love-Canticle . . ."[425]

In this romantic ideology which Terhune and Evans Wilson promoted, intercourse between the sexes was characterized by mutuality rather than domination. If head (man) guided heart (woman), heart was just as likely to enlighten head. Women, moreover, had both the right and the moral obligation to develop their talents to the fullest. Although the term is anachronistic for the 1850s, Terhune and Evans might both be considered

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[424] Chapter 33, the final chapter of *Alone*, and Chapters 4 and 35 of *The Hidden Path* contain such conversations. Terhune was a great believer in friendship, including non-erotic friendships between men and women.
[425] Harland, *Autobiography*, 347-349.

"feminists" in the context of the mid-nineteenth century. They promoted education and creative opportunities for women, while they opposed ideologies that sneered at feminine abilities and sought to relegate women to a strictly domestic role. Both writers would certainly have agreed with the anonymous author of an article titled "Female Teachers," that appeared in the *Watchman and Observer* in 1851. The essay argued that the growing demand for female teachers was encouraging, "For who is not ready to concede that Female Education, has a deeper, happier, holier influence upon the state of society than that of the other sex . . ."[426]

The word "feminism" has, itself, undergone a change of definition over time. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1933) defines it as "Advocacy of the claims and rights of women," a definition it dates to 1895. By contrast, the *American Heritage Dictionary* (1982) defines feminism as "a doctrine that advocates or demands for women the same rights granted men, as in political and economic status." In the intervening century, feminism had changed from general advocacy of women, one which assumed sexual differences, to a "doctrine" which denied all but anatomical differences, and held that sexual equality required identical roles for men and women.[427] Terhune and Evans Wilson met the earlier definition, while opposing the later. Resorting to the more forceful methods employed by women's rights activists would, they believed, undermine

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[426] *Watchman and Observer* (Richmond), 18 September 1851.

[427] According to historian Nancy Cott, the domestic conception of women became obsolete in the 1910s, and the 1910s and 1920s were a period of crisis for the women's movement, which split between supporters of special laws for women based on sexual difference, and activists who argued that all special treatment maintained the inferior status of women. The latter faction lost the battle of the 1920s, but Cott argues that they lay the groundwork for the reemergence of feminism in the second half of the twentieth century. Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 6, 7, 10.

the ability of women to change their society for good by means of distinctively feminine influence.

Nature and Art

The romantic sensibility of the mid-nineteenth century, while idealizing marriage and family, also expressed itself in a passionate love for nature and for art, the human vision by which the glories of nature might be captured and even, if possible, surpassed. For evangelicals of the period nature was, as well, a witness to divine beauty and benevolence. The contemplation of nature was thought to have a purifying effect on human beings, while Christian art could serve as a witness to the unconverted, as well as encouragement to believers. Popular periodicals such as *Godey's* regularly featured lyrical (or sometimes less than lyrical) poetry that drew parallels between natural and spiritual or moral beauty.

Women were thought to be particularly sensitive to both natural and spiritual beauty, as a result of their innate sensitivity and intuitiveness. Terhune and Evans Wilson apparently needed no encouragement where nature was concerned. Both loved natural beauty with a passion, and both had a fondness for animals from the time they were children. According to Rachel Lyons (Heustis), Evans had been heartbroken, at about the age of ten, by the death of a kitten. In the excitement of Christmas Eve she had neglected to feed her pet. Reminded by her father, she went out only to find the kitten frozen in the snow. There was no joy in Christmas for young Augusta that year, but the childhood bereavement strengthened the connection between love and duty in her

mind.[428] Terhune had loved small animals of all kinds as a child, and remained fond of pets as an adult.[429]

According to one of her autobiographical short stories, Terhune also had a tomboyish fascination for insects while growing up, and this intellectual sport led to her receiving a lesson in reverence for life. The tale shows Terhune's distinctive twist on "sentimentality." The young "Mollie" (Ginny) has made a hobby of collecting praying mantises ("devil's race-horses") and studying the aggressive creatures' habits. One day, she shows her cousin Mollie Belle (apparently Virginia's real-life cousin "Cousin Mollie") how two mantises can be made to fight to the death. There follows a detailed account of how the insects wrestle viciously, until one finally bites the head off the other. Mollie Belle is repelled, but Mollie explains, "'Tisn't as if they had souls, you see. They just die and don't go anywhere." A moment later, the girls are obliged to flee the pasture for their lives when they are charged by an angry mother sow. After this apparent act of cosmic justice, Mollie Belle says to Mollie, "We will never make devil's race-horses fight again, Namesake. They have a right to their lives. And a life is a very precious thing!"[430]

As adults, both Terhune and Evans Wilson retained their love for nature. Terhune loved to take long walks, both for the exercise it gave her and because it gave her a chance to drink in the beauty of her surroundings. In the poetry she wrote for her beloved Eppes, Terhune often evoked memories of the natural beauty they had enjoyed together

[428] "Mrs. Wilson in War Times," *Mobile Register*, 10 May 1909, newspaper clipping in Augusta Evans Wilson Papers, Historic Mobile Preservation Society, Mobile.
[429] Terhune's son, Alfred Payson Terhune, inherited this fondness. A writer and journalist, he was best known for his popular stories about collies, set in Sunnybank, the family house in New Jersey.
[430] Harland, *When Grandmama Was New*, 36-44.

during their intimate talks. Her grateful response to Eppes's news of her conversion was prefaced by a description of the beautiful northeastern autumn, which Terhune used as a metaphor for her own gratitude: "This most magnificent of Northern rivers [the Hudson] flows directly below my window . . . Beyond tower the Palisades, the bare, stern rocks relieved by the changing masses of autumn foliage, and over all shines the October sun like the very smile of 'Our Father!' There is a brighter sunshine in my heart, a deeper river of love and praise as I write the words. . . ."[431] In general, however, Terhune associated her friendship with Eppes with the soft summer evenings they spent together, and in particular with the moon. Her earliest poetic tribute to Eppes had begun:

> I pray for thee at nightfall,
> When all the world is still,
> When dewdrops linger in the flower
> And moonbeams on the hill.[432]

The moon, of course, had figured largely in Terhune's own conversion experience, and throughout her life she would associate her friendship with Eppes with the moonlight.

Evans Wilson, too, closely connected natural beauty with her joy at her conversion. In January of 1856, she had written her friend the Reverend Walter Clopton Harriss about her recent escape from the clutches of skepticism. In April of the same year, she wrote Harriss again, this time in a state of joy that made her feel at one with the beautiful, busy spring day.

> What would I not give to have you with me for a few weeks! For I verily believe "if there be an Elysium on earth: it is this! it is this! And our soft sun and breeze burdened with the spicy perfume of magnolias,

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[431] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 18 October, 1855, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[432] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) [for Virginia Eppes Dance], 26 March, 1843, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

> oranges, chinas, and honeysuckle, would surely bring back to you health and strength.
>
> My Brother I am happy now! O so happy! I lift up my arms yearningly towards the clear loving sky that bends over me and feel that my heart can not hold its deep joy![433]

Unsurprisingly, then, the antebellum novels of Terhune and Evans Wilson are suffused with lyrical or rapturous descriptions of natural beauty. Terhune had a particular love for birds, and used them repeatedly in her fiction as symbols of innocence and joy.[434] When Grace (*Moss-side*) begins her slow recovery of faith, it is the sight of birds ("unsinning Sabbath-breakers") building their nests on a lovely spring day that leads her to recall her brother's wish that she should begin to lean, as he had, on a "higher power."[435] Maurice Oakley, the hero of *The Hidden Path*, has a caged but contented bird that loves to twitter a "vespers" at sundown.[436] The same novel also contains a striking description of a mockingbird that cheers the heroine as she faces an uncertain future:

> How he sang! As though the happiness of the universe were concentrated in his throbbing heart, and his mission in life was to pour it forth. One long, delicious gush of thanksgiving, a clear, liquid shout of joy . . . and he mounted aloft, borne up by his own music, higher and higher, in darting, eccentric circles, sending down, like a rain of diamonds, glad thrills of rapture. "The morning! the morning!" he sang, "God made it;" and, as if the doors of Bella's heart had been flung open, light, and perfume, and song filled it.[437]

If nature could bring both conversion and comfort to suffering human beings, art could aid in the task. Both Terhune and Evans Wilson conceived of art as a natural gift

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[433] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harriss, 22 April, 1856, in Frear, "You My Brother," 132.
[434] Evans would adopt the same symbolism after the Civil War, in *St. Elmo* and, especially, *Infelice*.
[435] Harland, *Moss-side*, 195.
[436] Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 271-172.
[437] Ibid., 64.

that should be developed to do the work of God, and they shared an interest in the visual and dramatic as well as literary arts.[438] Evans in particular was fascinated by the fine arts, and shared the frustration many cultured Southerners felt over the lack of artistic and literary development in the South.[439] The dilemma was especially vexing because Evans Wilson also argued that Southerners had an intrinsic appreciation for true art, as well as nature, while Northerners were oblivious to the latter and bent the former to propaganda purposes.[440] Despite such sectional antipathies, Evans subscribed to the *Cosmopolitan Art Journal*, a journal of art, literature, and criticism published in New York City, and she urged other Southerners to do the same as a means of fostering Southern *belles-lettres*.[441]

Terhune and Evans Wilson held contrasting views about realism in art, including their own art. The storyteller Terhune believed that art should reflect the reality of life, and indeed she often drew from personal experience, her own and those of others, in creating her stories. She often made a point of informing her readers when certain characters or events were taken straight from life, particularly when she suspected her readers and critics would consider them implausible. In the decade preceding the Civil War, Terhune was still young, romanticism (her own and that of her culture) remained vibrant, and despite some dark undercurrents in her own thinking the novelist was able to

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[438] Once she had abandoned her Old-School Presbyterian scruples, Terhune, herself a dramatic personality, found much enjoyment in the theater.
[439] In *Beulah*, the heroine confronts a prominent editor of a Southern literary magazine, arguing that literary periodicals stymied the development of Southern writing by refusing to compensate authors adequately for their work. Embarrassed, the editor offers to find a way to pay Beulah. Drew Gilpin Faust has written of the fellowship formed by four gifted Southerners who felt isolated in their concern for the refinement of Southern culture. Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 249-250; Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).
[440] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harriss, 22 April, 1856, in Frear, “You My Brother,” 133; Augusta Jane Evans, “Northern Literature,” Mobile *Advertiser*,11 and 18 October, 1859 and “Southern Literature,” Mobile *Advertiser*, 30 October and 6 November, 1859, in Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 71-72.
[441] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Orville James Victor, editor of the *Cosmopolitan Art Journal*, 6 June 1860, 1 December 1860, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 14-15, 24-25.

reconcile her religious idealism with her storytelling honesty because she believed the two would eventually coincide. It was a confidence that would be badly shaken in future years.

Evans Wilson, who always maintained an exalted idea of art, was not as vulnerable on this point. Less a storyteller than a painter of word-pictures (glorious or ludicrous depending on the reader's taste), she rejected the literary realism that was already beginning to appear in the 1850s and would become dominant in the years after the Civil War. In 1860 she complained to Rachel that many novelists, in "too close an imitation of Nature," had fallen into "patronizing coarseness, vulgarity, and ignorance," and she cited George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) as an example of this trend, possibly because the novel depicted a young woman who had murdered her illegitimate child.[442] The world needed "elevating," Evans asserted, and it was "the peculiar province of the Novelist to present the very highest, noblest types of human nature.[443] As early as 1856, Evans had engaged in a vigorous debate with the Reverend Harriss over the relationship between art and nature. Evans argued that Art transcended nature because it could point the way to hidden moral and intellectual truths. It was not enough that art should be skillful or visually beautiful. She strongly censured Shakespeare (despite the bard's high popularity at the time) for his failure to "woo the soul upward." In going to see a "famous Madonna" belonging to a "Dr. Singer," she was disappointed to find her only "a beautiful Spanish woman, and infant! No elevated expression, nothing ideal!" "O!,"

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[442] By "Nature," Evans apparently means the reality of human society, not the natural world whose purity she was fond of portraying as a contrast to the world of humanity.
[443] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Rachel Lyons, 15 November, 1860, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 21-22.

cried the impassioned Evans, "Art should elevate, should refine, should sanctify the heart!"[444]

Terhune and Evans Wilson also differed in their estimates of their own art, in a way that reflected their disagreement over the nature of art itself. Evans strove, with exalted language and copious erudite references, to create an art that would draw the souls of her readers upward. Many souls were attracted to this style, but many critics and at least some readers rejected it as pretentious and absurd.[445] Although it is not clear that Evans Wilson regarded herself as a great artist, she did adhere firmly to her own prescription for greatness. Ironically, Terhune, who was by far the better writer of the two, regarded herself as a lesser artist who might nevertheless hope to provide some encouragement or teaching to a few in her audience.[446]

Christian Community

While evangelicalism put a strong emphasis on the individual heart, the community of Christians also played an important role in evangelical culture. In a predominantly evangelical society, the distinction between neighbor and fellow adherent was not always evident, and believers could experience their community as both institutionally and geographically based. Thus, community could exist on distinct but overlapping levels outside of the immediate and extended family: geographically, as

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[444] Unfortunately, much of the debate between Evans and the Rev. Harriss on this subject has been lost, as a page is missing from the letter. Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harriss, 12 October, 1856, in Frear, "You My Brother," 138-139.

[445] S. H. (Stouten Hubert) Dent, a lawyer and Confederate artillery captain, was unimpressed by Evans Wilson. In an 1864 letter to his wife, he wrote, "Have you read 'Macaria?' It seems to be another pedantic exhibition from Miss Evans. I have however only read a small portion of it." S.H. Dent to Anna Dent, 10 September, 1864, S.H. Dent Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama.

[446] Harland, *Autobiography*, 264.

neighborhood, town, region, and nation; institutionally, as local church, synods and other church governance divisions, denomination, and church-linked benevolence associations that were sometimes interdenominational.[447] There was, in addition, a sense of a trans-institutional evangelical Protestant community that extended past national boundaries.

In their personal lives, Terhune and Evans Wilson differed greatly in their experience of Christian community as they grew to adulthood. Both were attached to their large immediate families, as well as to their extended families. Since the Hawes family remained within visiting distance from Judith Anna Hawes's sizeable extended family, Terhune had more connections than Evans in this respect. In addition, Terhune had many more friends and acquaintances. Evidently, the habit of socializing was instilled in her from living in a community in which neighbors exchanged visits on a regular basis. Terhune's diary records almost daily visits from or to neighbors, friends, and kin. Of course, Judith Anna's role in forcing her daughter to socialize with "common" visitors must have had an effect as well.

Terhune also identified far more strongly with her church than did Evans Wilson. Her diary and letters make constant reference to her church activities and her beloved pastor Moses Hoge, and they show that, in addition to singing in the choir and teaching Sunday school, she was actively engaged in events such as the annual fund-raising fair. It was not uncommon for her to attend church twice on a Sunday in order to hear sermons by different preachers (she also attended events such as prayer-meetings, temperance meetings, and lectures sponsored by Second Presbyterian and other churches).

[447] In the South, which remained wary of the growing social reform movements, benevolent societies tended to be explicitly geared toward mission, and included various tract and bible societies. One social reform cause that was widely accepted in the antebellum South, and in which Terhune was involved, was the temperance movement.

Evans Wilson, by comparison, is a study in religious isolationism. She may have re-joined the St. Francis Street Methodist Church at the urging of her friend Walter Harriss, since she thanks him for his "counsel regarding church matters" and informs him a year or two later that she has decided to hand her letter of membership to her pastor.[448] Apart from this reference, she makes no reference to the church in her surviving correspondence although she remained a member there for the rest of her life.[449] Apart from singing in the church choir after the Civil War, Evans Wilson seems to have avoided involvement in church activities. Her name does not appear on lists of women's committees in surviving church bulletins, and an 1895 address on the history of the church mentions Evans simply as one of the earliest members, and an author "whose books are justly the pride of the South," while praising by name dozens of other women members who had been engaged in various forms of church work.[450]

There are various possible reasons for the difference between Terhune and Evans Wilson in their church involvement. Terhune was usually healthy and possessed prodigious energy, while Evans Wilson was frail. As a young woman, Evans also devoted much of her time and energy to the nursing of family members, particularly her father. Moreover, Terhune had a famous and highly charismatic pastor in Moses Drury Hoge. If she herself became a literary "star of the South," Hoge was one of the South's ministerial stars, and future chaplain to the Confederate Congress. His warm personality and eloquent preaching attracted a sizeable congregation as well as a number of visitors

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[448] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harriss, 12 October, 1856 and 29 October, 185[8?], in Frear, "You My Brother," 136, 139-140.
[449] Apart from four letters to Harriss, Evans's earliest surviving letters date from 1859.
[450] Rev. J. W. Shoaf, "The Historic Memories of St. Francis Street Methodist Church of Mobile, An Address by Rev. J. W. Shoaf, D. D., March 31st, 1895, The Last in the Old Building, 12. Records of St. Francis Street Church. Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon.

on any given Sunday. Apart from any religious glamour factor, Terhune and her family also enjoyed a genuine personal friendship with Hoge, who was among the regular visitors to their home. Evans does not seem to have become strongly attached to any of her pastors, and none of the several ministers who led St. Francis Street Church could rival Hoge in renown.

Apart from these considerations, it is likely that the difference between Terhune and Evans Wilson in their church involvement was one manifestation of an important difference in their personalities. Terhune, despite the intensity of her interior life, was an extrovert who derived great satisfaction from her interactions with other people. In addition to a broad circle of friends and acquaintances, she formed a number of close friendships with both men and women. She also made a hobby of studying human nature, and her diary is full of comments, both admiring and caustic, about the people she encountered.[451] Terhune's active social life nurtured her storytelling talent. Evans, while she formed several close friendships (most notably, with Rachel Lyons Heustis), was not only introverted but highly intellectual, to the point where she appears to have lived much of her life in a world of ideas and ideals. This difference, as well as their regional identities and familial backgrounds, shaped the two novelists' ideas about "the South," and their opposing stances on the question of secession.

Terhune and Evans Wilson had similar beliefs about the structure of an ideal society: it should be orderly, hierarchical, benevolent and, of course, Christian. This was a common view in the antebellum South, and bears a close resemblance to the idea of

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[451] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 23 May, 1850, 16 August 1851, pp. 188, 308 of typed transcript.

"corporate individualism" developed by Jeffrey Young.[452] In this perfect society, all individuals, slaves included, might develop to the limits of their personal capacities. They believed that their Southern society was warm, hospitable and humane, and they contrasted this with the North which they believed was dominated by a cold, mercantilist culture. Evans, who with her family belonged entirely to the Deep South, drew this contrast strongly.

Terhune's thinking was much more moderate. She lived in the upper South, and her hometown of Richmond has been characterized as "a southern city with a northern tilt."[453] In addition, her father was from Massachusetts and she had visited her extended family in the North in 1851. While she certainly preferred Southern culture, her experience "at the North" led her to conclude that, under their apparently cold exteriors, at least some Northern hearts beat as warmly as Southern. "I seem to make friends everywhere," she confided to her diary, and the romances and friendships in her fiction often stepped blithely across the Mason-Dixon line.[454]

Thus, while Evans Wilson and Terhune held a similar vision of the ideal Christian society, they translated that vision into their political and social reality very differently. Terhune's primary political loyalty was to the United States republic, and while she was a young woman her strongest emotional ties were first to her home city and secondly to her

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[452] Jeffrey Robert Young, *Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670 to 1837* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

[453] Harry S. Stout and Christopher Grasso, "Civil War, Religion and Communications: The Case of Richmond," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 315.

[454] Terhune's diary describes various positive reactions to northerners in entries made between July 7 and August 20, 1851 (pp. 271-311 of Tms). *The Hidden Path* and *Moss-side* both end with happy marriages between a Northern man and a Southern woman, as well as depicting cross-regional friendships. Elizabeth Moss has argued that such happy endings were part of an effort by Southern domestic novelists to both defend Southern culture and promote peace and national unity at a time of rising sectional tension. Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 20 August, 1851, p. 310 of Tms; Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South*.

home state. Evans Wilson, on the other hand, displayed no strong attachment to either Mobile or Alabama. Politically and emotionally, she was bonded to "the South" that would soon become the Confederacy. In keeping with her intellectual approach to life, her "sunny South" had an almost abstract quality. Always a paradise of natural beauty, it also became for her a citadel of civilization as the sectional crisis deepened.

At the same time, paradoxically, Evans Wilson's "South" as ideal society was detached from place altogether. Not only did she avoid specific geographical references in *Beulah* (although the novel is clearly set in Mobile, the city is not named), but she also eschewed references to specifically Southern customs or characteristics. Beulah's conversion story could almost as well have been set in New York, London, or Edinburgh. Slaves are almost invisible in the novel, and when they do appear they are called "servants."[455] This was a polite term, commonly used by elite Southern whites, but Evans's "servants" are highly unusual in Southern fiction in that they are portrayed as dignified and, with rare exceptions, speak without a hint of "slave dialect." This is not, unfortunately, because Evans Wilson rejected racist ideology. Rather, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has demonstrated convincingly, Evans detached her literature from concrete regional associations because she thought Southern writers should have an impact "wherever the English language is spoken and read." She also avoided colloquial language because it did not meet her standards of "literary taste."[456]

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[455] In *Beulah*, Guy Hartwell's enslaved cook Hannah comes close to being a true character and even plays an important role in mediating between Beulah and Hartwell. After Beulah moves out of Hartwell's home, however, Hannah disappears from the plot entirely. While Evans informs us of the eventual fate of all of her white characters, including relatively minor ones, Hannah's destiny is left a mystery.

[456] Evans was influenced by Joseph Arthur, Count Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* [*An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*] (1853-55), one of the earliest works of scientific racism. She read Gobineau in the highly abridged translation by Henry Hotz and Josiah Nott, published as *The Moral and Intellectual Diversity of Races* (1856). This "translation" emphasized even more than the original the

Terhune had no such qualms. Slaves appear regularly in her antebellum novels, cheerfully speaking in a thick slave dialect, but their place is complex. Like most white Americans, Terhune considered blacks naturally inferior to whites, and she inserted an occasional pro-slavery apologetic into her fiction, primarily the argument that slaves were contented and well cared for in their state of bondage.[457] At the same time, Terhune often portrayed slaves as possessing a profound Christian faith and a spiritual wisdom and innocence that made them morally superior to whites. There is a condescending quality to this portrayal, for white children are shown to have the same capacities. Even so, this spiritual egalitarianism creates a strong counterpoint to Terhune's depiction of slaves as inferior, and it suggests a certain moral discomfort with the institution of slavery itself.[458] Furthermore, slaves often play a crucial role in Terhune's plots. In *Alone*, the slave minister Uncle Will is the human instrument of Ida's conversion, for he provides spiritual counsel and correction. He also, at her request, leads his congregation in prayer for her.

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inferiority of blacks, and reinterpreted Gobineau to support American race slavery. Evans enthusiastically recommended this book to her friend Walter Harriss. In "Northern Literature," Evans expressed virulently racist sentiments, complaining that Northern literature subverted the social order because the "low sensual African is dragged up from his normal position and violently thrust into an importance which the Creator has denied him by indications as strong as physical inferiority and mental incapacity could make them." Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harriss, 22 April, 1856, Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon; Michelle M. Wright, "Nigger Peasants from France: Missing Translations of American Anxieties on Race and the Nation," *Callaloo* 22.4 (1999): 840; "Northern Literature," Mobile *Daily Advertiser*, 6 November, 1859, in Elizabeth Fox-Genovese., Introduction, *Beulah*, xxii-xxiii.

[457] Terhune also used slaves for comic material, poking fun at domestic slaves' maladroit attempts to imitate the refined English of their owners. "It is always insecure," says one sage slave, "to renounce an opinion on what we are unaware of." This mockery, while patronizing, had more to do with Terhune's enjoyment of the ridiculous than any racist intent. In her later writings, Irish servants, working-class Americans, mid-Westerners, Englishmen and Frenchmen, even the famous Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon, would meet the same treatment. Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 7; Harland, *Loiterings*, 35.

[458] In her *Autobiography*, Terhune sympathetically tells the story of her "Aunt Rice" (Ann Rice, her hostess at Hampden-Sydney), who freed her slaves, spent several years training them for independent living, and sent them to Liberia. On learning that they were hungry and unhappy there, she brought them back to the United States. The entire procedure almost bankrupted her, and she spent her final years in poverty. Terhune comments admiringly that Rice bore her humiliation and disappointment in silence. "If her ancestors had sinned in bringing the race into bondage, and her teeth were thereby set on edge, she hid her hurt." Harland, *Autobiography*, 98-101.

In *Moss-side*, it is the prayer of an aged female slave, Aunt Molly, that helps bring Grace to the point of conversion. In *The Hidden Path*, a perceptive slave cook, Aunt Hagar, alerts Bella to the fact that her stepfather is slowly and subtly killing her mother.[459] Part of Terhune's evangelical vision, then, was the belief that all social inequalities would disappear in Heaven. When Molly dies, content in the knowledge that Grace has become a Christian, Grace reflects over her grave on her metamorphosis: "on earth an indigent slavewoman; in Heaven, the 'King's daughter all glorious' without as 'within'."[460]

In her fiction, Terhune sometimes depicted a close emotional attachment between her heroines and their slaves. In *Alone*, for example, Ida's slave maid, Rachel, comforts her depressed mistress by giving her a Christmas gift of silver jewelry, purchased with her own money. Ida, who is curt with her maid until she sees the gift, is so touched by this token of affection that she bursts into tears.[461] If such experiences had real life counterparts for Terhune, however, there is no evidence for them in her personal writings from the period. Based on her accounts of her childhood in *When Grandmamma Was New*, she seems to have had a strong attachment to several slaves when she was a child. If so, these attachments had apparently dissolved by the time she was older. As is generally the case with the personal papers of slaveholding families from this era, her diary and letters barely mention slaves.

At the age of seventeen, Terhune recorded one personal conversation with a slave in a letter to Eppes. Since this is the only contemporary and non-fictionalized description of her relationship with the Hawes family slaves, it is worth describing at some length.

[459] Harland, *Alone*, 226-230; Harland, *Moss-side*, 196; Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 213.
[460] Harland, *Moss-side*, 212.
[461] Harland, *Alone*, 168-169.

While writing to Eppes one morning, Virginia looked out her window to see Nelly, a household servant, standing near the gate and looking dejected. She laid aside her pen and went down to ask what was wrong. Nelly told Virginia she was "low-spirited." "Nonsense!" was Virginia's empathetic response, but the slave protested that she was indeed depressed, and explained that her "old man" (husband) had abandoned her. Nelly's husband belonged to a different slaveholder, and lived some distance away. Wishing to marry another woman, he spread word that Nelly was dead, and subsequently received his master's permission to remarry ("Some white men would think him a sensible fellow," was Virginia's caustic comment to Eppes). Virginia proceeded to give Nelly some advice she would never have given a white woman.[462] She counseled the slave "not to die just out of spite," but to show instead that she cared as little for her former husband as he had for her. She then offered to provide Nelly with her evaluation of Nelly's next suitor. Rewarded by Nelly's grateful smile, "which displayed every polished ivory in her mouth," Virginia returned to her writing desk, "well pleased that I had poured a few drops of balm into a bleeding heart!!!" and provided Eppes with an account of the conversation which had interrupted her letter. The next paragraph begins with, "What a rigmarole of nonsense I am writing."[463]

The "rigmarole" is probably a reference to the entire letter, which is mostly chatty and lighthearted.[464] Nevertheless, such light and patronizing sympathy as Terhune displayed toward Nelly shows her inability to empathize with the slave and her

[462] Terhune believed strongly in the permanence and sacredness of the marriage vow.
[463] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 26 April, 1848, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[464] Terhune, who liked a laugh even at her own expense, may also have been chuckling at her own self-satisfaction over her good deed.

assumption that blacks could not be held to the same moral standards as whites. Evans Wilson's anger at Northern subversion of the social order, and her attraction to scientific racism, shows a still greater alienation from blacks. In all, neither Terhune nor Evans Wilson was able to transcend the racism endemic to their society. Nevertheless, Terhune's vision of an egalitarian heaven suggests that she had some inkling of an alternative, at least in her religious imagination.

Providence

God is a central, if often mysterious, character in evangelical domestic fiction. While evangelicals differed over the nature of divine intervention, most domestic novelists gave God a role in ordering the events of their characters' lives. Outright miraculous intervention was rejected as too unscientific – and too Catholic – but God's providence was often shown or implied in various ways.[465] There were the intuitions, premonitions, and inexplicable convictions that sustained characters through their darkest moments. There were plot developments ordered toward the salvation of the chosen characters. There might even be more marvelous occurrences, "particular providences," the small but striking signs that a larger purpose was at work even in the details of characters' experience.

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[465] During the antebellum period, revelation and science were assumed to be compatible, since there could be only one truth that was both factual and moral in nature. Natural theology was in what historian Gregory Johnson has called its "heyday". The fear that religion and science were in conflict would not become prominent until later in the nineteenth century. In the antebellum era, however, there was some concern among Methodist natural theologians over the dangers of "materialistic reductionism." It was seen as a threat to female modesty and virginity, the loss of which would destabilize the culture. Gregory Johnson, "Matters of Unity, Truth, and Morality: Science and Theology in the *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, 1847-1851," *Methodist History* 31:2 (January 1993): 78, 80, 82.

The first type of providential ordering, more interior and therefore less problematic from a scientific point of view, is more characteristic of Evans Wilson than of Terhune. Evans depicts Beulah as having a kind of instinctive hope in God's goodness, based partly on her confidence of her own intellectual honesty. Even in the throes of skepticism, Beulah remains convinced that there is a land of "Beulah" for her.[466] When Hartwell goes abroad and she fears that he will never return, she nevertheless retains the mysterious conviction that he will. Such spiritual hope, of course, closely resembled the intuitive genius that the gender ideology of the era ascribed to women, and partly accounts for the belief that women were more religious than men. Yet Terhune portrays one of her heroes, Maurice Oakley, as possessing the same serene confidence. Secretly in love with the heroine, he is content to wait until he can make his feelings known (his caged bird, softly warbling its Vespers song, symbolizes Maurice's patience). In Terhune's fiction, however, such inner knowledge is more likely to take the form of premonitions of suffering or evil.[467]

Plot developments, especially those directly related to a character's conversion, are also intended to illustrate the ways of Providence, although in this instance it is difficult to disentangle religious teaching from literary device. Playing God herself by virtue of her authorial role, the novelist portrays God as behind-the-scenes actor in her story. In Terhune's and Evans Wilson's early novels, the sufferings the heroines undergo are interpreted as "mysterious providences" that prepare them for salvation. As the now

[466] The name "Beulah," meaning "married," is taken from Isaiah 62:4, which draws a parallel between a happily married woman and Israel's "marriage" to God. For Evans, this land of "Beulah" seems to have been the South. For a discussion of this interpretation, see Fox-Genovese, Introduction, *Beulah*, xi, xxxiv-xxxv; Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 275.
[467] Harland, *Alone*, 301; Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 179, 253; Harland, *Moss-side*, 84-85, 103-104.

converted Ida tells Lynn's bereaved fiancée, "He [God] smites to heal. In my short life, I have studied His providences sufficiently to teach me that it is the wise Physician, as well as the Father, who takes away our hurtful delights, and rives our heart."[468] Human experience could also serve as catechism. In *Moss-side*, Grace's conversion is partly effected through the love of her niece Lilly, whom she has previously saved from drowning. "You saved my life last February, Auntie, dear – almost died to do it," says the child, "What would you or anybody else say if I were never to thank you for it; if I did not love you better than I ever did before . . . .The Saviour has done more for us than you could ever do for me."[469]

Finally, there are the apparently magical occurrences that indicate an unseen hand is directing events toward their happy ending. In two instances, Evans Wilson has Beulah open the Bible at "random," and find specific passages that answer the questions she is asking about faith. When Beulah, her faith growing dim, wonders why the "blessed" must suffer, she reads the same lesson Terhune was teaching, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth" (*Hebrews* 12:6). Later, on a rare visit to church, the now skeptical and self-directed Beulah opens her bible to Job 38, in which God challenges Job about his lack of knowledge. For a moment, she longs to renew her faith.[470] The moment passes, for Beulah is not to be convinced by signs and wonders; on the whole, the scientifically-minded Evans-Wilson eschewed such small-scale miracles in her fiction.

It was Terhune, the lover of fairies and birds, who openly made a case for "minute" or "particular providences." The mockingbird whose song thrills Bella Conway

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[468] Harland, *Alone*, 325. See also Harland, *Alone*, 7; Harland, *Moss-side*, 84; Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 59.
[469] Harland, *Moss-side*, 203.
[470] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 59, 263.

bursts onto the scene at a moment when she is feeling desolate and frustrated over the "hidden path" of her future. Not coincidentally, the bird is perched at the top of a tall poplar, "Nature's spire, which, untrained by man, pointed ever heavenwards."[471] Grace, at her spiritual nadir, hears Lilly calling her just as she had tried without success to pray, and resolves to ask the child to help her understand "the reconcilement of God to man."[472] It was in *Alone*, however, that Terhune made her case for small providences most explicitly. In the middle of the novel, the heroine and hero discuss the validity of the notion. Ida points out that some object to this concept, since it contradicts "free agency" and "accountability," but Morton points to the Bible and to "common sense" to support the argument that a "Supreme Governor of the universe," who yet cares for every sparrow (Matthew 10:31, Luke 12:7) can certainly order small things as well as great. Moreover, he adds, "Nothing which God does is *small* . . . . His attention to small things is as conclusive a proof of His Divinity, as to great ones."[473] By the end of the novel, when all misunderstandings have been cleared away and Morton is able to propose to Ida, an array of tiny providences makes it possible for them to wed immediately. All their friends happen to be gathered together, the drawing-room happens to have been freshly decorated with white roses, and Aunt Judy, the cook, happens to have just baked a cake which "riz nicer than any I'se made since old Marster's wedding!"[474]

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[471] Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 64.
[472] Harland, *Moss-side*, 198.
[473] Terhune's vocabulary and arguments suggest that she had been at least indirectly influenced by Scottish common-sense philosophy which, as adopted by American theologians, showed both the reasonableness of faith and the need for revelation. E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 178; Harland, *Alone*, 244-245.
[474] Harland, *Alone*, 374-375.

Terhune's confidence in "providences," both mysterious and minute, was based on personal experience. Her diary contains several descriptions of premonitions, often of future suffering, although the inaccuracy of some of these led her to be more cautious of them in real life than she was in her fiction. "I am unwilling to trust in presentiments," she wrote in June 1849, "yet there seems to be a cloud hanging over me which I cannot dispel, whether it be caused by weakness of the body or the shadow of coming evil, time will prove."[475] Terhune also described, in her diary and letters to Eppes, vivid dreams which impressed her as prophetic in nature because they left her with a "vague, indefinable feeling of reality" after she had awakened. She recorded one such instance on November 13, 1850. She had dreamed that she was sitting at the family piano when her father walked in and announced, "Well, I shall be protested on Saturday next; shall fail at last!" That evening, after prayers, she remained in the room with her parents after the rest of the family had left. She suddenly and vividly recollected her dream, and experienced the same "dreamy feeling" she had had that morning, so that she was not surprised when her father spoke "the very words of my vision." Terhune interpreted the dream as God's way of preparing her for difficult times, part of a general gift of "inward strengthening" she had received from her "kind Almighty Parent."[476] In a more cheerful incidence of providence, Terhune recorded in her *Autobiography* her belief that she had received news of the international publication of her short story "Marriage From Prudential Motives," just when she needed the encouragement the most, at the start of her career as a novelist.[477]

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[475] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary,"19 June, 1849, p. 107 of typed transcript.
[476] Ibid., 13 November, 1850, pp. 237-238 of typed transcript.
[477] Harland, *Autobiography* 247-248.

Finally, Terhune, like many of her fictional characters, experienced the workings of providence through her love of nature. In *The Christmas Holly* (1866), she described how, as a teenager in a gloomy mood, she had been comforted in a manner that strongly resembles Bella Conway's poplar and mockingbird. Terhune was walking alone on a bleak November day, through an equally cheerless landscape, when she was surprised to come across a clump of dwarf trees ringing "a holly sapling, brave with leaves of glossy green and scarlet berries. The only smile in the drear expanse, it was itself a whole fountain of cheer." The tree seemed to her to be gathering warmth from "the great heart of Mother Earth." As she gazed at it, a flock of plump snowbirds "whirled noisily across the plain, and alighted, with much twittering and a deal of happy, useless fluttering, among the inviting branches." She returned home in a very different frame of mind.[478]

In these and various ways, the young Terhune became convinced, God answered the prayers and nourished the spirits of his followers.[479] Christians needed this sustenance as they trudged through the wasteland of the world.

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[478] Harland, *The Christmas Holly*, v-vii (page citations are identical in original and reprint editions).
[479] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 22 December, 1850, p. 245 of typed transcript.

CHAPTER IV: GRAPPLING WITH THE WORLD:
TERHUNE, EVANS WILSON, AND THE EVANGELICAL CHALLENGE

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." (I John 2:15) If Terhune and Evans Wilson had their vision for an ideal community, they also saw a rival system of values at work in their society. In this conception, too, the novelists were representative of the larger evangelical culture. Drawing on their biblical vocabulary, they named this ideological competitor "the world," and they acknowledged that it exerted a powerful attraction on their readers, and also on themselves. The novelists' stance toward this anti-vision is best summarized by the words from the First Epistle of John. It emphasized non-conformity rather than outright opposition, freedom from the world more than victory over it. Terhune, Evans Wilson, and their fellow novelists sought, through their fiction, to convince their readers of the hollowness of the world's values and the falsity of its claims. The formulaic happy ending of the domestic novel was a prefiguration of the eventual realization of the evangelical vision, and it assured the reader that the dissolute world would meet its logical fate – dissolution.

Christianity had traditionally understood the "world" as the dominant temporal system of sin and corruption, but for Terhune and Evans Wilson, coming of age in the last decades of the antebellum era, that world primarily referred to the more sinister and chaotic aspects of the market revolution. Both women had suffered personally from the

volatile economic conditions of the time, Terhune from the economic uncertainty that threatened her family's security in the late 1840s, Evans from the diminishing of her family's fortune following the crisis of 1837. As writers, both repeatedly explored the theme, so standard to domestic fiction, of the virtuous young woman obliged to make her own way in a heartless society.

In the mind of the domestic novelists, and of evangelicals in general, the "world" of the market revolution was associated not only with economic hardship but with anti-Christian values and ideologies. The marketplace was believed to encourage materialism, the worship of money, and the exploitation of the poor. For Southern writers, this utilitarian mindset was particularly associated with the commercial society of the North, which they contrasted with the humane values of the South. At the same time, Southern writers also depicted Southern society, especially in urban areas, as riddled with the identical corrupt values. Materialism, in their view, was closely connected with personal vices: with drunkenness and gambling in men, with vanity and fashion-worship in women, with calculated social climbing in both sexes.

Such personal corruption was not to be laid exclusively at the door of the market revolution, however, for the domestic novelists also held to the traditional evangelical understanding of personal sin as the chief source of social disorder. Terhune and Evans Wilson often depicted evil as a personal if mysterious choice. Terhune in particular explored the role of sin in everyday life in the short stories she published in the 1850s. Many of these stories explore the dark side of family life – domestic violence, alcoholism, adultery – and roughly half of them end unhappily. They present a

pessimistic view of human experience that would not appear in the writer's novels until the eve of the Civil War.[480]

In many cases, these Southern novelists also pointed to traditional Southern culture, rather than pernicious Northern influence, as a fertile ground for the nurturing of these sins. The South had been Christianized relatively late, in the 1830s, and evangelicals in the 1850s were keenly aware of ongoing vitality of an earlier, violent Southern culture based on a secular concept of honor.[481] Both Terhune and Evans Wilson, for example, were unequivocal in their condemnation of dueling as a form of murder. In an earlier age, dueling had been considered essential to the maintenance of gentlemanly honor.[482]

In keeping with the domestic ideology of the age, the evangelical novelists argued that the distinctive genius of "woman" enabled her to counter the insidious effects of "the world," both through her nurturing of her family and through her exposure of worldly deceits in her fiction. Terhune and Evans Wilson each sought to live out both dimensions of this feminine influence. In their personal lives, Terhune aspired to be the model

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[480] Historian Jane Turner Censer has noted a similar pattern among other popular women novelists, and has suggested that the discrepancy exists because of the character of the antebellum literary marketplace. The buying public could accept a degree of pessimism in its short stories (published together with lighter-themed material in popular magazines such as *Godey's*) that it could not swallow in a full-length novel. Jane Turner Censer, e-mail communication to author, June 23, 2006.

[481] Southern historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown has coined the term "primal honor" to describe the highly patriarchal, image-based value system held by the elite of this older Southern culture. He has argued that in the nineteenth century this ethic was modified by "accretions of humanitarian and Christian gentility." Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982; Oxford Paperbacks, 1983), xi.

[482] South Carolinian novelist Caroline Gilman, writing a generation earlier than Terhune and Evans, was much more ambivalent in her attitude toward dueling. In *Recollections of a Southern Matron*, the heroine Cornelia Wilton encourages her brother to engage in a duel, but is then overwhelmed by a sense of horror and guilt as she faces the possibility of his death. Gilman depicts Cornelia as torn between the Christian and humanitarian condemnation of the practice, and her sense that dueling is necessary to maintain masculine honor. Caroline Howard Gilman, *Recollections of a Southern Matron* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1838), 179.

homemaker and mother, and Evans, while unmarried, devoted much of her time to nursing family members. In their writing, both portrayed the cruelty and destructive effects of worldliness. The hardhearted businessman or matron, the brutal and dissipated rake, and the manipulative belle are stock anti-heroes in their fiction and that of their fellow domestic novelists. In conceiving of novel-writing as a form of prophetic censure for sin, the novelists had the support of their fellow evangelicals, at least those who did not oppose fiction on the grounds that it was inherently deceptive. An example of such support for Terhune may be found in the pages of the *Watchman and Observer*, in which a letter writer using the pseudonym "Equity" noted the popularity of *Alone* and applauded its message: "Let the incarnation of religion in soul-felt beauty be given us by the novelist, and the poisoned tastes of our youth may be corrected, purified."[483] Terhune and Evans Wilson indeed hoped that their writings would be an antidote to a multitude of spiritual poisons.

Skepticism

If the evangelical vision saw the Christian life as rooted in conversion, its counterpart in the worldly anti-vision was atheism. Both Terhune and Evans Wilson worried about what they saw as an increase in religious skepticism during the 1840s and 1850s. Evans Wilson in particular, in the wake of her own crisis of faith, initially

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[483] "Equity" was responding to a previously published condemnation of *Alone* in an earlier letter written under the pseudonym of "Clement." "Clement" evidently argued that fiction romanticized life and was inherently false, and that religion should be kept separate from life. "Equity" replied that fiction should be distinguished from falsehood, and religion was intended to permeate daily life, not be kept separate from it. About two weeks later, the *Watchman* published another letter by a writer using the name "Solus," which also rejected "Clement's" arguments and argued for the beneficial effects of religious fiction. In the pages of the *Watchman and Observer*, the opponents of fiction appear to have been losing ground in the 1850s. *Watchman and Observer* (Richmond), 18 May, 1854 and 1 June, 1854.

conceived of her literary vocation as a crusade against skepticism. Historian James Turner has argued that, even while evangelical revivalism remained strong throughout the antebellum era, atheism and agnosticism underwent something of a revival of their own beginning in the 1840s, and that many who remained Christian experienced considerable unease and uncertainty.[484] Atheism seems to have held a particular attraction for intellectuals. Intellectual historian Michael O'Brien has noted that, even while most Christians of the era saw atheism as "unnatural," educated Southerners, Evans's "Beulah" included, found its promise of personal freedom and power alluring.[485] Based on the story of Beulah, Evans seems to have been particularly troubled by her encounters with good people who were unable to accept the Christian faith despite their own desire to believe. In *Beulah*, Evans created such a character in the person of Dr. Asbury, Guy Hartwell's genial and kindhearted partner. When Beulah feels her Christian faith dissolving, she goes to Dr. Asbury for help, only to learn to her dismay that he himself is a reluctant skeptic despite his respect for his wife's strong faith. Evans, however, hinted that the doctor might be converted in the end.[486] Speaking through Asbury, she suggested that intellectuals in particular were being tested by skepticism.[487]

Terhune, while she does not seem to have been tempted to atheism herself, experienced something of a secondhand religious crisis as a teenager in that she was alarmed at the religious disillusion her father experienced in the late 1840s. Her diary contains repeated references to Samuel Hawes's depression and irritable outbreaks, which were related to business and church troubles. "Father desperately low-spirited – a

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[484] Turner, *Without God*, 141, 163.
[485] O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 767, 1166.
[486] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 254-255, 415.
[487] Ibid., 257.

serious matter," she wrote on March 20, 1848. On May 7, the date that Second Presbyterian was dedicated, she noted, "Father sick in bed, the fatigue and anxiety he has undergone lately have prostrated him completely. The Dedication Service in the afternoon." The situation was no better by May 22: "Father sick and desponding. I really fear that it will be impossible for him to weather the storm. It is a perilous time in the mercantile world; failures multiply each day, and they are mostly among the houses of long standing and hitherto unblemished credit." Another entry, dated July 1, highlights the role of the Second Presbyterian Church in Hawes's distress: "That dreaded church meeting comes on Monday night. I much fear that father will not be able to sustain the many troubles he will undergo that day. May God sustain him!"[488] During this same period, Hawes was shooting barbed remarks at his teenaged daughter and pressuring her to take a teaching position.

In his anxiety, Samuel Hawes often vented his frustrations by denouncing the perfidy of mankind in general and Christians in particular. On one occasion, he upset his daughter by claiming (in the presence of his younger children) that "there was more hypocrisy in the church than in the world." In that case, Terhune wondered, "What was the use of a visible church?" By October, Terhune felt that her father's spiritual bitterness had infected her. "What an unfortunate creature I am," she confided to her diary. "Long have I struggled against the distrust and suspicion with which the often enforced maxims of my father have filled my heart. I have prayed, wept over, written against them, but in vain. Slowly but gradually his sentiments have been adopted as my own. He has cited instances innumerable when everything – natural affection, religion

[488] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," Sunday, 20 March, 7 May, 22 May, 1 July 1848, pp. 33, 46, 50, 58 of typed transcript.

itself – has been made to yield to self-interest. . . Driven from side to side, almost upon the verge of infidelity and madness, I have settled down into a cold stoicism. . ." The entry ends with a desperate prayer: "What shall I do? My brain reels. God of mercy, pity me!"[489]

Moses Drury Hoge's biographer sheds some light on the conditions at Second Presbyterian that contributed to Samuel Hawes's distress. The new church was growing rapidly and its finances were inadequate to meet its needs. It was burdened with debt, and the business failures of several members of the congregation contributed to the crisis. At a meeting of the officers and other interested members (possibly the "dreaded church meeting" of Terhune's diary), the church leaders reluctantly concluded that the building would have to be sold. Hoge, however, surprised his congregation by offering a solution. He would serve as the church's pastor without pay, so that his salary could be applied to the church's debt, and he would support himself by opening a school. The officers agreed, and Second Presbyterian was saved.[490]

Samuel Hawes's business troubles were not over, however, and his depressions continued well into the following year. In May of 1849, his daughter noted, he was in "one of his worst fits of despondency and bitterness against mankind, which of course infects everyone around him, and I for the thousandth time [am] made to feel my utter weakness and folly."[491] Apparently Samuel's dour moods were so extreme as to give rise to rumors outside the family. In early 1849 Mary Virginia wrote to her friend Eppes, exasperated because she had not heard from her, and attempted to persuade her to come

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[489] Ibid., 19 May, 1848, 13 October, 1848, pp. 49, 76 of typed transcript.
[490] Hoge described his plan in a letter to First Presbyterian pastor William Plumer, in a letter dated July 29, 1848, and quoted in Peyton Harrison Hoge's biography. PH Hoge, *Moses Drury Hoge*, 99-101.
[491] Hawes (Terhune) Diary, 28 May, 1849, p. 102 of typed transcript.

to Richmond for a visit. “There is no cholera here, nor is there likely to be, father is not insane as I understand your worthy country folks have reported, and there is little prospect of our church being brought down by the hammer!”[492]

In addition to her father’s morose example, Mary Virginia had her own temptations to misanthropy, based on several unhappy experiences in friendship and disillusion with people she had trusted and admired. She experienced some intense depressions of her own, which she usually recorded in her diary without providing details about their cause. “My trust in mankind is gone,” she mourned in December of 1848, “Oh! I could weep my very life away at the blank that is left in my heart.” “A wound to self-love, the death-blow to Friendship,” she inscribed dramatically and mysteriously in February of 1852.[493] Yet these wounds, however much they diminished Terhune’s faith in humanity, did not prompt her to discard her faith in God. From the time that she began her diary Terhune had maintained a certain skepticism about human nature, and by her twentieth birthday her experiences had led her to conclude that, while mankind as a whole had little to commend it, she had found a growing number of “honorable exceptions to the general rule.” By the New Year in 1852, she could announce to her diary that she was not “misanthropical,” and that she had resolved to seek her happiness in the next world rather than this.[494] After all, the various proofs of human depravity were likely to reinforce rather than undermine Terhune’s native Calvinist faith.

Based on her own experience, however, Terhune did believe that personal hardship could lead to loss of religious faith or an inability to convert. She conveyed this

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[492] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 13 February, 1849, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[493] Hawes (Terhune) Diary, 3 December, 1848, 28 February, 1852, pp. 82, 323 of typed transcript.
[494] Ibid.,28 April, 1846, 21 December, 1850, 4 January, 1852, pp. 4, 243, 316 of typed transcript.

idea in her fiction. Ida Ross, the heroine of *Alone*, who was cold and embittered prior to her conversion, is probably a portrait of the author herself in her "misanthropical" phase.[495] Louise Wynne, the infidel anti-heroine of *Moss-side*, loses her faith in God because her worldly parents have prevented her from marrying the man she loves. Since her father worships Gold and her mother Society, Louise declares, she herself will have no god.[496] She is portrayed more as a tragic figure than a villain. Like Terhune, Evans Wilson suggested to her readers that religious infidelity could be a consequence of suffering. The Jesuit Mazzolin, the melodramatic villain of *Inez*, is certainly malevolent of his own accord, but Evans makes it clear that his character has also been warped by his father's abandonment and his mother's bitter yearning for revenge. The idea is less explicit in *Beulah*, but Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has made a sophisticated argument that Beulah's skepticism, while fed by her study of philosophy, is rooted in her personal losses.[497] Evans's emotional intensity, and her continual emphasis on need of the womanly heart for love, support this interpretation.

Yet the "infidels" were not merely, or even primarily, victims in the eyes of Terhune and Evans Wilson. Various personal defects paved the way to ideological atheism, as well as to the practical atheism of respectable citizens who, while they might well be habitual church-goers, lived as if there were no god. Pride was perhaps the sin most conducive to ideological atheism. It might take the form of excessive independence and self-will, as in the case of Louise Wynn who, following her rejection of God, uses her considerable talent to promote feminism and transcendentalism (neglecting her

[495] Smith, "Mary Virginia Terhune" (Ph.D. diss.), 179.
[496] Harland, *Moss-side*, 9.
[497] Orphaned from childhood, Beulah loses her only sister early in the novel. Fox-Genovese suggests that Evans made this argument unconsciously. Fox-Genovese, Introduction, *Beulah*, xxv.

husband and son in the process). Evans's Beulah Benton is in large part motivated by intellectual pride. Her search for philosophical truth, while sincere, is accompanied by a growing hardness that Evans conveys by frequent references to Beulah's "cold smile" and curling lip. This iciness is inseparable, in Evans's mind, from the heroine's quest for emotional and economic independence. Beulah's conversion comes only after she learns intellectual humility, and she acquires this lesson through her reading of Sir William Hamilton's essay, "Philosophy of the Conditioned," which argued that all human knowledge was limited because finite human beings could not grasp an infinite reality. Gazing up at a starry night sky after finishing the essay, Beulah realizes on an emotional level that she cannot solve the mystery of the universe, and she returns to her room to repent and pray.[498] Hamilton's thesis resembles Evans's personal conclusion, following her crisis of skepticism, that she could know nothing through her own power. ". . . I am sick to death of the struggle!" she wrote her friend Walter Harriss. "And impotent to help myself, I give it over, and admit that I do not and can not know anything, save as God wills I should!"[499]

Practical atheism was the province of the everyday American rather than the genius. In the view of the Terhune and Evans Wilson, it usually arose from the materialistic temper of the times. The market revolution, with its affirmation of profit-seeking, encouraged a utilitarian mentality and contempt for all human loves that could

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[498] Sir William Hamilton (1788-1856) sought to reconcile German transcendental philosophy, which emphasized the human capacity for knowledge, with the Scottish common sense tradition that stressed human limitations. According to Michael O'Brien, the recognition of human ignorance is a meeting ground for Christianity and modern philosophy. Hamilton is considered to have prepared the way for modern relativism, and O'Brien suggests that *Beulah*, ironically, comes close to being one of America's first existential novels despite its author's orthodox intentions. O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 1133-1137, 1169; Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 384-385, 387.

[499] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harris, 29 January, 1856, in Frear, "You My Brother," 130.

not be assigned a monetary value. In Terhune's antebellum novels, the quintessential devotee of amoral capitalism is "Mr. Read," Ida Ross's cynical guardian in *Alone*. Priding himself on his realism, Read views men as "machines" to be manipulated, and he dismisses all "holy and beautiful feelings" as "romance and nonsense!" For Terhune, such feelings were not mere sentiments but evidence that human beings were created in the image of God. Having rejected the heart, Mr. Read is estranged from the world of the spirit. Significantly, he is also contemptuous of women, whose apprehension of reality was thought to spring primarily from the heart. For Read, wrote Terhune, "the crying sin was to be 'womanish'; - 'woman' and 'fool' were synonymes [sic], used indiscriminately to express the superlative of re-exciting folly."[500]

The domestic novels, however, contain numerous specimens of feminine humanity who reject their own hearts. In them, the same materialistic focus leads to a shallow preoccupation with fashion and social prestige, and an often unscrupulous quest for an advantageous marriage and fortune. Such a heartless female is Adelaide Berkeley, the "conceited beauty" of *The Hidden Path*, who seduces the heroine's fiancé away from her.[501] One of several villainesses in *Beulah* is May Chilton, Dr. Hartwell's widowed sister, who attempts to drive a wedge between her brother and his protégée in order to secure his fortune for herself. Occasionally, the fashion-driven woman was portrayed as more weak than heartless. Mrs. Grayson, who adopts Beulah's sister Lily and then prohibits Beulah from visiting her, smothers her womanly sympathy out of a misguided sense of social duty.[502]

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[500] Harland, *Alone*, 19.
[501] Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 54-55.
[502] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 29.

In men, weakness might take the form of enslavement to drink, gambling, and sometimes (by implication) womanizing. In *Beulah*, the heroine's friend Eugene Graham is sent to Europe for an advanced education, but acquires only a taste for dissipation. His character is redeemed following a life-threatening accident, but not before he has entered into a miserable marriage with yet another heartless beauty, Antoinette Dupres. In *Moss-side*, the charismatic and cynical Frenchman Mr. Dumont is not only an atheist himself, but a danger to the faith of others.[503] He is also revealed at novel's end to be a seducer and bigamist.[504]

De facto rejection of faith might also be rooted in outright evil. Both Terhune and Evans Wilson created characters who were thoroughly depraved. In Evans's work these characters have a theatrical quality (the Jesuit Mazzolin of *Inez* sounds like a villain in a melodrama), but Terhune's evil characters are more subtle and may well have been based (as were many of her characters) on real people whom Terhune knew through personal contact or by report. They are solid, outwardly respectable, often pious citizens, and most of their evildoing takes the form of psychological manipulation rather than criminal violence. They are no less dangerous for that. Mr. Snowden, Bella's wicked stepfather in *The Hidden Path*, is an elder in the Presbyterian Church, and in that capacity he persuades the pastor to expel an impulsive but honorable young member for drunkenness. He also endeavors, while posing as a devoted nurse, to hasten his ailing wife's death by continually reminding her of her poor health. In *Moss-side*, Louise Wynn's mother, who pressures her daughter into a disastrous marriage, is a placid, soft-spoken woman with a

[503] The domestic novelists, like many American Christians, particularly associated France with sophisticated irreligiosity. Harland, *Moss-side*, 40-41.
[504] Ibid., 286.

genius for warding off moral challengers by reassurances that are both soothing and patronizing. The heroine Grace attempts to confront Mrs. Wynne only to find that she is "rocked" into a kind of mental paralysis.[505]

In fact, Terhune's evil characters closely resemble the evil personalities described by psychiatrist M. Scott Peck in *The People of the Lie* (1983). Peck proposed that evil be formally defined as a variation of narcissistic personality disorder. Among the characteristics of the evil personality he included "consistent destructive, scapegoating behavior, which may often be quite subtle," and a "pronounced concern with a public image and self-image of respectability, contributing to a stability of life-style but also to pretentiousness and denial of hateful feelings or vengeful motives."[506]

Possibly the most devious of Terhune's characters is Eleanor Argyle of *Nemesis*, a novel published on the eve of the Civil War. Eleanor is a virtual sociopath, and at least one reviewer protested that such a character, "who hates her brother and despises her sisters from childhood, and who plots their destruction with all the coolness and malignity of a fiend . . . who never, through all her years of intimacy, reveals one single trait of womanly tenderness and affection," was simply unbelievable.[507] The provocative author had anticipated such objections as she prepared her manuscript, and in a pre-emptive response she insisted facetiously that while such women might not exist in "these millennial days," "depraved men and heartless, unprincipled women" did indeed inhabit the "former days" of the early Republic in which her story was set. Terhune also provided an introduction in which she noted wryly that the events and persons her

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[505] Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 210-217; Harland, *Moss-side*, 20-22.
[506] M. Scott Peck, *The People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 128-129.
[507] Review of *Nemesis* in "Literary World," *World* (New York), 3 September, 1860.

preliminary critics had found most "Improbable" were precisely those she had copied from real life with the greatest fidelity.[508]

Corrupted Womanhood and Sexuality

There were two sides to the coin of feminine influence. If heart-centered women, by virtue of their natural kindness and wisdom, had a special power to reform society, heartless and unprincipled women surpassed depraved men in their capacity to wreak cultural havoc.[509] The wicked women of the domestic novel were usually portrayed as belles. They were physically beautiful and graceful, and if they were invariably shallow they nevertheless possessed a certain devious intelligence. They might allure men who, though good, lacked moral robustness (Beulah's friend Eugene and Bella's fiancé Willard each succumbed to the machinations of a belle), and they might further corrupt men who were already bad.

On the other hand, belles might learn their lesson in heartlessness from a man, and then adeptly diffuse the poison in the feminine world of love and intimacy. In *Alone*, for example, Mr. Read's daughter Josephine is catechized in cynicism by her father: "He taught her deceit, under the name of self-control; heartlessness, he called prudence; veiled mistrust and misanthropy under clear-sightedness and knowledge of human nature."[510] Later in the novel, Josephine maneuvers, with near success, to destroy the romance

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[508] Harland, *Nemesis* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1860; reprint, New York: G.W. Dillingham, 1888), v, 101-102.
[509] Gillian Brown has argued that Harriet Beecher Stowe sought to promote a woman-dominated culture in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, presenting the home of the Quaker Halliday family as a domestic ideal. Simon Legree's slave woman Cassy, on the other hand, represents a "murderous maternity," women's influence as a violent and subversive force that even a brute like Legree could not elude. Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 24-25, 34-36.
[510] Harland, *Alone*, 12.

between Ida and Morton Lacy. Terhune did not wish, however, to portray Ida's would-be nemesis as entirely alien or evil-minded. Terhune scholar Karen Manners Smith has suggested that Mr. Read is a veiled portrait of Terhune's own father at his cynical worst during the anxious years of 1848 and 1849.[511] If so, the author may have felt that she had narrowly escaped becoming a Josephine herself. Perhaps recalling her own fear that she was succumbing willy-nilly to her father's baleful influence, she places words of forgiveness and understanding in Ida's mouth: ". . . my mother's training was all that saved my disposition from adapting itself to Mr. Read's mould. She [Josephine] had no talisman."[512] Terhune believed it had only been by the grace of God, mediated by a good mother, that she could say "I am not misanthropical."

In the eyes of Terhune, the "strong-minded" woman rivaled the material girl as a threat to society (it was a theme Evans Wilson would not address until after the Civil War). Unlike the merely narcissistic society matron or belle, the strong-minded woman had principles, but these were distorted. She was a reformer and an advocate of women's rights, but in rejecting woman's sphere she only inflicted damage on the society she hoped to improve. In Louise Wynne of *Moss-side*, Terhune created a strong-minded woman who through her grace and talent wielded a considerable negative influence over her society. As the tale opens, Louise has yielded to her parents' insistence that she marry David Wilson, a wealthy but dull man she can neither love nor respect. Already bitter and cynical, she declares that she has no husband and that she intends to be "a faithful wife in the letter of the law" only.[513] Louise does not reappear until the end of

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[511] Smith, *Mary Virginia Terhune* (Ph.D. diss.), 179.
[512] Harland, *Alone*, 383.
[513] Harland, *Moss-side*, 48.

the novel, seven years later. She is now a self-possessed matron, an elegant New York saloniere, and the acclaimed author of a feminist novel.

The heroine Grace reads this feminist masterpiece before she encounters her former friend, and Terhune devotes four pages to a description of the novel and its effects. This passage is both an illustration of the author's belief in power of fiction, for good or for ill, and a summary of her belief that a culture war was being fought between early women's rights advocates and the conservative mainstream. Louise's plot is vaguely described as centering on a woman who breaks free of the oppressive, male-authored social system and emerges as a radiant being whose goodness and intelligence fall little short of divinity.[514] The novel is depicted as emotionally seductive, intellectually manipulative. Terhune, who by 1857 had learned to appreciate good wine, has Grace liken Louise's book to a sparkling goblet of poison. "Pearls of fancy, diamonds of wit, the blood-red ruby of passion gemmed the bowl, and dazzled my wavering perceptions of good and evil." Louise's artistry is such that "not a false or one-sided representation was discernible to the most critical research, and what had been left out was never missed." Grace drains the draught in a single day, and by evening she is "miserable to wretchedness."[515]

At this point, Grace has been won over to Louise's point of view but is depressed to think that the feminist "Millennium" has arrived too late to include her. A discussion with her friend May (the widow of her Christian brother) restores her emotional and

[514] In Terhune's critical account, the feminist heroine is portrayed as queen and priestess, the "radiant Immaculate." Her use of this term, three years after the Roman Catholic Church had promulgated the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (1854), suggests that Terhune saw a connection between the feminist glorification of woman and the Catholic veneration of Mary.
[515] Harland, *Moss-side*, 239.

intellectual equilibrium. In this conversation, Terhune summarizes the feminist arguments through Grace, and her own counter-arguments in the voice of May. May begins by asserting that Louise's "*bad* book" arouses discontent artificially.[516] Acknowledging the existence of unjust legislation and social customs, she nevertheless maintains that all genuine reform is achieved gradually, not through the revolutionary means Louise advocates. When Grace bemoans the dependence of woman on man, May retorts that man is equally dependent on woman, and that man's superiority is limited to physical strength and the "external trappings" of power. In answer to Louise's complaints of male abuse of this power, May asserts that loving fathers and husbands far outnumber the abusers. Finally, May argues for a legitimate male authority: "Rulers there must be, and since I perceive in myself no vocation for the office, I had rather submit to [male] jurisdiction than to a female autocracy." When Grace suggests that there might be a sharing of power between the sexes, May replies that such a composite government would be unstable, comparing it to Nebuchanezzar's dream-image as "a mixture of iron and clay."[517]

The final argument that May uses to condemn Louise's ideology is that it is rooted in a rejection of Christian scriptures. The rejection, apparently, is veiled in Louise's novel, for Grace protests that May is "too severe." May insists, however, that Louise's vague and sublime sounding terms constitute a denial of Christian belief. The

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[516] To use anachronistic terminology, Louise's book would be described in feminist terms as raising the consciousness of its readers, while May argues that the discontent the novel engenders is, to borrow from Marxist theory, a form of false consciousness.

[517] According to the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a dream in which he saw an image with a head of gold, a body of inferior metals, and feet that were a mixture of iron and clay. The prophet Daniel interprets the image as a metaphor for Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom and successor kingdoms, the last of which would be divided. That divided kingdom, symbolized by the feet of iron and clay, elements which cannot mix, would be "partly strong, and partly broken." KJV, Daniel 2: 31-43. Harland, *Moss-side*, 240-241.

terms, which include “natural religion,” the “higher law of instinct,” the “newer and divine revelation of intuitions,” and “spirit communications,” are associated with or suggestive of Deism, transcendental philosophy, and spiritualism.[518] May goes on to label these phrases the “cant” of a sect that, while denouncing Christian dogmatism, has embraced a dogmatism of its own. Yet the problem is not fundamentally one of intellectual distortion in May’s (and Terhune’s) view. Louise’s religious infidelity and her “*bad* book” are the consequences of her unhappy marriage. “Poor Louise!” sighs the now re-converted Grace, “If she had been a happy wife, this book would never have been written.”[519]

The moral lesson is underlined a few pages later, when Grace and May meet Louise and her husband and later attend a dinner at Louise’s home. The polished hostess is revealed to be a narcissist. Mr. Wilson is now cowed and withdrawn, and Grace speculates on the irony of his wife’s portrayal of the husband as a “tyrant.” The couple’s overindulged and willful son is far more tyrannical, but he is also neglected. During the party the child is banished to his nursery, which contains books and adult artwork, but no toys. In a final, ironic “minute providence,” one of Louise’s guests tells the company a story about the death of his colleague, a dedicated young doctor. The doctor is clearly Louise’s first love, yet she gives no sign of realizing this. After seven years of liberation, Louise has lost her ability to love.[520]

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[518] “Natural religion” was an eighteenth-century term associated with Deists who rejected supernatural revelation while asserting that religion could be based on the study of nature and on morality. Modern spiritualism took root in America in the 1850s, although the way had been prepared earlier through the popularity of Swedenborgianism. Holifield, *Theology in America*, 162; Winthrop S. Hudson and John Corrigan, *Religion in America*, 6th edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), 199-200.
[519] Harland, *Moss-side*, 240-241.
[520] Ibid., 242, 246-253.

The theme of domestic unhappiness as rooted in personal failure to love (rather than in flawed and unjust social structures) appears elsewhere in the writings of both Terhune and Evans Wilson. The fault, in many cases, is laid at the doorstep of women. In *Beulah*, much of Dr. Hartwell's irreligion and cynicism is due to the misery of his first marriage. He had once been handsome and cheerful, but his beautiful first wife had married him for his money and carried on a flirtation with a previous lover. The couple separated, she later died, and Hartwell emerges from this grief as the stern atheist who both loves and torments Beulah. Only after his marriage to Beulah does his "nature" slowly thaw, until at last he begins to laugh again. Beulah, aware of her power, is fearful that she will not "employ it properly."[521] In *Moss-side*, Grace's suitor Herbert Wynne is the adopted son of the worldly Mr. and Mrs. Wynne, and brother of Louise. While not warped in character, he is lonely, and he asks Grace to supply what he has lacked. "I have never had a home. Grace, will you make me one?"[522] Despite masculine strength and rationality, Evans and Terhune suggest, men are driven by heart hunger as much as women are, and women's emotional power more than compensates for men's political power.

Men as well as women, however, could provide or deny love and domestic tranquility. Terhune had a strong interest in family dynamics, apparently based on her own complex experience with her large family. In her antebellum short stories she explored various ways in which families could be unhappy. In these works, the romance and requisite "happy ending" of the domestic novel is dispensed with, and the reader is given a brief glimpse of a gloomier world. In one of Terhune's earliest pieces, "Only a

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[521] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 400-401, 438.
[522] Harland, *Moss-side*, 115.

Quick Temper," a father's violent temper gradually destroys his wife and embitters his children. The story has some autobiographical elements. Mr. Harvie of the short story, "like most irascible men," hates to see a woman cry. His sneers and criticisms, while cruel, are sometimes rooted in his own emotional distress. Samuel Hawes also prohibited tears, and his daughter's diary attests to the connection between his verbal abuse of his family and his personal anxieties in the late 1840s.[523]

In another story, "Two Ways of Keeping a Wife," Terhune told of two sisters who married very different men, one highly principled but reserved and stoic, the other merry and affectionate to the point of indulgence. By the end of the story, the first wife, once a beauty, is faded and aged, and her husband wonders why "some women break so much faster than others."[524] The next story Terhune published is unusual in that the protagonist is an awkward boy, while both of his parents the unwitting abusers. Terhune tells the story with empathy and acute psychological insight. Young Allen, the "black sheep" of the family, is goodhearted and has talent, but he is homely and apparently dull. He also has the misfortune to be born to parents who, with two gifted sons already, had wished for a daughter. He is misunderstood, his own gifts go unrecognized, and he grows into a lumpish, reclusive young man. A thoughtless schoolgirl manipulates him into falling in love with her, but when he discovers she has been trifling with him he leaves home and becomes a vagrant and drunkard. His mother realizes, too late, that she neglected to give

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[523] Marion Harland, "Only a Quick Temper," *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book* 47 (November 1853), 396, 401; Harland, *Autobiography*, 245; Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," various entries, 1848-1849.
[524] Marion Harland, "Two Ways of Keeping a Wife," *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book* 61 (November and December 1860), 503.

her son the maternal love that might have compensated for “Nature’s deficiencies and the world’s slight.”[525]

The antebellum domestic novelists, Terhune and Evans Wilson included, had firm convictions about sexuality, and regarded the distortion of sexuality as profoundly damaging to individuals and to society. As in the case of the holistic, romantic sexuality that they affirmed, the abuse of sexuality was usually treated obliquely. In their fiction, Terhune and Evans Wilson wrote of exploitive, extramarital sexual contact between men and women, while avoiding explicit descriptions. They did not touch on prostitution, homosexuality, abortion, incest, pedophilia, or rape at all. Their personal correspondence shows a similar reserve, and even Terhune’s diary, while revealing in many respects, is silent on this subject. This reticence is quite typical for Southern diaries of the period, as intellectual historian Michael O’Brien has noted. Diaries were often intended to be read by others, albeit a select few, and although they revealed much that was on the mind of the diarist, they generally “dealt in venial, not mortal sins.” Sexual matters were discussed only in “repressed allusions and codes, often now impenetrable.”[526]

In *Inez*, Evans Wilson did touch on a sexual subject that was part of the standard fare in anti-Catholic novels, lascivious priests who preyed upon helpless female victims, usually nuns. In Evans’s variation on the theme, the wicked Mazzolin attempts to force Inez to become his mistress. Inez, who is far from helpless, merely laughs scornfully and refuses. “You know full well my word is law,” Mazzolin tells her. “Resist not, nor further rouse me – there is no help for you save in submission.” He then commands a

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[525] Marion Harland, “The Black Sheep,” *Godey’s Magazine and Lady’s Book* 62 (January and February 1861), 154.
[526] O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 459.

soldier to guard her on the grounds that she has broken her promise to enter a convent. Inez, however, escapes that night by setting fire to the building.[527] This account is far less sensational than the popular anti-Catholic fiction of a decade or so earlier, which often featured lurid accounts of convents that were de facto brothels, and illegitimate infants of priests and nuns strangled and buried. Historian David Reynolds has stated that the most salacious novels were often the most profitable.[528] Evans, it appears, eschewed this particular route to wealth. The worst Mazzolin does is grip Inez's arm.

In Terhune's *Moss-side*, the theme of sexual corruption actually plays a central role, for when Grace's father dashes her hopes of marital happiness by forbidding her union with Herbert Wynne, it is a past sexual sin, and its aftermath, that underlies the mystery. Terhune depicts sexual corruption as a kind of moral venom that can sicken an entire family. Not long after Grace is denied her wish to marry, her Aunt Agnes suffers a stroke and is left in a coma. Grace is horrified, and intuitively she knows that there is a connection between her thwarted romance and Agnes's stroke. Lonely and bitter, because she believes that she has been duped and that her father never truly loved her, Grace recalls an Egyptian fable which taught that there was a skeleton in every heart and home. She concludes that her beloved home, Moss-side, has its own hidden skeleton.

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[527] Evans (Wilson), *Inez*, 229-233.

[528] The anti-Catholic literature had its heyday between 1834 and 1850 and included popular novels such as George Bourne's *Lorette* (1833) and Benjamin Barker's *Cecilia* (1845), as well as ostensibly factual accounts such as Rebecca Reed's *Six Months in a Convent* (1835) and Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal* (1836). The distinction was often blurred in the antebellum climate of intense anti-Catholicism. Monk's account created such a sensation (in every sense) that it led to an attack on the Hotel Dieu convent. When no infant corpses were found and Monk's testimony was disproved, her *Awful Disclosures* continued to sell well as a novel. Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction*, 181-6.

"Through our merry childhood, our happy youth," she muses, "we have frolicked in its shadow and not suspected its existence. This is its unveiling!"[529]

The exact nature of the horror remains veiled, though tragedy follows on tragedy. When Grace herself is seriously injured, a neighbor whispers of a "fatality" hanging over the Leigh family, a negative kind of peculiar providence. The Christians in the novel (such as Grace's brother Frederick) reject this interpretation, yet Terhune leaves open the suggestion that the family skeleton exudes a kind of curse. On a gloomy, wet Christmas Day, a year after Grace and Herbert have separated, Grace hears in the rain the sound of weeping ghosts.[530]

When the dreadful secret is finally revealed, the entire business seems overwrought by twentieth-century standards. Terhune, however, depicts Mr. Leigh telling Grace the labyrinthine story in a state of shuddering, sweating anguish, while Grace herself is sickened to the point of faintness. He confides that Agnes, as a headstrong young girl, had eloped with a charming scoundrel by the name of Julian Darford (who turns out to be none other than the sinister Frenchman Mr. Dumont). After her marriage, Agnes learned that her now-neglectful "husband" was an infidel and hedonist. He had, moreover, abandoned a wife and child in New England. She wrote to her brother pleading for help. Mr. Leigh rescued his sister and then, intent on revenge for her injury, fought a duel with Darford. Darford was hurt and Leigh mistakenly believed that he had killed him. Traditional Southern honor required a duel under such circumstances, but as a Christian Leigh considered himself a murderer. After Grace had fallen in love with Herbert, Leigh learned that Herbert was Darford's biological son. He

[529] Harland, *Moss-side*, 131-133.
[530] Ibid., 173.

could not permit his daughter to marry the son of the man he had murdered, nor could he explain his reasons to Grace because he had sworn to Agnes that he would keep her past a secret. Agnes had pressured her brother to tell her the reason for his refusal of Herbert, and was so stricken when he told her that she had suffered a stroke.

The skeleton, now fully exposed, is also robbed of some of its power. Mr. Leigh is liberated from his guilt because he has learned that Darford/Dumont is still alive. Grace, however, remains depressed. She now understands her father, but her youth is gone, and Herbert, she thinks, cannot be restored to her. Just then, in another minute Providence, she overhears her niece Lilly singing a William Cowper hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way." "His purposes will ripen fast/ Unfolding every hour," Lilly sings, and Grace takes comfort in the idea that she can wait patiently for fulfillment in heaven.[531] Instead, through an improbable contrivance by her friends, Grace is reunited with Herbert in this world, all obstacles to their marriage having been removed. The skeleton dissolves, and the Christmas fairies reign at Moss-side.

It is clear from the storyline of *Moss-side* that Terhune associated sexual corruption with atheism and spiritual corruption. This is most clear in the case of Darford/Dumont, atheist, bigamist and voluptuary. The connection is more subtle in the case of Louise, who has adhered to her resolution to be a faithful wife "in the letter of the law." When Grace meets her after the seven-year hiatus, she observes that Louise's dress is suitable for a married woman "in texture and hue," but too revealing for Grace's tastes.

[531] Lilly has been, all along, an unwitting prophet at *Moss-side*. Upon her arrival there, she tells the story of the Exodus to a young visitor who, charmed by her artlessness, feigns ignorance of the account. Lilly explains that the pillar of fire that had guided the fleeing Israelites had appeared to the Egyptians to be a cloud that hid their former captives from their sight. Grace, eavesdropping on the conversation, is impressed by Lilly's observation: "The Egyptians could not see through the cloud, for it *was* a cloud to them!" The fabled Egyptian skeleton, Terhune suggests, is an aspect of this obscured, because unconverted, vision. Ibid., 170-171, 288-310.

". . . the corsage retreated from the bosom and shoulders with a freedom that caused my cheeks to burn with unsophisticated blushes, and the arms were surmounted by an ornamental band . . . which was called by courtesy, a sleeve."[532]

Despite *Moss-side*'s happy ending, the skeleton gives the novel a doleful quality in the eyes of many twentieth-century scholars. Helen Waite Papashvily describes *Moss-side* as a tale "as dank in content as in title."[533] Karen Manners Smith and Nina Baym protest that Grace's suffering is gratuitous, and doubly so: Grace must suffer for her father's sin, and her father is mistaken about having sinned.[534] Terhune, however, seems to have regarded the entire nauseous sexual legacy of betrayal, shame, violence and confusion as an entangling web of sin and its consequences, the hellish counterpart to the web of light spun by the Christian child Lilly.[535] Such snares were not easily thrown off. Agnes had never escaped, and her brother's life had been blighted. May had lost Frederick after a brief month of wedded bliss, while Grace and Herbert had found their happiness only "at evening time." Still, the evening was Terhune's favorite hour of the day, and in its soft glow her hero and heroine saw the promise of a bright morning, one that the author suggested would be eternal as well as temporal.[536] Terhune's readers must have shared in her sense of precarious worldly happiness, for in its own day *Moss-side*

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[532] Ibid., 243.
[533] Helen Waite Papashvily, *All the Happy Endings, the Women Who Wrote It, the Women Who Read It,in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 137.
[534] Ibid.; Baym, *Woman's Fiction*, 205.
[535] Terhune depicts the addition of Lilly to the household as the beginning of a new, providential design. In Grace's words, "This tiny cog in our machinery accelerated the slow rate of its revolutions, and the web that rolled from it was interspersed with light, graceful designs, and hints of brighter coloring, among the formal patterns, in dead, neutral hues that had hitherto formed our bundle of life. Harland, *Moss-side*, 176-177.
[536] Harland, *Moss-side*, 352.

was well-received by both the public and critics.[537] As the 1850s drew to a close, authorial and public confidence in happy endings was beginning to wane.

Corruption in Nature and Art

Terhune and Evans Wilson did not see nature as inherently corrupted. Both had a great love for the outdoors, for birds and animals, and in their romantic vision the natural world was a lovely, innocent witness to the glory of the Creator. They believed that communion with nature had a healing and sanctifying effect upon human beings. When the authors touched on the predatory and chaotic aspects of nature, on the other hand, it was usually as a metaphor for moral disorder in the human world. In *Beulah*, the desolate open sea symbolizes the emptiness of the heroine's soul. To her friend Reginald Lindsay she compares herself to Coleridge's ancient mariner, saying that she is "weary as the lonely mariner, tempest-tossed on some pathless ocean.[538] In *The Hidden Path*, Terhune compared the evil stepfather Mr. Snowden to a cat, an animal she seems to have been less fond of, perhaps because they preyed on her beloved birds. Terhune also used natural events in her fiction as harbingers of evil. Indeed, Mr. Snowden's attempt to kill his wife is symbolized by his cat's preying on song-birds.[539] Bella's betrayal by her fiancé Willard and Adelaide is foreshadowed when, having fallen asleep in a park, she is bitten by a snake.[540] The weather might also reflect human anguish. In *Moss-side*, a winter

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[537] Smith, "Marion Harland," (Ph.D. diss.), 241.
[538] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has identified a close parallel between the plot and rhetoric of *Beulah* and Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Fox-Genovese, Introduction, *Beulah*, xxiii-xxiv; Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 383.
[539] Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 235.
[540] Ibid., 119.

storm sets in after Grace and Herbert are parted. Grace makes explicit the parallel between the death-like silence produced by the storm and her own inner deadness.[541]

Dangerous behavior in animals might be directly produced by human misconduct.[542] In Evans Wilson's antebellum novels, horse-related mishaps are the result of a chaotic social environment or a rider's irresponsibility. In *Inez*, a bucking horse threatens the life of his female rider. When Florence Hamilton's father rescues the woman the horse kicks him in the head, producing an injury that eventually kills him. The horse, however, has taken fright because of a raucous San Antonio street festival.[543] In *Beulah*, the horses drawing a carriage carrying Beulah and Cornelia bolt, this time because of the celebratory pandemonium (firecrackers included) of Christmas Eve. A fatality is avoided when Beulah heroically takes the reins, but later in the novel Eugene fares less well. After a night of carousing, he orders his spirited horse to gallop full-speed to win a bet. The horse takes over, Eugene is thrown and almost killed (the crisis, however, is the beginning of his belated reformation).[544]

Human beings, of course, could violate their own natures, particularly their sexual natures, by adopting behaviors unbecoming to their sex. The case is presented most clearly in *Moss-side*, Terhune's protest against feminism. By the end of the novel Louise and her husband have reversed the social design of separate-spheres ideology, with deleterious effects. As May describes it, "Her life is all public; that of her husband all private. She is ostentatiously happy in her fame, he undeniably miserable in his

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[541] Harland, *Moss-side*, 127.
[542] In antebellum domestic fiction, riding and carriage accidents occur frequently. This was in part a reflection of the frequency with which skittish horses did cause accidents, and in part, no doubt, a convenient plot device for introducing a crisis.
[543] Evans (Wilson), *Inez*, 49.
[544] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 225, 357-358.

home."[545] On a less radical level, Terhune and Evans often portrayed manipulative belles as unnatural in their mannerisms. Even the belles, however, are natural beauties in a purely physical sense. Cosmetics, which both Terhune and Evans would criticize in their post-war works, had not yet made their appearance in popular women's fiction.

Terhune and Evans both saw art as potentially corrupt and corrupting, depending on the character of the artist. In Terhune's antebellum writing, the quintessential dangerous artist is of course Louise Wynne Wilson. Terhune depicts Louise as highly sensitive to beauty. At the beginning of *Moss-side*, Grace and several friends accompany the Wilsons on their wedding trip to Niagara Falls. Grace's last moment of "soul-communion" with Louise takes place when the two stand side by side gazing in rapture at the cascades. In her excitement, Grace recites aloud the lyrics from the Hallelujah chorus of Handel's *Messiah*: "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth forever and ever – Hallelujah!" Louise, her face radiant, thanks her. Apart from this brief moment of transport, however, Grace perceives that Louise's heart is already withered: "If the heart were dead, the intellect, with all its exquisite susceptibility to beauty, its grand capacities, its undying desires, lived still, and its expansion, its longings . . . were painful in their intensity."[546] It is precisely Louise's intellectual and creative gifts that enable her to author a powerfully seductive feminist novel. Her intellectual aspirations and moral vision strike an answering chord in the reader's own yearnings for grandeur, while her frozen heart renders her insensitive to the true needs of those closest to her.

While Evans Wilson never created a character analogous to Louise, she depicts Beulah's spiritual crisis as the fruit, not only of intellectual sophistry, but of twisted

[545] Harland, *Moss-side*, 237.
[546] Ibid., 25, 45-46.

artistry. Indeed, Beulah first begins to go astray one winter afternoon when she casually takes a volume of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories from the shelf of Dr. Hartwell's library, despite the fact that Hartwell has warned her against reading him. Poe's weird imagination seems to cast a spell over her, and night falls as she reads tale after gloomy tale. By the time she has finished, she is unable to shake off the "dreary, unearthly images" which now haunt her mind. Beulah is simultaneously fascinated and horrified by Poe's brilliant but elusive intellectual arguments. In Evans's description, Poe appears to be a masculine and morbid version of the fictional Louise, in that he is able to present partial and distorted truths with such skill that the rapt reader is unable to identify the flaws in his reasoning:

> . . . [Beulah] caught tantalizing glimpses of recondite psychological truths and processes, which dimly hovered over her own consciousness, but ever eluded the grasp of analysis. While his unique imagery filled her mind with wondering delight, she shrank appalled from the mutilated fragments which he presented to her as truths, on the point of his glittering scalpel of logic.[547]

Like Louise's writings, Poe's work both seduces and depresses. Like Louise, he invites the reader to adopt an exalted, even deified view of self. Grace had May to set her back on the straight and narrow path, but since Beulah had no talisman, the "study of Poe was the portal through which she entered the vast Pantheon of Speculation."[548]

Terhune, like Evans Wilson, appears to have found Poe both intriguing and profoundly disturbing. His imagery was entrancing, his genius could not be denied, but

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[547] Like the fictional Beulah, many Americans were powerfully affected by Poe. Michael O'Brien names Poe as the most eloquent of the Southern romantics who saw the dangers of disintegration. He identifies him as the only antebellum Southern poet whose works entered into the popular imagination. Beulah's attraction to Poe's atheism, however, struck an unusual note in the Southern literature of the period. O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 11, 24, 714, 1166.

[548] Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 122-123.

his dark spiritual vision was terrifying. Poe had grown up in Richmond. His mother died in the city when he was just under two years old, and he was adopted by John Allan of the wealthy Allan family.[549] While Poe was not intimate with the Hawes family, he visited their home on at least one occasion, when Terhune was a young teenager. She only saw him from a distance, but years later she recalled the strong impression he had made on her. "Whatever may have been his lineage and however dissipated his habits, the refined features on which I now looked were patrician and purely intellectual. Not one in twenty of the portraits assuming to be likenesses of him convey any just idea of the rare charm of the original."[550]

In person, at least at a distance, Terhune had found Poe charming. Yet there is evidence that someone in the Hawes family could sympathize with Beulah's desire to exorcise her mind of his influence. In the family papers at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond, in a folder labeled "Miscellaneous," is an anonymous, handwritten poem of three and a half pages entitled "Sequel to the 'Raven' of Edgar Allan Poe." Adopting Poe's meter and attempting to imitate his style, the author has the narrator in the poem realize that the sinister raven is "bird, but something more." In an abrupt and confusing transition the raven is either changed into or displaced by an angel, and the darkness just as suddenly turns to light. The sequel ends on a triumphant and redemptive note:

> I will write a book hereafter, cheerful as a baby's laughter
> When a Mother's breast o'erleans it on the sainted spirit shore
> Like Apollo, the "far darter," I the Poet and the Martyr
> Will chant paeans of soul music that shall live forever more

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[549] Elizabeth Arnold Poe (1787-1813) is buried in a sequestered corner of the graveyard at St. John's Episcopal Church, Richmond. As an actress, she experienced the social disapprobation that Anna Cora Ritchie would meet even in the 1850s.

[550] Marion Harland, "Eighty Years of Reminiscence," *Ladies' Home Journal*, December 1920, 172.

Not a friend – a Brother more.[551]

Although the poem is unsigned, it was probably written by Mary Virginia, an indifferent but persistent poet. The strained meter and the maternal imagery both suggest her authorship, as does the simultaneous admiration for Poe as an artist, and revulsion toward him as a Christian. Finally, the handwriting on the manuscript matches Terhune's.

It was Poe's artistic genius that Terhune evidently wished to redeem, precisely because of its potent emotional impact on his readers. Christianity, both Terhune and Evans Wilson taught, resided in the heart. When a soul went astray, it was the heart that led the way while the mind followed. It was because artists spoke directly to the heart that they held such power over yearning human spirits, either to purify or to warp them.

Corruption in Society

The idea of the Christian community was central to the vision of both Terhune and Evans Wilson, and a recurring theme in their novels is the struggle of their characters against the internal and external forces that threaten to corrode that society. Indeed, their fiction often conveys the impression that the benevolent Christian society, far from being a mighty "evangelical empire," is a small island country. More accurately, it is a tiny archipelago of warm, loving homes in a roiling sea of worldliness and selfishness that at times threatens to wash over them. Beulah finds little in her Southern city to testify to the goodness of human nature. Ida grows cold and hardhearted under the baleful influence of her "guardian." In their personal lives as well as their fiction, both authors wrestled with

[551] Unsigned manuscript, Katherine Heath Hawes Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

the tension between their romantic Christian confidence in the happy ending, and their fear that cold, crude reality might, after all, have the last word.

For the extroverted Terhune, that struggle often took the concrete form of struggles over friendships, the building blocks of the wider Christian community. On the one hand, she longed for the kind of soul-communion she believed she enjoyed with Eppes. On the other, she was often skeptical of human attachments, an effect she attributed to past experiences of hurt. Indeed, Terhune's diary strikes a sour note on the subject early on: "More than ever strengthened in my beliefs of what every one calls my 'absurd theory', vis: a total unbelief in disinterested friendship. Talk on, ridicule it if you will, it saves me many a heartache."[552] The world-weary woman was then fifteen.

Terhune's diary is rarely explicit about the cause of her emotional trials, but the autobiographical short stories she published in the early twentieth century offer some clues to the source of her disillusion. On at least two occasions, she was betrayed by friends she had considered intimate. In one case, her friend "Sidney" attempted to use her as an accomplice in her scheme to elope with a man the young Virginia considered wicked. Her disillusion deepened when she learned that Sidney's only object in eloping was to have a "swing" before she married a commonplace man she did not love. A second friend, the elegant "Julia," was eventually revealed to be a compulsive shoplifter who had used Virginia as an unwitting accessory. Not only did Virginia feel betrayed, she was also humiliated by her apparent gullibility (the chapter on Julia is entitled "Duped Again!").[553]

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[552] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 28 April, 1846, p. 4 of typed transcript.
[553] Harland, *When Grandmamma Was Fourteen*, 37, 109.

Terhune's difficulties with friendship probably had deeper roots than these particular hurts. Her own neediness, coupled with her sincerity, probably rendered her vulnerable to the point of gullibility. "My chosen intimates were always older than I – why I have never been able to determine," Terhune mused as an elderly woman. "Nor did I comprehend then more clearly than now why I always loved them far better than they loved me."[554] Yet Terhune did, as a teenager, realize her emotional hunger. At the time she made a "holocaust" of her writings, she confided to her diary, ". . . Unloved, there is the secret. From my earliest childhood there has dwelt within my heart a restless craving after affection. I would cringe, aye kneel in the dust, to the lowest, meanest creature were I sure of being loved . . ."[555]

Terhune's friend Virginia Eppes Dance was about the same age as herself, but judging from the frequency with which Terhune cajoled, exhorted, and scolded Eppes for not writing or visiting more often, this was another instance in which the teenager loved better than she was loved. It is also possible, of course, that Eppes simply could not match her friend's intensity. Still, the energy itself may have been partly rooted in Terhune's loneliness. Her letters to Eppes often have a demanding tone, and she does not seem to have realized that she was bossy.

At some point, Terhune's fears about the unreliability of human friendship were realized in her relationship with Eppes. The two women had married at about the same time, and they had both married ministers. If Terhune as a young mother had less leisure to write, her warm feeling for Eppes remained strong. On November 8, 1857, she wrote Eppes a long letter in which she asked for a frequent correspondence.

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[554] Ibid., 11.
[555] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 9 February, 1847, p. 19 of typed transcript.

> You will seem dearer to me now than ever. Will you not write to me often and freely of yourself and your new life? That your strength will be equal to your day I doubt not, but it is well for those who love the Lord "to speak often to one another," to "comfort one another with the words" of His gracious promises.[556]

This was Terhune's last known letter to Eppes until 1880.[557] By then she was well-to-do, but she wrote a much more formal epistle to her friend regretfully informing her that she could not provide financial assistance in the building of her church. "The many similar applications we receive almost daily from different parts of the South go to show that many others are ignorant of the fact that we at the North are already taxed to the utmost of our ability to maintain our local charities," Terhune explained. "My regular subscriptions to religious and benevolent purposes leave little in my hands for occasional calls – this year, almost nothing." Terhune assured Eppes that she and Edward nevertheless remained "deeply interested" in her, and ended her letter with a reference to the "large pile of correspondence" she had yet to answer.[558] She would not write to Eppes again until 1896.

While the teenaged Terhune had no inkling of the distance that would grow between her and Eppes, she had enough relational disappointments from soured friendships and family tensions to render her something of a misanthrope in her own

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[556] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance Campbell, 8 November, 1857, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

[557] It was common for correspondence between intimate female friends to slacken off considerably after both were married and raising families, then resume once the children were grown, but a complete end to communication is more unusual. There is no evidence for a rupture between the two Virginias which could account for the abrupt cessation of their letters. It is possible that some letters have been lost, although Virginia Campbell appears to have carefully treasured all of the letters and even short notes she received from her friend, including those dating from the revival of their friendship in the 1890s. Edward Terhune's friendly missives to his "dear friend" Dr. Campbell, which form part of the same collection, also cease after October 19, 1857. Anthony Gene Carey, personal communication to author, 5 October, 2006.

[558] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance Campbell, 24 May, 1880, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

eyes. Her doubts about human nature, absorbed from her irascible father, led to doubts about the validity of the church and suspicions about all friendships. Indeed, the Egyptian skeleton of *Moss-side* made an appearance in Terhune's diary first:

> I wish I could once more believe in my fellow-mortals! Like the Egyptian who found a skeleton to be his companion at a banquet, I constantly dread lest the veil should be lifted, and bring other motives, other feelings to light than those which the friendly word and kind smile would seem to convey. This suspicious dread must certainly be with me a sort of monomania. I have struggled with it more than I have with every other fault put together.[559]

Terhune's tactics in that struggle were entirely in keeping with St. Paul's exhortation to positive thinking, "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). Paradoxically, she had a strong strain of optimism that competed with her pessimistic streak.[560] Yet this very optimism was perhaps literally a "strain," an attitude she adopted by force of will so as to conquer her dark moods. She concentrated on the "honorable exceptions" to the dismal state of the human race as a whole, and it was perhaps to these chosen few that she addressed her voluminous writings. Terhune also schooled herself to place her hopes in heaven, and to limit her expectations for the happiness in the present world. Having begun her diary on a misanthropical note, she had ended it by renouncing misanthropy. In the same entry quoted above, she wrote,

> I look not forward to the blissful earthly future that my hopes once bounded forward to greet, as if to meet it halfway would hasten its

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[559] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 1 March, 1851, p. 253 of typed transcript.

[560] In her *Autobiography*, Terhune attributed a "family maxim" about her positive attitude to her daughter Christina: " . . . if mother were set down in the middle of the Desert of Sahara, and made to comprehend that she must spend the rest of her days there, she would, within ten minutes, begin to expatiate upon the many advantages of a dry climate as a residential region." Harland, *Autobiography*, 356.

> coming; but there is a sweetness in the very denial of the words that engraved [sic] upon the cross I bear upon my bosom, and that stand like the impress on the seal of one chamber of my heart – "Not here!" "Not here!" whispers Memory, and Hope, like a joyful echo of a sad strain, adds "Hereafter."[561]

Such reflections were quite common among evangelicals of the period, but Terhune also evidently had a unique coping method in her wrestling match with the skeleton. There is no mention of it in her diary or letters from the period, but Terhune wrote of her secret tactic in the autobiographical stories she published more than a half-century later. The teenaged Virginia had a handsome, noble, God-fearing, and warmly empathetic imaginary lover, whom she named Mr. Frederick Sedley. The lover was, as the elderly Terhune explained, a "Mosaic Model," an amalgamation of various historical and fictional heroes, and he was fully under his young creator's control. Over time, she removed some of his attributes and added others, according to her changing tastes and ideals. Always, he was a secret source of solace. When Virginia felt lonely, ashamed, or confused, she would open the doors to his "tabernacle," out he would glide, and she would hold "sweet converse" with him until her mind was clear and her heart steadied.

Mr. Sedley, however, was more than a gallant security blanket. According to Terhune, her fantasy courtier helped her to retain her romantic ideals. She refused to imitate the tawdry and egocentric habits of many of her associates, such as trifling with men in the way that "Sidney" had, because she desired to be worthy of him. As Virginia grew up, Frederick Sedley was finally "relegated to Mythland," but according to her later recollection, his influence remained with her: ". . . he had made my ideals high and pure . . . I would never give my hand unless love, warranted to wear for all time, went with it."

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[561] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 4 January, 1852, p. 316 of typed transcript.

Terhune's experience with Mr. Sedley was probably one of the reasons that she eventually affirmed the goodness of the imagination, despite the Old-School Presbyterian suspicion of fiction and her own frequent worries about unhealthy fantasizing. She recognized that a vision might serve as an inspiration to excellence rather than a mere escape from reality.[562]

In keeping with her more introverted and intellectual inclinations, Evans Wilson struggled to maintain her sense of equilibrium, not with friends and neighbors, but with the ideas she encountered in books. If Terhune saw the society around her as warped by petty vanities and coarse sensibilities, Evans pointed to the grander malignancies of anti-Christian philosophies and dissolute materialism. At the nadir of her religious crisis, she very nearly succumbed to the majestic pathology of total skepticism which she had admired in Poe and in the German transcendentalists. She was preserved from this fate by her own exhausted decision to accept Christianity on faith, and also to some degree by a flesh-and-blood Frederick Sedley in the form of Walter Clopton Harriss. If Harriss lacked the perfect grace of Sedley, he had the advantage of corporeality, and Evans looked to him for empathy and strength as she fought her way back to a stable Methodist orthodoxy.

After what she viewed as her own narrow escape, however, Evans Wilson retained a sense of the pressing danger of skepticism in her society, and she may have shared with Terhune a sense that the majority in her society would not be inclined to

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[562] The question arises as to why Mr. Sedley does not appear in Terhune's contemporary writings, but the later account furnishes an explanation: "I should have blushed myself blind for shame had his name, or a hint of his existence, escaped my lips." Even the diary, which would one day probably be seen by others, was no safe repository for musings about the Mosaic Man. Harland, *When Grandmamma Was Fourteen*, 15-17, 103-105.

receive her message. Certainly, she was willing to take unpopular positions on principle. In arguing that Shakespeare's art was morally defective, for example, she was aware that she was swimming against the tide of educated opinion. "N'importe!" she cried. "I only want the truth, whether old or new, popular or scorned!"[563]

Both Terhune and Evans Wilson opposed what they saw as the heartless commercialism of their society. They portrayed the marketplace as corrupting on two levels, the intellectual and the mundane. In the intellectual sphere, commercialism was associated with materialist and nihilist philosophies. Terhune's "Mr. Read" is a most representative anti-hero in this respect, and by portraying Read as an overt misogynist she underscored the link between heartfelt Christianity (the antidote to materialism) and femininity. On the other hand, both authors portrayed women as particularly susceptible to the more banal forms of commercialism, particularly the worship of fashion and of the social prestige that wealth brought.[564] Neither writer, however, particularly associated commercialism with industrialization or urbanization in the antebellum era, nor did they take a negative view of technology. Terhune, to be sure, has one of her heroes injured in a train wreck, but the accident is the occasion for his restoration to the woman who loves him.[565] The train seems merely to serve as a mechanized substitute for the runaway

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[563] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) Walter Clopton Harriss, 12 October, 1856, in Frear, "You My Brother," 138.

[564] Given their repeated condemnations of consumerism, Evans and Terhune would have been surprised to find themselves classified as "sentimental" novelists, the very species excoriated by historian Ann Douglas as the creator, in collusion with male clergymen, of American consumer culture. Neither author, however, fully fits Douglas's thesis. They are Southerners, whereas Douglas studied New Englanders. More importantly, they did not write primarily for money. While Evans wrote partly out of financial need at the beginning, she continued to write long after she had become wealthy. Terhune was largely motivated by her own passion for writing. Both novelists were convinced that their works could be an effective Christian witness.

[565] In *The Hidden Path*, Frank Lyle is nursed back to health by Isabel Oakley. Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 233-237.

capricious horses that play the same function in other novels. A darker view of industrialization and urbanization would emerge in the writings of Terhune and Evans Wilson after the Civil War.

Terhune's and Evans Wilson's critique of capitalism suggests a marked ambivalence about money-making, and about their own place in society. Both were daughters of businessmen, but the heroes of their pre-war novels are almost always professionals (usually doctors or clergymen) or independently wealthy. An ambiguity about money was present in evangelical Christianity itself. Despite its critique of the materialism and vanity that were often associated with money-making, evangelicalism was very much the religion of the middle and upper-middle classes of the era for whom business was the primary source of wealth. Historians such as Paul Johnson and Mary P. Ryan have seen evangelicalism as promoting the market society, and Johnson in particular has argued that capitalists sought to inculcate such evangelical virtues as sobriety, hard work, and self-discipline in their employees so as to produce a docile work force.[566] Terhune and Evans Wilson did not resolve this ambiguity. Despite their distaste for business, they enjoyed the financial security as well as the finer pleasures that wealth brought. Their antebellum novels, however, provided an unstated solution to the dilemma. The happy endings implied that the same Providence that looked after the heroines' spiritual and emotional welfare also attended to their material wants, usually by providing them with husbands as well-to-do as they were virtuous. The heroines were in no way guilty of fortune-hunting, for before receiving this particular providence, they

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[566] Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millenium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837*, American Century Series (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865*, Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Modern History (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

chose poverty and work over financial dependence or secure but unloving marriages. This literary device was an emotionally satisfying solution to the authors' desire to combine moral elegance with aesthetic refinement. It was also a solution that Terhune in particular would reject as overly easy in future years.

Both Terhune and Evans Wilson were, to varying degrees, exercised by the burning social issues of the 1850s. They worried about the specters of race conflict, abolitionism, and Catholic immigration, as well as deepening sectional discord, all of which they saw as threatening their ideal society, which Evans especially associated with the South. These issues particularly highlighted the regional differences that shaped the thinking of the two novelists. As the Civil War loomed nearer, Evans Wilson increasingly became the firebrand secessionist of the Lower South, Terhune the conciliatory Unionist of the Upper South. Their stances also reflected their personality differences. Evans, the intellectual, shaped her antipathies and anxieties into passionate political convictions. The more down-to-earth Terhune at times reacted strongly to immediate threats, but did not sculpt these fears into ideology.

Like many Southern whites of the period, both Terhune and Evans Wilson feared social and especially racial upheaval, and believed that Northern abolitionists incited otherwise peaceful and contented slaves to violence against their masters. In "Northern Literature," Evans protested against what she saw as pernicious abolitionist literature, in which "the low sensual African is dragged up from his normal position and violently thrust into an importance which the Creator has denied him by indications as strong as

physical inferiority and mental incapacity could make them."[567] Both authors inserted into their novels short but pointed rebuttals to the abolitionist argument that slaves were unhappy. Their arguments were standard in the proslavery apologetics of the 1850s. In *Inez*, Evans contrasted the Hamiltons' slave cook with the Northern laborer:

> The breakfast was brought in by a middle-aged negress, whose tidy appearance and honest, happy, smiling face presented the best refutation of the gross slanders of our northern brethren. I would that her daguerreotype, as she stood arranging the dishes, could be contrasted with those of the miserable, half-starved seamstresses of Boston and New York, who toil from dawn till dark . . . for . . . the mighty recompense of a shilling.[568]

In a similar vein, Terhune devotes a couple of pages of *Alone* to a proslavery apologetic. She has Ida and her friends visit an idyllic slave hamlet on horseback. The slaves' happiness is described in terms of domesticity, and Terhune creates a conversation in which her characters decide that the slaves are both materially comfortable and spiritually content:

> Good humor and neatness characterized the simple inhabitants; children drew to one side of the road; the aged reared their bleared eyes, to reply to the respectful salutations of the young riders; through the open doors were seen clean, comfortably-furnished rooms; in most, the tables were spread for the evening meal, and the busy housewives preparing for their husband's return from field or forest.[569]

Despite such arguments, Terhune and Evans Wilson were forced to confront the possibility, and sometimes the reality, of slave violence. For Terhune in particular, the danger hit home on more than one occasion. In 1847, she returned to Richmond after a

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[567] Augusta Evans, "Northern Literature," Mobile *Daily Advertiser*, 6 November, 1859, in Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, ed., Introduction, *Beulah*, xxii-xxiii.
[568] Evans (Wilson), *Inez*, 35.
[569] Harland, *Alone*, 115-116.

visit to Powhattan, and learned that there were rumors of a slave revolt. She later wrote to Eppes about it:

> The first thing I heard when I reached home was tidings of that worst of bugbears to a Southern woman – an impending insurrection. A double guard was on duty at the capitol, and a detachment of military from the armory paraded the streets all night. I was, I confess, somewhat alarmed, and not a little startled, but gradually my fears wore away, and I slept as soundly that night as if no such thing were in agitation.
>
> Puss Sheppard was in to supper, and her parting salutation to us at going was "Farewell! If I am alive in the morning I will come and see if you are!"
>
> The whole matter, ended, like Mr. C.'s sermon – "just where it began – *viz*., in nothing."
>
> Richmond is rather dull at present. . . .[570]

Terhune quoted this letter in full in her autobiography, in the chapter "The Menace of Slave Insurrection." In this 1910 account, she admitted that despite the calm tone of her letter to Eppes, she had in fact been badly frightened. With her heightened sense of insecurity, even the family slaves' welcoming gestures seemed suspect. "They were too glad to see me, and while they protested, I discerned sarcasm in their grins, a sinister roll in lively eyeballs." Her fears were exacerbated by her belief that American slaves, although devoted to their masters, still retained elements of African savagery. "We knew them to be but children of a larger growth, passionate and unreasoning, facile and impulsive, and fanatical beyond anything conceivable by the full-blooded white. The superstitious savagery their ancestors had brought from barbarous and benighted Africa, was yet in their veins."[571]

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[570] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 8 June 1847, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke; Harland, *Autobiography*, 186-187.

[571] Evans Wilson may well have shared this belief in the innate African capacity for violence. Count Gobineau, whom she had read in translation, asserted that the "Negro" had "as little respect for his own life as he does for others'; he kills for the sake of killing, and this automaton that is so easily moved is, in the

Terhune explained in her *Autobiography* that she felt impelled to include a discussion of the Southern "bugbear" for the sake of completeness in her portrayal of the Old South. She acknowledged that the specter of slave revolt raised its head with some frequency, and that it had caused her real terror. "I cannot recollect when the whisper of the possibility of 'Insurrection' (we needed not to specify of what kind) did not send a sick chill to my heart."[572]

This fear was not simply due to white beliefs about an African propensity for violence. Terhune and her fellow Virginians also retained keen memories of actual slave revolts or attempted revolts: Prosser's Gabriel in Richmond in 1800, Denmark Vesey in Charleston in 1822, and Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831. To these histories were added bloodcurdling stories of individual slave attacks on their owners. One such story literally hit close to home for Terhune.[573] In July of 1852, she wrote to Eppes, "You have, ere this heard of the horrible tragedy that has spread gloom over our city." Terhune was referring to a hatchet attack on the Winston family as they lay in their beds. Mr. Winston survived, but Mrs. Winston and the couple's infant were killed, and both were said to have been mutilated beyond recognition. The Winstons' slave Jane Williams and her husband were accused of the murders, and the outrage in Richmond was such that a number of prominent citizens called for their lynching.[574]

Terhune's horror was magnified by her proximity to the attack, as she explained to Eppes:

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face of suffering, either a coward who seeks refuge in death or else monstrously indifferent." Count Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines [Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races]*, 339-40, in Michelle Maria Wright, "Nigger Peasants from France: Missing Translations of American Anxieties on Race and the Nation," *Callaloo* 22.4 (1999), 832; Harland, *Autobiography*, 187, 189-190.

[572] Harland, *Autobiography*, 187.

[573] Curiously, Terhune makes no mention of this particular atrocity in her *Autobiography*.

[574] Gregg D. Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*, 66.

> Add to the dreadful circumstances of the murders themselves, the fact that they were committed within two squares of us, and that on Sunday night the boys were my only protectors, father, sister and the little girls having gone to the country on Saturday morning, and you will conceive of the emotions that crowded upon me when I heard the fearful story – the horror, the feeling of imminent danger that I had escaped, the loneliness, and then the full outgushing of thankfulness to Him who had guarded our little band from evil and alarm.[575]

Terhune, who had a special love for children, was particularly shocked at reports that the ten-month-old infant had been mutilated. "The most brutal savage would have contented himself with a single fracture of the tender skull," she exclaimed to Eppes, "but these inhuman monsters inflicted no less that <u>four</u> mortal wounds, all upon the head, its mother receiving <u>twenty</u>."

The atrocity led Terhune to some passionate political commentary and some uncharacteristically grim predictions of race war. The crime was, she wrote to Eppes, a "bitter harvest, the seed of which was sown by our 'Higher Law' Governor." The Winston murders, which she believed were unquestionably committed by the family slaves, were only the latest in a series of recent black-on-white attacks, including "a murder, a case of poisoning, and one of incendiarism, all clearly proven . . ." In each case, Terhune asserted, "justice has been withheld – who can wonder that this awful affair should be the climax of such a list?" In her excitement, she confided to Eppes, she had thought of little else. Then, commenting that "this does not interest you," she abruptly dropped the subject and turned to a brief description of Hawes family doings.[576]

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[575] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 20 July 1852, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[576] Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune) to Virginia Eppes Dance, 20 July, 1852, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

The "'Higher Law' Governor" of Terhune's letter to Eppes was Democrat Joseph Johnson, who became governor of Virginia in the spring of 1851. In using this label Terhune was linking Johnson with William Henry Seward, the antislavery senator from New York who had famously argued during the debate over the Compromise of 1850 that the moral law, a "higher law" than the United States Constitution, prohibited the extension of slavery in the territories newly acquired by the United States as a result of the Mexican War.[577] Governor Johnson did not in fact endorse Seward's abolitionism, but during his tenure he commuted the sentences of a number of African Americans convicted of serious crimes against whites from death to sale and transportation outside the state of Virginia, usually to Louisiana. In her complaints of justice withheld, Terhune was probably referring to these well-publicized commutations.

Many Richmonders shared Terhune's belief that the mere "transporting" of convicted criminals fell short of justice. Like Terhune also, they connected this practice to a reported increase in serious crimes committed by slaves on whites.[578] Terhune's

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[577] In 1861, Abraham Lincoln appointed Seward Secretary of State, a position he retained until 1869.

[578] County and city courts routinely sentenced troublesome slaves to sale and transportation, a practice authorized by the Virginia Assembly in 1801. By the early 1850s, about thirty slaves per year were being transported out of state. Governor Johnson's commutation decisions were motivated by both humanitarian and political considerations, and were always a response to citizen petitions. In May of 1852, for example, he commuted the death sentence of Jordan Hatcher, a slave hired out to a tobacco factory, who had been convicted of murdering his white overseer William P. Jackson. Supporters of the commutation (most of them Whigs) argued that Hatcher had been acting in self-defense and had not intended to kill Jackson, and that a white man in similar circumstances would have been convicted of manslaughter, not first-degree murder. The case also reflected tensions between Richmond's new tobacco manufacturers and the city's older mercantile elite, as well as city leaders' concerns about Richmond's growing and apparently unregulated black population, both slave and free. In 1852, many white Virginians perceived an epidemic of black-on-white crime as Richmond papers reported a series of assaults, poisonings, and other crimes committed by slaves. Some slaves were quoted as saying that they expected to escape prosecution since the governor was known to be lenient. (Jane Williams and her husband, however, did not receive commuted sentences. They were quickly prosecuted and promptly hanged.) It is difficult to determine whether the flurry of news items indicates an actual increase in crimes committed by slaves (poisoning in particular was notoriously difficult to prove) or reflects the growing fears of the white community. William A. Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 77, 80-84, 88-90; Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*, 66.

reaction to the numerous crime stories which appeared in the Richmond papers in 1852 indicates the circumstantial nature of her strongest racial feelings. She was aware of the reports, but only when the purported crime wave struck her own neighborhood did she speak darkly of a coming "struggle for supremacy" between the races. Moreover, she did not translate this emotion into mental conviction. The subject of race war never reappears in her writings. Decades later, however, she would suggest that it was the fear of black insurrection that lay at the root of Southerners' hatred for white abolitionists.[579]

Toward the end of her chapter on slave insurrection, Terhune explicitly states that slavery was wrong, and gives several anecdotes to illustrate her family's opposition to the institution in the early nineteenth century. She recalls hearing her maternal aunt Elizabeth, whom she calls "my saintly Aunt Betsy" sadly predict that "we" would eventually have to pay for the sin of holding slaves. Terhune's mother retorted that "we" had not brought the slaves to Virginia in the first place, and that she herself wished them back in Africa. "But what can we do, now that they are on our hand?" Judith had asked rhetorically. Terhune also describes her father's plan in the 1830s to free the eight or ten slaves his wife had inherited from her father, and to send them to Liberia. Her childhood recollection was that the slaves had refused to leave, and had pleaded with her mother not to send them away "into exile," since their families and friends were all in America and they had no emotional attachment to Liberia. Her father had finally acquiesced, with the

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[579] While freedom for "the negro slave" was an abstract principle to the Northerner who sat safe at home, Terhune commented in her autobiography, white Southerners realized the violence to which they would be subjected in the event of an organized slave uprising. In the case of the 1847 insurrection scare, she herself had heard reports that abolitionists had been active among slaves in Henrico and Hanover counties. Harland, *Autobiography*, 189, 193.

remark that there was nothing to do but "wait for further indications of the Divine will."[580]

Such antislavery sentiments, however, do not appear in Terhune's literature or private writings from the 1850s. By this period Southerners had closed ranks against what they saw as aggressive Northern attacks on their culture, and if some individuals continued to hold pro-emancipation sympathies they were obliged to keep them to themselves (or to exile themselves to the North as had the abolitionist Grimké sisters). Neither Terhune nor Evans Wilson ever wrote about slave insurrection or other forms of resistance. To do so would have been to lend support to the abolitionist argument that slaves were unhappy with their condition. Some Southern domestic novelists, notably Caroline Lee Hentz in *The Planter's Northern Bride* (1854), did write about slave resistance but portrayed the slaves as the hapless victims of abolitionist manipulation.[581] Terhune and Evans Wilson eschewed this most overt form of literary proslavery propaganda. They made their contribution to the proslavery cause, however, in portraying slaves as invariably contented with their condition. There was one exception. In *Moss-side*, Terhune gleefully created, as a very minor character, a brutal and ignorant slaveholder who enjoyed his power over his slaves. That slaveholder, however, was a free black.[582]

There are additional factors that probably shaped Terhune's and Evans's decision, conscious or unconscious, not to explore "insurrection" and race war in their fiction. The nightmare vision, while both considered it a potential reality, lay far outside the

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[580] Harland, *Autobiography*, 194-5.
[581] Hentz's novel was one of several direct literary rebuttals to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
[582] Harland, *Moss-side*, 98-102.

bounds of their vocation as they understood it. They were attempting to reach readers like themselves, educated whites of the middle and upper classes, and their novels assumed a certain social stability even as they condemned what the authors saw as rife immorality. An account of racial civil war would have constituted a leap to another genre altogether. Furthermore, of course, the writers' view of blacks as simpleminded and lacking in agency obviated any need to "influence" them through literature. Terhune and Evans directed their efforts toward persuading those they saw as their social peers. Finally, neither novelist held the kind of virulent racist sentiments that might have them to portray villainy as an inherent racial characteristic of blacks. Their fear of African "savagery" existed in tension with their belief in blacks' goodness and honesty as well as (in Terhune's case) their intuitive religious wisdom. Terhune subscribed to the "romantic racialism" historian George M. Frederickson has identified as a characteristic of Northern slavery opponents, particularly Harriet Beecher Stowe. As "natural Christians," the black characters in Terhune's novels, and to a lesser extent in Evans's, were witnesses for the evangelical vision of an orderly Christian society, and against the pervasive elite sins of materialism and skepticism.[583]

Another pervasive anxiety among evangelicals of the 1850s was the growth of Catholicism, mainly due to high rates of Catholic immigration from the 1840s on. The majority of Catholic immigrants were Irish and Germans fleeing successive potato crop

[583] See Frederickson's chapter 4, "Romantic Racialism in the North." George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on African-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

failures, land shortages, and political unrest.[584] By the 1850s the Roman Catholic Church was the largest single denomination in the United States. Economic and political tensions created by the dramatic demographic change exacerbated traditional Protestant and secular antagonism toward a faith that was seen as narrow, superstitious, and authoritarian. Catholics were believed to follow the political directives of their priests, and were thought to be unfit for citizenship in a republic. A nativist reaction against Catholicism grew in the 1840s, and in 1852 this movement coalesced into the anti-Catholic American Party, popularly called the "Know-Nothings."

As devout evangelicals, Terhune and Evans-Wilson shared in the pervasive anti-Catholic sentiment of the 1850s. Like the rest of the urban South, both Richmond and Mobile experienced high rates of Catholic immigration and a nativist backlash.[585] In Richmond, the growth of the American Party prompted candidates for city office to declare their party allegiance for the first time in the municipal elections of 1855 and 1856.[586] In Mobile, the political strength of the American Party in the same years led the rival Democratic Party to court the immigrant vote by calling for universal white male suffrage. The mid-1850s proved to be the peak years for the Know-Nothings, who subsequently went into political decline.

The most prominent example of anti-Catholicism in the writings of Terhune and Evans Wilson is of course Evans Wilson's *Inez: A Tale of the Alamo*, published in 1855 during the heyday of Know-Nothingism. In this novel, Evans portrayed ordinary

[584] Approximately 800,000 Irish arrived in the 1840s, and over 900,000 in the 1850s. For Germans, the figures were about 400,000 and over one million, respectively. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 206.
[585] Richmond's foreign-born population increased from 7.6 percent of the total in 1850 to 13 percent in 1860. Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*, 31.
[586] Ibid., 198.

Catholics as gullible and superstitious, and the Jesuit priest Mazzolin as power-hungry and unscrupulous. As noted in the previous chapter, however, Evans's anti-Catholicism does not appear to have been deeply rooted. She shed her anti-Catholic views after her religious crisis of 1856, at which time skepticism replaced Catholicism as her chief spiritual antagonist. The fact that Evans's religious change of heart coincided with the decline of the American Party raises the possibility that *Inez* was written in part as a response to the political arguments of that party.

Terhune never portrayed Catholicism as a serious political threat, although her local Presbyterian paper, the *Watchman and Observer*, occasionally published harsh and contemptuous indictments of Catholicism. Several examples will suffice to communicate the general tone of the paper. "The Age of Martyrs Returning" was the title of an 1851 article on the persecution of "Bible readers" in Catholic nations in Europe. The following year, an article titled "Religion and Politics" linked "false religion" with political despotism, while in 1855 a biography of the aforementioned Seward was described as pandering to both "Popery" and abolitionism.[587] Terhune evidently read the *Watchman* closely, at least those articles that particularly interested her.[588] Certainly, she shared its disdain for Catholicism.

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[587] *Watchman and Observer*, Richmond, 7 August, 1851, 26 February, 1852, 4 April, 1855.

[588] As late as the 1880s, Terhune's domestic advice writings include quotes from articles that appeared in the *Watchman* in the 1850s. The most striking example, admittedly on an entirely different subject, is her warning against unnatural chemicals contained in a popular candy called "alba-terra." "Convince Mamie," Terhune wrote, "that the lovely emerald of the pistache-drop is arsenical: that there is Prussian-blue in another and softer shade of green, and red-lead in the rose-color. Talk of chemical analyses, and of revolting revelations that have come about by providential and retributive fires . . ." This information corresponds closely to an 1854 article in the *Watchman* entitled "Poisonous Colored Confectionary," a summary of a report by the *Lancet* that had originally appeared in *Scientific American*. "The London 'Lancet' commissioners, in reporting the result of their investigations respecting colored confectionery, express their surprise at the extent to which deadly and virulent poisons are daily made use of by the manufacturers of those articles." Each of the additives mentioned by Terhune appears in this article. Harland, *Eve's Daughters*, 113; *Watchman and Observer*, Richmond, 27 July 1854.

In her literature and private writings, however, Terhune mainly depicted the Catholic faith as an object of ridicule rather than a serious social threat. Her Catholics are not malevolent Jesuits but simpleminded Irish workingwomen (she had probably already encountered Irish maids by the mid-1850s).[589] As she does elsewhere with blacks and country folk, Terhune enjoyed inserting Irish dialect into her text for humorous effect. Nevertheless, she also portrayed Catholicism as a possible snare to individual souls. In *The Hidden Path*, she depicts a young Irish woman who, having earlier embraced Protestantism, wishes for a priest when she is dying. ". . . the priest can do something. He is a holy man," Norah exclaims, but it is because, in her weakened state of mind, "early superstitions" have expelled her later lessons in Protestantism. Isabel Oakley gently reminds Norah that Christ is the only priest, and so Norah in the end dispenses with the priest, and prays only for light.[590] By the end of her prayer, even Norah's "fat" Irish attendant, an unenlightened "Papist," has knelt in prayer. The scene is devoid of any stark religious confrontation. This contrast between the anti-Catholicism of Evans Wilson and that of Terhune demonstrates once again the more dramatic and politicized quality of Evans Wilson's thinking, and the more relaxed and personalized nature of Terhune's.

Nowhere does this temperamental difference between the two novelists show up more clearly than in their divergent thinking on the deepening sectional divide. As discussed in the previous chapter, their political views reflected that of their different regions (Deep South and Upper South), but were also a manifestation of their very

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[589] By the Civil War, the Irish maid, whether clownish or solid and sensible, would become a stock character of Terhune's fiction.
[590] Harland, *The Hidden Path*, 195.

different personalities and experience. As the Civil War approached, Evans Wilson increasingly identified her idealized "Sunny South" with the Southern section of the United States, and rejected the North as an alien and spiritually callous culture. This romantic absolutism was a common characteristic among her generation of Southerners, but it was also a consequence of Evans's idealistic and introverted temperament.[591] She admired uncompromising adherence to principle, at any cost; her heroes and heroines are invariably strong-willed. In her personal life, she lived out this willingness to sacrifice personal happiness to principle when she broke off her engagement to the Northern editor Spalding.

Evans Wilson, however, appears to have been conflicted on this score. Her love for principle was tempered by her recognition of human weakness and error, and of the need for toleration of differences. In her antebellum fiction, she depicted her protagonists as cold and inflexible in consequence of their iron-clad wills, and in most cases they are obliged to relent in some important respect in order to bring about the requisite happy ending. In her personal life, Evans seems to have harbored both tendencies in the late 1850s without integrating them. As early as 1856, she could condemn the Northerner for his aesthetic insensitivity and cold utilitarianism, an idea she would reiterate in her 1859 articles on Northern and Southern literature. At the same time, she could fall in love with the Republican Spalding and engage herself to marry him. She could also, as late as December 1860 (after she had broken her engagement), write a cordial letter to Orville James Victor, editor of the New York *Cosmopolitan Art Journal*, regretting that she was

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[591] Richard J. Carwardine has argued that antebellum politics were strongly shaped by the "Manichean" tendencies of evangelicalism, particularly in the generation that came to maturity in the 1850s. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*, xvii,129.

"debarred from the treasures contained in the New York Galleries and Studios."[592] By the time she penned her Civil War-era novel *Macaria*, however, she would depict the "Yankee," at least in his Union military incarnation, as wholly evil and corrupt. Evans did not resolve this contradiction in her view of Northern society, but as the sectional tension finally exploded into war her vision of the North as wholly wicked gained the upper hand.[593]

Terhune, with her regionally mixed personal background and Unionist political loyalties, did not ascribe wickedness to either section, but to the radicals of both. Like her husband and the majority of the Hawes family, she held that secession was immoral and blamed the Confederates for starting the war.[594] In her *Autobiography*, she recalled that she had favored the Constitutional Union Party candidate Bell in the 1860 election.[595] She cautiously questioned her husband about whom he intended to vote for, and was disappointed when he refused to tell her. Edward in fact planned to vote for Lincoln (as Virginia learned some months later) but in view of his sensitive position as a clergyman

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[592] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Walter Clopton Harriss, 22 April, 1856, Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon; Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson), "Northern Literature," 11 October and 18 October, 1859, Mobile *Advertiser*; Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Orville James Victor, 1 December, 1860, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 25.

[593] Evans's politicization supports the thesis of Michael Holt concerning the radicalization of politics in the 1850s. Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s*, Critical Episodes in American Politics (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978).

[594] According to her *Autbiography*, Terhune liked Mea's husband but was "irked" at having "a Secessionist in a loyal family." In their private correspondence, the Hawes family expressed strong opposition to secession. In an undated letter written from New Brunswick Seminary after South Carolina's secession, Terhune's brother Herbert ("Hatie") wrote to her brother Horace ("Hardie"), "I don't like secession any better than I ever did. I cannot discover wherein the <u>right</u> consists." Herbert Henry Hawes to Samuel Horace Hawes, 1861; Terhune's younger sister Alice wrote to her brother Horace ("Hardie"), who had enlisted with the Richmond Howitzers, "I hold that if government is worth having it is worth maintaining and I think that the South is much, <u>much</u> to be blamed." Alice Hawes to Samuel Horace Hawes, 31 April, 1861; Edward Payson Terhune wrote to Horace, "I only wish you were not necessarily engaged to a cause to which you cannot give your whole heart. But we love you the better for your [dangers]. Edward Payson Terhune to Samuel Horace Hawes, 20 April 1861. Harland, *Autobiography*, 374-375; Katherine Heath Hawes Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

[595] Bell would carry only the Upper South states of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

he had decided to keep his political views a secret even from his wife at the time of the election. "There are times when the Know-Nothing policy is the safest," he explained to her later.[596]

Terhune's reluctance to believe that secession and war would actually take place indicates her unwillingness to view her nation in Manichean terms. This incredulity, she claimed in her autobiography, was typical of Southern Unionists, many of whom did not believe that the republic had truly split until the First Battle of Bull Run (Manassas) in July 1861.[597] It was also typical of Terhune herself who, in setting aside her misanthropic tendencies, had chosen to focus on human good will and common ideals. She avoided the subject of the war in the fiction she published in the early 1860s. Her short stories and novels were either set in the antebellum period, or avoided more than an indirect reference to the fighting. Not until the war had ended would Terhune publish a Civil War novel. *Sunnybank* (1866) would depict the travails of a Unionist planter family in Virginia. Sincere adherents to both causes are portrayed sympathetically in this novel, while the villains are motivated not by political loyalties but by self-interest.

Conflict in the Supernatural Arena

Disorder in the world included disorder in the spiritual realm, and both Terhune and Evans Wilson explored the subject of spiritual evil, albeit with caution. Both authors at times endowed natural or human events in their fiction with an ominous quality, although probably as a literary device rather than out of an explicit belief in portents.

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[596] Harland, *Autobiography*, 361-362.

[597] Terhune notes that her mother would not have allowed Alice to return to Newark with them had she not believed the "war-cloud would blow over." Harland, *Autobiography*, 382.

The belief in an "enchanted universe," which historian David Hall describes as characteristic of Puritans in the early modern era, had been left well behind by the middle class of the antebellum years.[598] Evans Wilson, in fact, rejected the possibility of the miraculous, subscribing to the belief that miracles had ended with the age of the apostles. This view, common among nineteenth-century Protestants, enabled its adherents to reconcile a belief in the historicity of the biblical miracles with the naturalistic ideology of contemporary science.[599] Terhune, on the other hand, was open to exploring possible intersections between the material and spiritual worlds. She treated the subject carefully in her published work. Her antebellum writings limited the supernatural to benevolent "particular Providences," and she did not write explicitly of more sinister supernatural events (with the possible exception of the Egyptian skeleton of *Moss-side*) until decades later. Her personal interest in the supernatural, however, began in the early 1850s, and grew from her own experience.

While coming of age in Richmond, Terhune took some interest in mesmerism, a subject of considerable fascination in the 1850s and one that was closely associated with spiritualism. A demonstration at a friend's home in April of 1849 convinced her that the phenomenon was "either the d - - or a humbug," but "a lot of fun" withal.[600] A month later, she attended a "Psychological Electro-Magnetic Lecture" given by a Dr. Williams. She was more impressed this time. "Cannot understand the mighty influence he

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[598] David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder; Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 7, 11, 71.
[599] A belief in miraculous healing did not begin to re-emerge among evangelicals until the 1870s. Heather D. Curtis, "Houses of Healing: Sacred Space, Spiritual Practice, and the Transformation of Female Suffering in the Faith Cure Movement, 1870-1890," *Church History* 75 No. 3 (September 2006), 599.
[600] According to Ahlstrom, mesmerism and spiritualism were so closely associated as to seem inseparable. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 487; Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 21 April 1848, p. 95 of typed transcript.

evidently exerts over his subjects," she wrote in her diary. "From whence can he derive it? I disregarded the evolutions of a juvenile corps which was on the stage but there were two young men of respectable standing and character and who would not I think lend themselves to such an imposture."[601]

In 1851, Terhune became interested in spiritualism during a visit to Boston. In response to a casual remark she had made, her cousin "Dr. Curtis" confided to her that he had become convinced that "communications from the spirit world" were a reality. In her diary, Terhune described her powerful attraction to the idea. "I listened to his clear but enthusiastic argument . . . with a wildly beating heart; my breath came short and quick, my mind seemed to break from its narrow confines and bound away into another world; a world seen only in dreams of bliss and holiness, or in day visions of future blessedness, too bright for mortal eyes to behold." Dr. Curtis explained that he had had communications with a spirit named "Paulina," who had told him that he might discuss his experience with Mary Virginia, provided she raised the subject first.

Recalling the conversation the following morning, Terhune alternated between skepticism and acceptance. "This morning in the coolness of calm reflection and absence of excitements old prejudice and skepticism return with such force that I almost wonder how I could for a moment have credited a theory so preposterous and utterly opposed to what is generally styled reason and common sense. Yet why should it not be true? If I believe as I have always done, in the actual presence of departed spirits, in the tender guardianship of ministering angels, why treat with contempt the idea of personal intercourse? That there are mysteries of the spirit as well as of the body which research

[601] Hawes (Terhune), "Diary," 21 May 1849, p. 101 of typed transcript.

and science shall yet make known and prove beyond the shadow of a doubt, no one questions - - yet I am still incredulous." She questioned both the motive and the "undignified" manner of the spirit communications Dr. Curtis had reported to her, but she remained intrigued.[602]

In the end, Terhune decided to attend a séance with Dr. Curtis, to be conducted by a medium she named as "Mrs. Baldwin." The event was an anticlimax. No spirit made an appearance, and the medium blamed Dr. Curtis who was, she claimed, "too anxious." Terhune was both annoyed and, from this point, repelled by her cousin. "I am still undecided and would think of the matter as little as possible. I cannot feel at ease in the presence of this man, yet why I cannot say. There is a growing repugnance in my mind towards him and for my life I can assign no reason; indeed, it seems most unreasonable; whether it is best to strive against this or to regard it as the holy dictate of nature I know not."[603] Despite her ongoing questions, the unpleasant experience ended Terhune's fascination with spiritualism. She made no further explorations into the occult.

According to Terhune's *Autobiography*, however, she and her entire family had a different kind of supernatural encounter the following year. She recounts the event in detail in a chapter titled, "Our True Family Ghost Story." The ghost in question haunted the Hawes home at 506 East Leigh Street, which Samuel Hawes's mother had purchased for the family residence in 1851. Terhune first saw the apparition in the upstairs hallway on a stormy winter night in 1853. She writes that she had just spent the evening playing

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[602] Ibid., 9 July, 1851, pp. 272-274 of typed transcript.

[603] Terhune's revulsion for Dr. Curtis actually dated from an earlier period, although she apparently did not remember this in 1851. Upon first meeting him in 1849, she had written in her diary, "I hardly know what opinion to form of him, he is gentlemanly, intelligent, and I believe he had a kind and feeling heart but there is an indifference – a je ne sais quoi – about him that I do not like much, it may be that I am not used to it but it piques me a little." Hawes (Terhune), "Diary", 9 May, 1849, 14 August, 1851, pp. 46, 305 of typed transcript.

music with a close friend and was in a cheerful mood, not susceptible to morbid visions. On her way to her bedroom, she saw the ghost emerge from the opposite door and "glide" down the hall. "She was dressed in gray; she was small and lithe; her head was bowed upon her hands, and she slipped away, hugging the wall, as in flight, vanishing at the closed door. The door I had heard latch itself five minutes ago! Which did not open to let her through!"[604]

Terhune was surprised when her father, who despised all forms of superstition, reacted gently to her announcement that she had just seen a ghost. He searched the house, listened to her account, and instructed her to tell no one about what she had seen. Over the next several months, Judith, Mea, Alice, and a visiting cousin each saw the specter. Samuel Hawes then called a meeting of all the adult members of the household who had seen the "small, gray woman," and admitted that he himself had had numerous encounters with her. Finding her harmless and even "amiable," he had decided to say nothing and await "further manifestations." He instructed his family to say nothing about the ghost and to pretend to disbelieve the children's reports, for very down-to-earth reasons. If word came out that 506 East Leigh Street was haunted the slaves would refuse to enter, and the family would be unable to sell the house. For the sake of their own comfort, Samuel suggested, they should "keep our own counsel like sensible, brave Christians." The Hawes family acquiesced. None of them spoke of the ghost until Terhune herself told the story in her 1910 autobiography.[605]

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[604] Harland, *Autobiography*, 205.

[605] Terhune added a coda to her ghost story. After her father had died and her younger siblings had moved out, her mother sold the house to a prominent Episcopalian church for use as an orphanage. In altering the house, the workers uncovered the skeleton of a small woman in the front yard. She was buried with an elaborate, tortoise-shell comb, only six feet away from the house, and with no evidence of a coffin or coffin

According to that autobiographical chapter, the encounters with the "small, gray woman" convinced both Terhune and her father of the reality of "psychical phenomena," even if their existence could not be explained in terms of the philosophy of the age. At the same time, Terhune took her cue from her father in concluding that "sensible, brave Christians" should not be disturbed by such apparitions nor become unduly fascinated with them. This belief in a morally ambiguous, supernatural dimension to reality thus informed her thinking, while her reticence on the subject prevented her from gliding into sensationalism. Terhune depicted the material and spiritual worlds as intertwined, and for the rest of her life she remained both cautious of and open to the possibility of supernatural phenomena. This belief was one aspect of her endeavor to communicate a Christian vision of human experience.

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plate. The curious finding was, Terhune wrote, reported in the local papers. The Hawes family apparently took an interest their family ghost story (rumors of hauntings continued into the 1930s). Several news clippings reiterating the story are in the Miscellaneous File of the Hawes family papers at the Virginia Historical Society. Harland, *Autobiography*, 203-217; Katherine Heath Hawes Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

The "Hawes House" was purchased by St. Paul's Episcopal Church some time after the Civil War and turned into "St. Paul's Church Home School for Orphans." The Richmond Esthetic Survey and Historic Building Survey of 1965 indicates the house was last occupied as a private residence in 1875, but St. Paul's sources seem to indicate an earlier, unspecified date of purchase. The house became a club and a Salvation Army shelter before it was demolished in 1968 to make way for the Richmond Coliseum. The Library of Virginia Catalogues, computer file of the Richmond Esthetic Survey and Historic Building Survey, 1965, http://ajax.lva.lib.va.us, 7/22/2005; "Now and Then," newsletter of St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Sunday School 1:1, 15 March, 1873, 2; William C. Bentley, "St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia, Historical Sketch" (Richmond: Whitte & Shepperson, 1913), 8; Paul S. Dulany, *The Architecture of Historic Richmond* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), 105.

CHAPTER V: THE CIVIL WAR AND AFTER: THE VISION DULLS

Mary Virginia Terhune and Augusta Evans Wilson were zealous ambassadors for the romantic evangelicalism that permeated the middle-class culture of the antebellum era. Their blending of divine and sexual love, their love for the domestic hearthside, their reverence for nature, and their conviction that a spiritual drama lay hidden just beneath the humdrum of everyday life, all of these were integral parts of an evangelical vision that had a quality of enchantment about it. Terhune's beloved fairies might almost have been real. The young novelists, in their enthusiasm, were riding a wave of evangelicalism that was the conjunction of several decades of Christian revivals with the Romantic movement. It swelled through the early nineteenth century and crested in the late 1840s and 1850s, the formative years for both Terhune and Evans Wilson.

Even at its zenith, the evangelical vision was not devoid of darkness. Indeed its ambassadors Terhune and Evans Wilson often depicted the hidden dimension of life as a deadly contest between darkness and light. They wrestled with doubts and temptations to despair in their personal lives, and portrayed these struggles in their fiction. Evans's fiction had always had an ambivalent quality. Of the three heroines of *Inez*, only one makes the conventional happy marriage. The heroine in *Beulah* marries her Dr. Hartwell, but Evans leaves his conversion an open question. Terhune, who had grimly flirted with "misanthropy" as a teenager, wrote happy endings in marriage for her novels but

explored harsher themes in her short stories. Even at its bleakest, however, the antebellum fiction of these novelists was innocent of the squalid. It might portray the tragedy of life, but never the tedium.

With the coming of the Civil War and, in its wake, the pragmatic and often sordid Gilded Age, Terhune and Evans Wilsonwere obliged to confront a new, flatly unromantic reality from which fairies were summarily banished. The authors responded very differently, both in their fiction and their personal lives. Terhune went through several years of experimentation and disorientation, reflected in the series of "dismal" novels she produced in the late 1860s and the 1870s. Her new career direction as an author of domestic advice was a partial adaptation to the practical temper of the age. Evans Wilson, both in her physical home and her literature, constructed an ideological refuge from the society she saw as increasingly exploitive and depraved. For them, as for many evangelical Christians, the shining millennium had retreated into the distance.

Yet, if Terhune's and Evans Wilson's confidence in the near realization of their bright evangelical vision was badly shaken, their love for that vision remained essentially unchanged. The same themes, conversion and vocation, womanly genius and influence, nature and art, Christian community and divine providence, persisted in their writings. In the case of Terhune, these themes would indeed be obscured for a time, but they would eventually re-emerge. The proverbial happy ending remained, although it was more likely to be deferred until the arrival of the now dim millennium. In the end, each novelist would still make her home in the romantic evangelicalism she had embraced in her youth.

The Civil War was a traumatic experience for both Terhune and Evans Wilson. For Terhune, the war itself had been a blood-soaked mistake. She blamed secessionists for the immediate outbreak of hostilities, and radicals on both sides for the deepening tensions that had led to the rupture. In addition to the anguish she experienced for the safety of her family and friends, Terhune suffered personal wounds that, if not directly connected to the conflict, were closely associated with the nightmare of wartime in her mind. Diphtheria had taken her five-year-old son Eddie in the opening months of the conflict, and had threatened the lives of her husband and daughter Chrissy as well. Other personal bereavements of that period were probably at least exacerbated by the emotional tensions created by the war. Terhune believed that her grandmother had died of grief after seeing her brother Horace leave for the front. It is also likely that the troubling emotional bond that developed between her husband Edward and her sister Alice was fed by the heightened anxieties of those days. The Terhunes' marriage had survived, even thrived, but the incident left lasting scars on Virginia's faith in her husband and her ideal of romantic love. Moreover, although she attributed Alice's death in February of 1863 to varioloid, it would have been natural for her to experience some guilt. A few months earlier, she and Edward had arranged to have the weakened Alice smuggled across the Chesapeake Bay in a rowboat, under both Union and Confederate guns.[606]

In addition to these trials, there had been the endless demands on the time, energy, and charity of a minister's wife in war-time Newark. It was not only a matter of meeting

[606] According to his son, Edward Terhune himself never forgot the backward look Alice gave him as the boat slipped out into the bay. Albert Payson Terhune to Frederick Fritz Van de Water, 18 November, 1939, Albert Payson Terhune Papers, Rutgers.

the pressing needs but of distinguishing the genuine claimant on her charity from the charlatan. Several years later, Terhune described the wearisome work for her readers:

> There is a magnetic influence in that dreadful [door]bell that draws up our steps a string of beggars – if not in the motley garb described by Mother Goose, yet clad in pretensions as varied, and as ludicrous in their heterogeneity as the "rags, tags, and velvet gowns."
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> . . . Old clothes men, volunteer house cleaners, men and women in quest of employment and broken victuals, cadaverous personages, with dingy white cravats, who may be, as they claim, home-missionaries, whose names have by some typographical blunder, been omitted from our clergy list . . . Reduced gentlewomen from a distance, who used to be Southern refugees, but are now invariably the widows of Union soldiers, and want to be "sent on" to Chicago, or Canada, or Nova Scotia, where they have wealthy relatives; and who so able to pay their traveling expenses as the long-suffering, much-believing, tender-hearted Dominie? [607]

It was the yearning for respite from these endless tensions and demands that led the Terhunes to seek refuge in the New Jersey countryside and, finally, to purchase property of their own and erect their beloved "Sunnybank." In her autobiography, Mary Virginia recalled how she and her husband, driving through the Jersey hills, had fallen in love with the valley at first sight:

> . . . an exclamation from my husband stopped a sentence in the middle. He drew the horse to a sudden halt.
>
> Woodsmen were busy with destructive axes upon a body of native trees at the left of our road. They had opened to our sight a view heretofore hidden by the wood. A lake, blue and tranquil as the heavens it mirrored; green slopes, running down to the water; wooded heights, bordering the thither banks, and around, as far as the eye could reach, mountains, benignant in outline and verdant to their summits, billowing, range beyond range, against the horizon – why had we never seen this before? It was like a section of the Delectable Mountains, gently lowered from Bunyan's Beulah Land, and set down within thirty miles of the biggest city in America.
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> The rapt silence was ended by one word from my companion:

[607] Marion Harland, "Sunnybank Papers, No. I," *Hours at Home: A Popular Monthly Magazine* 9 (May 1869): pp. 78-79, in Smith, "Marion Harland," Ph.D. diss., 280.

"Alabama!"[608]

The mystical attraction that Sunnybank held for the entire Terhune family probably stemmed not only from its beauty but from its almost sacred importance as a place of retreat from the physical and moral grime of the war years.[609] When the war was finally over and the tension lifted, Sunnybank would retain its place as their favorite refuge and, in the deepest sense, their home.

As a Unionist, Terhune was spared the anguish that Southern supporters of the Confederacy suffered at the end of the war. Her intense relief over the cessation of hostilities was reflected in the glow that suffused the early post-war essay "A Christmas Talk with Mothers" (November 1865) and her 1866 novel *Sunnybank*. Despite its portrayal of war-time hardship and betrayal, this novel has an unambiguously happy ending. A different mood would suffuse Terhune's later writings. Her republican patriotism, which emerged stronger than ever after the war, had taken on a chauvinistic quality by the 1870s. When she took her long-postponed trip to Europe, her delight in her travels was mixed with annoyance over uncouth and unkempt foreigners. During this same period, her fiction betrayed a certain hardening and stoicism. In *Phemie's Temptation*, for example, she treated weakness, particularly in men, with contempt. This

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[608] The meaning of Edward's exclamation is unclear. It may have been a comment on the beauty of the scene. There is no evidence that either of the couple ever visited the state of Alabama. Harland, *Autobiography*, 406-407.

[609] Irving Litvag, biographer of Albert Payson Terhune, writes of the "almost mystical force" which Sunnybank exerted on the Terhune family. For Albert, "the Place" took on the quality of an Eden. It was, until he died, the only place where he felt at home. Curiously, Sunnybank had a similar effect on visitors. According to Albert Terhune, one frequent visitor was a beautiful, cultured woman who was dying of an incurable disease. "There is a strange peace that comes over me the instant my car turns into your gateway and down the drive," she told Albert and his wife. "It helps me to carry on for days afterwards." Irving Litvag, *The Master of Sunnybank: A Biography of Albert Payson Terhune* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 22-23.

new, hard edge may have been a result of Terhune's having imbibed militaristic values during the war, but it was also a manifestation of her personal disillusion, her sense that her highest ideals and hopes had been betrayed.

Evans Wilson, the "uncompromising secessionist," drained the bitter cup of Confederate defeat to the dregs. Her very idealism and intensity, which had contributed to her zeal for the Confederate cause, added to her despair over its death. Her bitterness was of course widely shared by her former compatriots, but Evans's personality gave her grief a distinctive quality. As an introvert and intellectual, and as a frail girl who had been unable to attend school, she had lived much of her life in the realm of ideas. Apart from her devotion to her family, her sense of purpose came largely from her determination to "combat skepticism," an omnipresent but nebulous enemy. Even her adored "sunny South" had had an abstract quality – her "Beulah Land" was as much a beautiful ideal as a physical place. With the coming of the secession crisis, however, Evans's abstract ideal became identified with the Confederacy, and for the first time she had something concrete to live for and perhaps die for. Her writing talent, her training as a nurse, and her organizational skills could all be directed toward Confederate independence. Moreover, in this life of service the once isolated Evans could experience being part of a wider community of belief and action. The former non-joiner joined the Confederate fight with all of her heart and soul.

Although the Confederacy was a material reality that Evans Wilson could love, she nevertheless idealized her new nation (this in spite of her awareness of its weaknesses). This accounts in part for the novelist's black and white thinking during the Civil War, her casting of "Yankees" as entirely dastardly, Southerners as noble and true.

In this Manichean mindset, however, she was again part of a community of belief. Sarah E. Gardner has noted (quoting George Rable) that Confederates were able to modify or abandon their ideas of Christian charity and rationalize their hatred by vilifying Yankees.[610] Evans's old friend Walter Clopton Harriss even reconciled his faith and his hatred by proclaiming, "It is a righteous war. I feel a deep, christian (sic) and inextinguishable hate toward the demons of the north who would desolate my country and destroy its liberties. It is doing God service to kill the diabolical wretches on the battle field."[611] Evans herself was only slightly less sanguinary. In describing the First Battle of Manassas (Bull Run), she would write,

> In July, 1861, when the North, blinded by avarice and hate, rang with the cry of "On to Richmond," our Confederate Army of the Potomac was . . . watching at both points the glittering coils of the Union boa-constrictor, which writhed in its efforts to crush the last sanctuary of freedom.[612]

Granted that Evans Wilson may have distinguished between the "hypocritical Puritans" she despised and those individual Northerners with whom she had maintained friendly relations until the very eve of the war, during the war itself her detestation for the former appears to have suffocated all memory of the latter.

The Civil War era marks the most intensely political period of Evans Wilson's life, precisely because the fate of the Confederacy had become closely tied to her own sense of identity. Not only did she pen the most political of her novels, *Macaria*, during

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[610] George Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 155, in Sarah E. Gardner, *Blood and Irony: Southern White Women's Narratives of the Civil War, 1861-1937* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 20.

[611] Walter Clopton Harriss to his brother Francis Harriss, Jr., 17 May 1861. Walter Clopton Harriss Papers, Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon.

[612] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson), *Macaria; or Altars of Sacrifice*, edited, with an Introduction by Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press , 1992), 232.

these years, but she also maintained a lively correspondence with two prominent Confederate leaders, Congressman J.L.M. Curry and General P.G.T Beauregard. These letters have been particularly interesting to feminist historians because in them Evans comments authoritatively on both military and political issues even as she demurely admits her unfitness as a woman to engage in these arenas. In these letters, Evans Wilson also felt free to lay aside the glorification of the Confederacy that characterized her published fiction and articles, and to frankly discuss her worries about her nation's political and military weaknesses. Her criticism was harsh at times. Vicksburg had fallen through "official imbecility," while Jefferson Davis's decisions in military affairs had been "suicidal."[613] In this, too, Evans was not unusual. As Sarah Gardner has noted, many Confederate women, particularly public women who could not express their anxieties openly, vented their frustrations in their private correspondence with trusted friends.[614]

Such misgivings did not prevent Evans Wilson from embracing what Catherine Clinton has called the "cult of sacrifice" among Confederate women. Indeed, Clinton comments, Evans's novel *Macaria* exemplified that cult. Even its title was an allusion to the Greek maiden who immolated herself on the altar of the gods in order to save the city of Athens from conquest.[615] It was a sacrifice Evans would have eagerly made had she thought she might thereby save her own nation. As it was, she sacrificed her engagement and was willing that her brothers Howard and Vivian die, if necessary, for the cause. She

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[613] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to J.L.M. Curry, 15 July, 1863, and to P.G.T. Beauregard, 14 November, 1863, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 68, 82.
[614] Gardner, *Blood and Irony*, 22.
[615] Catherine Clinton, *Tara Revisited: Women, War, and the Plantation Legend* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995), 159.

also risked physical danger herself. She expressed a willingness to serve as a nurse in areas near battlefields, and made several visits to the front in order to be near her brothers and friends on the eve of a battle. On one occasion, Evans Wilson was actually fired upon. The incident provoked her not to a panicked run but to a fierce yearning to fight back. "Oh!" she wrote Rachel, "I longed for a secession flag to shake defiantly in their teeth at every fire; and my fingers fairly itched to touch off a red hot ball in answer to their chivalric civilities."[616] Martyrdom being ineffectual and fighting prohibited to a woman (at least to one who subscribed to the separate-spheres ideology), Evans instead devoted her full energy to serving the Confederacy as nurse, organizer, seamstress, and propagandist.

At war's end, Evans Wilson considered but rejected the possibility of emigrating. She coped with her bitterness and despair by keeping herself busy with various projects intended to memorialize her beloved Confederacy. She also had a wide range of household chores, for she had lost her slaves and was reduced to doing her own cooking. Such work challenged her romantic conception of woman's sphere, as she acknowledged in a letter to Curry that combined her characteristically laborious erudition with wry humor:

> Mary W. Montague has remarked in one of her letters, that: "to a lady of delicate sensibilities, and warm affections, the preparation of a meal for those she loves, becomes no longer mere vulgar cooking of beef and pudding, but a precious privilege of ministering to the wants of her dear ones!!" Sans doute this peculiarly amiable and eminently feminine theory seemed quite comme il faut, when penned from the luxurious depths of her ladyship's delightful boudoir in the sublime Porte, -- but I very much question the perpetuity of said culinary aesthetics when practically illustrated in a Mobile kitchen in the month of August when the

[616] Fidler, *Augusta Jane Evans*, 91, 97-98; Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Rachel Lyons, 26 June, 1861, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 34.

> temperature vividly reminds me of that volcano, in ascending which, Humboldt burnt off the soles of his boots.[617]

Evans Wilson was deeply wounded but not completely crushed by the shattering of her nationalist dream, for there remained to her the Beulah Land of her evangelical faith. Her sense of Christian vocation had sustained her before the creation of the ill-fated Confederacy, and she would now return to it. Her novels after *Macaria* were written in much the same style as *Beulah* and explored variations on the same themes. Indeed, *Macaria* itself had not constituted a radical departure from these themes, for it was as much a tale of conversion as it was a pro-Confederate war saga.

Nevertheless, Evans Wilson's personal defeat in the Civil War left deep scars in her psyche. Her ideals remained, but her aspirations for life in this world faded. Her political loyalties had led her to sacrifice her engagement to James Reed Spalding, a man who seemed her ideal mate. Not only was Spalding handsome and physically impressive, but he shared Evans's intellectual disposition and her passion for Christianizing society through the media and literature. In many ways, he resembled one of her fictional heroes and he had, moreover, been deeply in love with her.[618] The man Evans married in 1868 was less her beau ideal. Although attractive and energetic, Lorenzo Madison Wilson was thirty years his wife's senior. Unlike the heroes of his wife's novels, he was not a professional, nor a scholar, but a successful businessman. He had, moreover, a number of pastimes that, while socially acceptable in a Southern man of the period, were distasteful to his wife. The Wilsons' life together seems to have been happy, yet Mrs.

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[617] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to J.L.M. Curry, 7 October, 1865, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 108.

[618] There is no evidence that the couple had any further contact after 1860. On January 18, 1865, Spalding married Mary Elizabeth Atwater. He died in Dover, New Hampshire, on October 10, 1872.

Wilson had compromised her romantic ideals in choosing her marriage partner. At age thirty-three, she may have felt that the time for a perfect marriage was past.

There are other elements of Evans's post-war life that suggest a loss of enthusiasm for living. A trip to Europe, especially to magical Italy, had been one of her great dreams before the war. In 1860, when her earnings from *Beulah* made such a tour possible, she had eagerly tried to persuade Rachel to be her traveling companion:

> I am now studying French in the hope that I shall be able to go to Europe this spring or summer. From early childhood it has been a bright beautiful dream to me, that one day I should wander amid the ruins of the old world, and study art in the galleries of Rome and Florence. . . . My dear Rachel can't you arrange things so as to go with me?[619]

The outbreak of hostilities prevented that trip and the war left Evans Wilson bankrupt. In 1865, however, she turned down an invitation from a New York friend (probably Mrs. Derby, the wife of her former publisher) to travel to Europe and stay there for several years.[620] Most likely Evans could not bring herself to leave her family at that time, particularly since her brother Howard was still seriously ill. Yet in later years, wealthy and childless, she would have had ample opportunity to visit Europe if she had so desired. She never went.

Finally, Evans Wilson's sense of her grand mission to "combat skepticism until the day of my death" seems to have weakened. Despite the huge success of her 1867 novel, *St. Elmo*, the frequency of her literary productions slowed significantly after 1869. Other factors played a role here. Evans's health, never robust, worsened in the 1870s. She had other interests and activities, including her nursing, various charities, horticulture

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[619] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Rachel Lyons, 4 January, 1860, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 7-8.
[620] Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to J.L.M. Curry, 7 October, 1865, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 109; Fidler, *Augusta Jane Evans*, 146.

and the management of her large estate. It is also likely, as I have argued earlier, that Evans did not greatly enjoy writing. She had always, however, been strongly motivated by a sense of duty, and the fight against irreligion in various forms was the ongoing theme of the works she did produce. It is always possible that by 1866 Evans Wilson felt she had essentially accomplished her mission. She may have said, in effect, "They have *Beulah* and *St. Elmo*; let them read them." It is also likely, however, that Evans's crusader's zeal had flagged. She continued to write novels to please her loyal readers, but the fight against skepticism was no longer the lodestar of her life.

Even more than Terhune, Evans Wilson needed a refuge after the war. Fatigue, disillusion, and lasting hurt over the death of the Confederacy motivated her withdrawal into a private world. Her money, and that of her husband, made it possible for her to create an idyllic retreat at the couple's elegant estate, Ashland. Like Terhune, she felt at home in this Eden of her own making and, unlike Terhune, she seldom left it. Over the years, as the surrounding society became increasingly violent and depraved in her eyes, she sought to keep her beloved Ashland safe and undefiled. The literature she created in these years was a type of intellectual retreat, for the new Mrs. Wilson continued to write much in her old style. To her devoted readers, she offered in imagination the same refuge from the poisonous winds of change that she herself had chosen.

If the disruptions of the war drove both Terhune and Evans Wilson to create a gracious retreat for themselves and their loved ones, they were seeking solace not only from the personal suffering but from the moral and religious disorientation of those years. Both novelists found the chaos and fratricidal hatred unleashed by the Civil War profoundly disturbing spiritually. In their fiction, the open sea often serves as metaphor

for their characters' experience of emptiness and loss, as indeed it had earlier in Evans's *Beulah*. Terhune and Evans Wilson continued to create tales of a dramatic, though hidden, conflict between Christianity and the world. In their wartime and postbellum fiction, however, they seem oppressed by a sense that the world is emerging the victor. If the evangelical empire was, after all, only an archipelago in a sea of voracious worldliness, Evans Wilson's islands shrank under the engulfing waves, while Terhune's were for a time submerged altogether.

In addition to this sense of moral bewilderment and loss, Terhune's and Evans Wilson's writings show a fascination with pagan themes of fate and vengeance, often symbolized by Nemesis, the Greek goddess of retribution. They struggled to reconcile these themes with their Christian faith, but the tradition from which they drew was ambiguous. On the one hand, Christianity demanded that its adherents seek mercy rather than vengeance. On the other, evildoers might well receive their just recompense, provided it came from the God who had declared, "Vengeance is mine." (Deut. 32:35, Rom. 12:19, Heb. 10:30). Paradoxically, mercy and vengeance might be intertwined, as St. Paul had suggested when commending kindness to one's enemy as a way of heaping "coals of fire" on that enemy's hapless head (Rom. 12:20).

Sarah Gardner has noted that Southern woman writers, even years after the warfare had ceased, often clung to their hatred and desired a divine retribution upon the North, rejecting the idea of forgiveness.[621] Evans Wilson gave voice to this sentiment in the early days after the war when she cried, ". . . the strongest wish of my heart is that I may live to witness, to enjoy the dire retribution, the awful Nemesis, which if God reigns

[621] Gardner, *Blood and Irony*, 54, 65-66.

in heaven, must descend upon that Synagogue of Satan. –New England. The wrongs inflicted upon us, I expect neither to forgive nor forget."[622] Southern writer Cora Ives, in a similar vein, had written a fable in which Nemesis threatened to destroy the Radical Republicans (in this fable, however, the blow is averted by the mercy of a Confederate soldier).[623] During the war, of course, themes of vengeance and divine retribution appeared in Northern literature as well, most notably in Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic" (1861) with its grapes of wrath and fateful lightning.

Terhune shared this fascination with vengeance. Indeed, *Nemesis* was the title and central theme of her fourth novel. The epigram of the book is the ancient Greek saying, "The mills of the gods grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small." It was a proverb that Evans Wilson and other vengeful Southerners were fond of quoting.[624] Terhune, however, employed the grim maxim to a very different end. As a Southern Unionist, she located the evil she decried neither in the North nor the South, but deep in the human heart.[625] While the tale features a Northern couple (New Englanders yet!) who make their home in Virginia, there is little discussion of North-South contrasts. Nor is Old Virginia romanticized. Rather, the state and its people are depicted as a study in contrasts, at once squalid and elegant, sordid and heroic. Moreover, Terhune set her

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[622] Evans signed this letter, "Your countrywoman in captivity." Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Mrs. J.K. Chrisman, 3 February, 1866, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 116.

[623] Gardner, *Blood and Irony*, 55.

[624] In an 1866 letter, Evans quoted Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Retribution" (from *Sinngedichte of Friedrich von Logau*, translated by Longfellow), which rephrased the classical motto:

> Though the mills of God grind slowly,
> Yet they grind exceeding small,
> Though with patience he stands waiting,
> With exactness grinds he all!

Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to unknown recipient, 23 October, 1866, in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 131-132.

[625] In a footnote, Gardner describes Terhune as a "notable exception" to the southern interpretation of the Civil War and postwar years. Gardner, *Blood and Irony*, 277, n. 37.

novel in early nineteenth-century Virginia, putting it at a considerable distance, chronologically speaking, from the mid-century sectional crisis. It was the author's first work of historical fiction, a genre she would return to in later years. It was also her first novel to feature a heroine of the artisan class, a fact which indicates Terhune's growing awareness of class and which foreshadows her later fascination with the question of innate gentility as opposed to social status.

Nemesis is a hybrid novel, offering both a domestic fiction and a tragedy in a double plot encompassing two generations. The older protagonist, Bessie Hale, is the Nemesis of the title. A cheerful and clever New England housewife at the opening of the tale, she becomes embittered when her husband Mark, a virtuous and God-fearing shoemaker, dies through the antipathy and neglect of his more fortunate neighbors. Gradually poisoned by her desire for revenge, Bessie is by tale's end reduced to a shadow of her former self. Her daughter Katherine, by contrast, is a lovely and lively heroine in the domestic fiction tradition. She upholds that tradition by enduring various hardships and by finally making a happy marriage to the noble planter Malcolm Argyle. Thus, this novel marks a transition in Terhune's writing from the happy ending of the antebellum domestic formula (already stretched rather thin in *Moss-side*) to the possibility of a tragic ending in the postwar years.

As the title indicates, it is the tragic theme that is dominant in *Nemesis*. The novel opens with a description of an empty Virginia forest on a chill November evening before a storm. The "hidden path" has taken on an ominous character, for "giant trees lock arms across the highway" along which the Hales, newly arrived from New England with their infant daughter, must pass. The family begins to build a simple, happy life, but is thrust

into poverty when Mark becomes ill with rheumatism and eventually dies. Bessie becomes obsessed with taking vengeance on the neighbors whose envy and callousness sealed her husband's fate. Her yearning for revenge (and her second, unlikely marriage to an English aristocrat) changes the complexion of her character from rosy to grey. When the reader is reintroduced to Bessie, now the icy Mrs. Rashleigh, her hair and dress are silvery, she is unnaturally pale and tranquil, and her eyes resemble an extinct volcano.[626]

Although Mrs. Rashleigh concocts an elaborate plot to wreak vengeance on her enemies, Providence interferes. Her husband's enemies are killed in the Richmond Theatre fire of 1811 before she can bring them to ruin by exposing their fraudulent business dealings.[627] Mrs. Rashleigh does successfully confront her feminine enemy, Malcolm's heartless sister Eleanor, but the encounter brings her neither satisfaction nor peace. On learning of the fire, she raises her hands upward, "the reluctant homage of a foiled ambition to the Power that had dashed it to the ground," and emphatically quotes Romans 12:19 ("VENGEANCE IS MINE – I WILL REPAY, SAITH THE LORD!) before falling into a faint.[628]

As with her earlier works, Terhune hoped that *Nemesis* would strengthen the Christian faith of her readers. The tragedy is a moral fable about the sinfulness and

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[626] Harland, *Nemesis*, 179-180, 237.

[627] Terhune provides a historically accurate account of the disastrous fire that killed 72 people, including the governor of Virginia and a number of Richmond's most prominent citizens, on December 26, 1811. She also inserted a real-life African-American hero into her novel, the slave blacksmith and Baptist deacon Gilbert Hunt. The powerful Hunt saved the lives of many women by catching them as they leapt from the windows of the blazing building. In *Nemesis*, Katherine Rashleigh is one of those women and Hunt exclaims as he catches her, "All safe, missis! Bless the Lord!" Despite being hailed as a hero, Hunt remained enslaved until he purchased his freedom in 1829. Harland, *Nemesis*, 487; Dabney: *Richmond: The Story of a City*, 90-92; Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*, 144.

[628] Harland, *Nemesis*, 490.

futility of attempting to usurp God's role as the dealer of justice. By tale's end, the would-be Nemesis "submit[s] to her dethronement" and enters a life of seclusion. While she has admitted her spiritual error, physical restoration is impossible.[629] Although one reviewer quipped that *Nemesis* was so saturated in Calvinist fatalism that it might better have been entitled *Calvinesis*, Terhune also sought to illustrate redemptive love through the romance between Katherine and Malcolm.[630] Yet she leaves Bessie Hale's faith, and her ultimate fate, in doubt. After the grey woman dies and is buried beside her husband, her daughter and son-in-law hope "that the calm ray at 'evening-time,' was a foretoken of light celestial and eternal."[631]

Although the theme of revenge in *Nemesis* accords with the mood of American society (Northern and Southern) during and after the Civil War, the novel was published in 1860, nearly a year before the onset of the war, and by an author who, according to her own account, did not foresee the outbreak of hostilities. The novel was, moreover, an elaboration of a short story Terhune had published in *Godey's* in 1854. The basic storyline of "The Thrice-Wedded" is virtually identical to that of the tragic strand of *Nemesis*, making this novel the earliest and clearest instance of a tragic Terhune short story making the transition to a full-length novel.

The reading public may have been growing in tolerance for tragedy in its popular literature, for *Nemesis* was another commercial success for Terhune. According to one reviewer, twelve thousand copies were sold within a month of publication.[632] The

[629] Harland, *Nemesis*, 496.
[630] George Bagby, review of *Nemesis* in "Notices of New Works," *Southern Literary Messenger* 31:5 (November 1860), 398.
[631] Harland, *Nemesis*, 498.
[632] George Bagby, "Notices of New Works," *Southern Literary Messenger* 31:5 (November 1860), 398.

rejection of the domestic fiction formula and the exploration of darker subject matter are trends usually associated with the disruptive cultural effects of the Civil War. That Terhune had been moving in this direction several years before the war and that her works had been well-received suggest that the war itself was one violent manifestation of a deeper and earlier cultural disturbance. To paraphrase Clausewitz, war is cultural conflict by other means.

Terhune may have been indirectly addressing the sectional crisis in *Nemesis*, for she viewed the deepening divide as a tragic family feud and the unhappiness of the fictional Argyle family, whose members bear little love for each other, is a second tragic theme of the novel. When Katherine confesses to Malcolm that she was so lonely as a child that she invented an imaginary sister, he shocks her by suggesting that such isolation may be preferable to familial misery. "If there be unquenchable fire in this life, it is the flame of family dissension ; the fierce scorchings of love changed to hatred."[633]

Terhune's next three novels were written while the nation was in the throes of the Civil War. All three, set in the antebellum period, avoid dealing directly with the war. Two of the three, however, have the darker coloration of *Nemesis*. The first novel, *Miriam* (1862) is a traditional domestic romance set in Kentucky, but it also features the death of a small, golden-haired boy. In her typical fashion of working out personal hurts through her fiction, Terhune was memorializing her own son Eddie in this work. The other two novels were published by Sheldon and Company in 1863.[634] *Helen Gardner's Wedding Day* is a romance with an almost gothic quality. Set in Maryland, the novel

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[633] Harland, *Nemesis*, 247.
[634] Sheldon became Terhune's primary publisher after the failure of Derby and Jackson after the outbreak of the Civil War.

recounts the anguish of a love triangle in an elite family and contains murder, insanity, and family degeneration. If the plantation novel of the antebellum era was a celebration of Southern elite culture, this work is in many ways an anti-plantation novel.

Husks was initially published in serial form in *Godey's* between January and August of 1863, and republished by Sheldon in book form later the same year. Its stark tone and bleak subject matter demonstrate that, for Terhune at least, the domestic fiction formula had already been strained to the breaking point. Like *Nemesis*, the novel contains a number of firsts for the author: a young child is portrayed as jaded and vicious, a heroine stoops to marrying for something less than love, and the heroine is later driven to near suicide. Most importantly, Terhune suggests in this novel that romantic love may not be an adequate basis for marriage. She was probably writing the story at roughly the same time that she was worried about the relationship between her husband and her sister.

Husks does recapitulate the traditional domestic device of opposing genuine Christian values (associated here with the countryside) to the "husks" of a vain world, in this case a grimy and tawdry New York City. Sarah Hunt is a lonely heroine, and her surname suggests her hungry quest for meaning. The only member of her family who even remotely sympathizes with her spiritual aspirations is her meek and unassuming father. The household head, however, is her shallow mother, whose chief ambition is to see each of her daughters make an advantageous marriage.

Terhune demonstrates Sarah's goodness at the opening of the novel by showing her kindness to a street child. The child plays a small but surprising role in the novel, one far removed from the Victorian stereotype of angelic childhood. On a stormy afternoon,

Sarah invites the weeping little girl into her home, feeds and clothes her, and finally, much to the scorn of her family, gives the child her own umbrella to carry home after first making her promise to return it. When Sarah's parents predict that the little girl will not return, the sentimental novelist would proceed to prove them wrong. As it turns out, they are right. Some weeks later, however, the same girl dashes into the street in front of Sarah in pursuit of a young boy. Catching her victim by the hair, she gleefully commences "a vigorous assault, accompanied by language alike foul and profane." Seeing Sarah, she races back into the ally, and out of the novel, "with the blind haste of guilty fear."[635] The child's main function in the plot, apparently, is to highlight Sarah's charitable impulses and to help explain the heroine's eventual loss of faith in her own ideals.[636]

The epigram of *Husks* is from the parable of the prodigal son: "He would fain have filled himself with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him." (Luke 15:16). Living on the husks of the world, Sarah is emotionally malnourished. It is this neediness that leads her to fall in love with Philip Benson while visiting her aunt in the New Jersey countryside. Philip, a sophisticated and thoughtful man, has a fatal flaw: he is a student of human nature. "Of all the dignified humbugs of the solemn farce of life," declares the author tartly, "deliver me from that creature self-styled 'a student and judge of character'!"[637] (It is a strong statement from a novelist who, as a teenager, had styled herself just such a creature.) Unconsciously, Philip manipulates Sarah into falling

[635] Marion Harland, *Husks* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1863), 35.
[636] Terhune was probably describing some of the street children she had observed in New York and Newark. In her memoir, *The Heart of a Child*, Terhune's daughter Virginia Van de Water describes several family encounters with street children in 1870s Newark.
[637] Harland, *Husks*, 58.

in love with him, then jilts her for her pretty and silly sister. The betrayal and its aftermath are foreshadowed by the remains of a shipwreck that Sarah and Philip find on the seashore. Listening to Philip's account of the many wrecks in the treacherous waters off the coast in winter, Sarah visualizes the horror in the summer waves:

> . . . there were bitter wailings blent with the surge's roar; arms, strained and bare, were tossed above the dark, serpent-like swell of water, in unavailing supplication, and livid, dead faces stared upon her from beneath the curling crests of the breakers.[638]

After her betrayal, Sarah, humiliated and fearful that her attachment will be exposed, makes a choice no Terhune heroine would have made in the antebellum years. She marries Lewis Hammond, a modest, sensible, and kindhearted man who loves her dearly, but whom she does not love. Still in love with Philip, and unable to overcome her revulsion for her husband, Sarah realizes that she has imprisoned herself for life. She keeps her husband at a distance, barely able to conceal her true feelings. When Lewis discovers the mementos Sarah has kept of Philip, the couple quarrels and separates, and Lewis mentions the scandalous option of divorce. At this point, Sarah decides to end her "thwarted, warped, disjointed existence," reasoning coolly that her daughter is still too young to remember her and no one else will miss her greatly. Appropriately enough, she sets out to drown herself in the sea, but is distracted from this purpose by the sudden illness and death of her daughter.[639]

Husks is ultimately a conversion story. The wretched Sarah returns to the home of her kindly aunt on the Jersey shore. It is the aunt who confronts her with her own wrongdoing toward her husband, and brings her to Christianity. The chastened Sarah

[638] Ibid., 64-65.
[639] Ibid., 218-223. Sarah's daughter is named Belle, a name Terhune later gave to her own daughter.

resolves to go to her husband and apologize but, like the prodigal son, she is met halfway. Lewis, too, has been converted, and the couple is reunited on the basis of a love that is now rooted not in romantic infatuation but in their common faith. With this novel, Terhune rejected facile Christian romanticism and returned to something like the theme of her first short story, "Marrying From Prudential Motives." Eros and agape, the Christian ideal of sacrificial love, were no longer fully identified in her mind. Neither, however, were they disconnected. At novel's end, Sarah has conceived for her husband a "deep, true tenderness," and a confidence that her child, whose death had prevented her suicide, had not died in vain.[640]

Terhune did not publish a Civil War novel until 1866, when Sheldon came out with *Sunnybank*. This novel was a sequel to her first "bantling," *Alone*, and was set in Ida and Morton Lacy's Virginia plantation, "Sunnybank." By 1861, the Lacys are the parents of three grown children, Ross, Lynn (named after Lynn Holmes of *Alone*), and Elinor, nicknamed "Brownie."[641] They are also guardians to an orphaned cousin, Agatha. The story is told as a series of alternating diary entries by Elinor and Agatha, and Terhune adroitly weaves together the contrasting perceptions of the two young women whose moral characters are in stark opposition. Elinor is sprightly and innocent, and her goodness deepens as wartime events bring her suffering. Agatha, a sedate beauty, is self-centered and indolent. Besides resenting her position as a ward, she is Elinor's rival for the love of the hero, Harry Wilton. Over the course of the novel, Agatha's malice intensifies as she plots the destruction of the Lacy family.

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[640] Ibid., 244.

[641] Here again, fact parallels fiction. "Brownie" was also the nickname of the Terhunes' daughter Alice.

Sunnybank reflects its author's own divided loyalties during the Civil War. The moral right clearly lies with the Union, but characters who side with the Confederacy out of personal conviction are portrayed with respect. Atrocities on both sides are portrayed, and Terhune based her account of the repeated raids on the Lacy plantation by both Union and Confederate troops on the experiences of her brother Herbert Hawes. Throughout the novel, the characters debate the merits of the Northern and Southern causes. Morton and Ida Lacy are Unionists, as is Elinor. Ross and Lynn, however, fight for the Confederacy. Harry, a Northerner, does not enlist in the Union Army until Lee marches into Pennsylvania, an act of aggression that justifies his taking up arms. Agatha is a Confederate supporter only out of self-interest, but Elinor's beloved and shrewd "Aunt Ellen" (also a holdover from *Alone*) is a zealous believer in the Southern cause.

Terhune's treatment of the Lacys' slaves suggests that her respect for the spiritual dignity of blacks had increased. The plantation slaves are conventionally portrayed as loyal to their master and mistress, but the leading slave characters are developed as independent actors, albeit subordinate to and protective of the Lacys.[642] Mammy secretly cares for a wounded Union soldier and chooses to notify only Elinor, concealing the soldier's presence from Morton Lacy in order to avoid implicating him in the act of comforting an enemy soldier.[643] Uncle Will, the minister who converted Ida, is still the spiritual head of the slave community, and in this novel he is shown as having so grown in dignity that he resembles "an Eastern patriarch." At Ida's request, Will leads the

[642] Only two slaves run away from this remarkably fortunate family, but after all the Union troops have plundered the slaves' food and possessions as well as those of the white family. Marion Harland, *Sunnybank* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1866, 1867; reprint, The Michigan Historical Reprint Series, The Scholarly Publishing Office, The University of Michigan, n.d.), 217, 324-325 (page citations in the 1867original and reprint are the same).

[643] Harland, *Sunnybank*, 251.

family prayers after the plantation has been repeatedly raided and Morton Lacy has been imprisoned on suspicion of treason. Uncle Will's lengthy prayer is in the resounding, eloquent English of the King James Bible. Terhune has Elinor comment:

> *De profundis clamavi!* The subdued wail of the organ, the chanting of stoléd priests, the fragrant clouds swung from silver censers, could not have added impressiveness to the scene as the quavering accents of the aged slave, untaught save by the Spirit of our God, arose in the summer twilight from the heart of that weeping band of the Lord's stricken ones.[644]

Like Uncle Will, Ida's old slave maid Rachel makes it clear that her allegiance is first to God, and secondly to her Unionist master. When a visiting white woman, Miss Hetty, spitefully confronts Rachel with the possibility that she will be confiscated by the Confederate government if Mr. Lacy is convicted of treason, Rachel retorts, "When that day comes, I belong to nobody 'cept the Lord!"[645]

Sunnybank shows that Terhune had become increasingly adept at illustrating the seamy underside of life. In this, too, she drew from personal experience, her own and those of her friends and family. She shows how Morton Lacy, who had been a pillar of the community in the days before the war, becomes the target of suspicion and malice in the now poisonous political atmosphere. The Lacys' white neighbors are carefully delineated in all their meanness and envy, as are the soldiers in their brutality. The harshness of these depictions is enlivened by a new note of raucous humor at the expense of both sides. Miss Hetty's pro-Confederate pronouncements are punctuated by the clicking of her false teeth, set on a spring. At a climactic moment, the teeth pop out of

[644] Ibid., 326-327.
[645] Ibid., 364.

their owner's mouth and go clattering along the floor. In Agatha's account, a drunken Union officer offers this choice commentary on Elinor's beloved horse:

"'I know a capital bit of (hic!) horseflesh when I see it, if I am a (hic! and an oath) Yankee!' said this image of his Maker. 'And this is the (hic!) nicest thing I have seen upon (hic!) hoofs for a month of Sundays.'"

The officer, of course, absconds with the horse.[646]

Significantly, these passages are depicted as coming from the pen of the unscrupulous Agatha, who serves as an outlet for her own maker's more pungent traits. Moreover, Terhune creates a complex and fairly sympathetic portrait of her villain, and she suggests that Agatha's warped character is in part the product of her deprived childhood. This understanding of evil as a consequence of personal hurt as well as deliberate choice is evident in the post-war writings of both Terhune and Evans.

The complexity and psychological subtlety of *Sunnybank* makes it one of Terhune's best novels. It was also one of her most successful, attracting both high sales and critical acclaim in the North. The reaction of ex-Confederates was a different story. Terhune was castigated for her pro-Union stance, and her family was made to share in the condemnation despite the fact that her brothers Horace and Percy had served in the Confederate army. In her own view, Terhune had been scorched by the "flame of family dissension" which, once ignited, had blazed on a national scale.[647]

The short stories Terhune published in *Godey's* during the war, like those she had published in the 1850s, ranged from the comic to the tragic, and some with an element of

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[646] Ibid., 160-161, 220.
[647] Mary Hudson Wright, "Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune ('Marion Harland'): Her Life and Works," Ph.D. diss., George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tenn., 1934, 99, in Smith, "Marion Harland," Ph.D. diss., 295-296.

farce. Typically, they were partly autobiographical (one Christmas story contains a merry poem taken straight from Terhune's correspondence to her friend Eppes).[648] One 1864 story is noteworthy both for its unusual character and because it anticipates a trend in Terhune's later writing. Spanning four months, the tale is a novelette with the lengthy title of "'Taking Boarders for Company': A Story of the 'Heated Term' and Containing More Truth than Romance."[649]

The story begins as a farce. Two young families arrange to escape from the summer heat of their city at a rural New Jersey home owned by three genteel spinsters. The house, described as a luxurious retreat, is suspiciously low-priced, but the hostesses explain that they have no need of the income and are simply taking in boarders for the pleasure of their company. Immediately upon their arrival, the families realize that they have made a mistake, but decide that they must stay on and make the best of their decidedly inferior accommodations. What follows is a blow-by-blow account of the process by which the hapless guests learn just how inferior their accommodations are, and how manipulative their hostesses (guests have no right to complain, since the spinsters have merely taken them in as a favor, at their own request). In particular, one couple's mischievous young son makes some nauseating discoveries about the establishment's food preparation practices. The farce threatens to become a tragedy, as one guest comments, when the poor food and unhealthy air cause a young woman and a child to become dangerously ill. Disaster is averted, and a romance consummated, and so the tale ends on a happy note.

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[648] Marion Harland, "What a Jealous Man Saw on Christmas Eve," *Godey's Lady's Book* 67 (December 1863), 521-534.

[649] Marion Harland, "Taking Boarders for Company," *Godey's Lady's Book* 69 (August to November 1864), August 115-124, September 205-213, October 295-305, November 385-395.

Although this story reads as a comedy, Terhune is once again exploring evil, this time in its most banal form. The spinsters warmly defend themselves against all complaints, but know that they are treating their guests badly for they secretly provide themselves with much more satisfactory fare. They also know, or should know, that they are endangering their boarders' lives. They show little concern, however, when two of their guests become seriously ill. As Terhune indicates, the story of the genteel non-boarding house was taken from real life, and possibly from her own experience since she and her husband took their summer vacations in the New Jersey countryside. Such hospitality as that from the three sisters may have been one more factor that drove the Terhunes at last to purchase a country home of their own.

This tale featuring "more truth than romance" also indicates that by 1864 Terhune had become disillusioned with the romantic formulas of the pre-war years. The language of real life, she had learned, contained more prose than poetry, and all too often it was the language of Sarah Hunt's street urchin, "alike foul and profane." The antebellum age had assumed that literature should have a didactic purpose, but Terhune, the inveterate storyteller, continued to write even when her moral vision had become clouded. The genteel sisters' squalid establishment, too low for tragedy and fit only for farce, foreshadows the elements of modernist anomie in the author's future works – the "dismal" novels of the postwar years, and the 1900 novel she co-wrote with her son, *Dr. Dale, A Story Without a Moral.*

Another short story, published shortly after the war's end, also anticipates Gilded Age themes. "The Vexed Question," a discussion of how best to treat servants, is didactic enough to satisfy any antebellum moralist. The servants in question are young

Irish women and Terhune treats them with considerable sympathy, arguing that inconsiderate employers rather than incompetent maids are to blame for most of the "servant problem." As in *Nemesis*, the author suggests that class is a poor predictor of character, that low-born persons may have innate nobility. Terhune also satirizes white middle-class fears of national degeneration. By 1880 she herself would take this threat more seriously in the wake of massive post-war immigration.[650]

In late 1865, Terhune was overjoyed at the end of the war, relieved for the safety of her family, and, as always, in love with Christmas. She was also troubled by a new hardness she perceived to be taking hold of the society she lived in. Acting on both her loves and her fears, she published a short story and an essay with warmhearted Christmas themes in *Godey's*. In 1866, Sheldon republished both pieces in a single volume titled *The Christmas Holly*. "Nettie's Prayer" is a simple tale that glows with Victorian romanticism and piety. A sober young couple decides that they will forego the annoying and time-consuming festivities of the season. After all, they tell their small daughter, Santa Claus is a fiction and there is little reason to believe that Jesus was actually born on the twenty-fifth of December. The parents undergo a change of heart when they overhear Nettie praying to her Heavenly Father to send her and her brother a real Christmas. Independently of each other, mother and father race out on a last-minute shopping spree to purchase a few extra gifts. The gift list grows as they shop, and in the end, the parents provide a lavish answer to the childish prayer.[651]

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[650] There is, in this story, no hint of the anti-Catholicism so characteristic of the 1850s. Marion Harland, "The Vexed Question," *Godey's Lady's Book* 71 (September 1865), 205-213.
[651] Marion Harland, "Nettie's Prayer," *The Christmas Holly* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1866, 1867), 11-42.

The accompanying essay, "A Christmas Talk with Mothers," reiterates the message to parents: Look at the world through your children's eyes. Do not expect them to think like adults, and do not deprive them.[652] As I have noted previously, the two pieces together emblemize the transition Terhune would soon make from fiction to advice literature, even while she reaffirmed her belief in domestic values. In her "Christmas Talk," Terhune argued that the care of children was a God-given mission for mothers. Using very modern-sounding rights language, she proceeded to lay down four guiding principles outlining "the Rights of Babies and the Responsibilities of Mothers": 1) Babies have a right to be; 2) Babies have a right to have mothers; 3) Babies have a right to be heard; and 4) Babies have a right to be babies. In the third injunction, Terhune explicitly rejected the Victorian adage "Children should be seen and not heard." It was, she opined, "Illiberal and cruel, and belongs to the age when a father held almost unlimited power over the very life of his child." The fourth admonition was a protest against what Terhune saw as inordinate pressure on young children to grow up quickly, depriving them of the freedom and joys of childhood and, in many cases, crushing the genius out of them.

It was in the context of this general admonition to love and understand children, and under the topic of her first injunction, the right of babies to be, that Terhune hesitantly raised the subject of abortion:

> This is not the page whereon to record a frank and full opinion upon such a subject, nor is mine the will or ability to treat of the mysteries of iniquity, the violence done to conscience, humanity, and natural affection, that have come to be talked of in the so-called higher circles as familiar things . . .

[652] In *Godey's*, the "Christmas Talk" was published first, in November 1865, and "Nettie's Prayer" in December. The order was reversed in the volume published by Sheldon.

Terhune did, however, wish to suggest to her readers that the underlying cause of the spread of this "abomination" was women's (and men's) growing rejection of large families, or even of bearing children at all:

> . . . I have no means of settling the date at which the opinion or prejudice was implanted on this continent, but certain it is, that a vast proportion – I fear, a large majority – of American mothers, would secretly, if not openly, controvert my first proposition. There is among us, if not a woeful deficiency of genuine maternal instinct, a style – a fashion, if you choose call it, and a very vile fashion it is – of deprecating as a grievous affliction the repeated visits of what a higher authority . . . has declared to be among Heaven's best gifts to humankind. . . . .
>
> Women! sisters! be assured there is something fearfully and radically wrong in a system that teaches us to despise or refuse our rightful share in our Father's riches![653]

Terhune was not alone in her belief that abortion was becoming more common at mid-century, and that it was being used by married women as a method of birth control. According to historian James C. Mohr, there was "a great upsurge of abortion" in America between 1840 and 1880. Not only did abortion become increasingly visible in these decades, but many contemporary Americans believed that its actual incidence had risen sharply. Moreover, the population of women who had recourse to abortion was changing. Abortion was less likely to be associated with illegitimacy, more likely to be practiced by middle-class and upper-class married women who wished to limit or delay child-bearing. Mohr attributes the increased visibility of abortion in part to the commercialization of American society. Abortion was widely advertised in newspapers

[653] Marion Harland, "A Christmas Talk with Mothers," *The Christmas Holly* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1866, 1867), 47-48, 54.

and magazines, and even religious journals. As Terhune also noted, "professing Christians" participated in the trend.[654]

In her "Christmas Talk," Terhune briefly drew a connection between the woman's rights movement and abortion, suggesting that "amidst the wild clamor of woman's rights and woman's sphere," it was almost useless to argue that motherhood was a holy thing. As Mohr has noted, a number of contemporary physicians made similar arguments. The connection between feminism and abortion, however, was tenuous, for the leading feminists of the period usually opposed the practice as both the killing of a child and a form of oppression of women. In general, both women's rights advocates and conservatives like Terhune blamed the practice on self-centeredness and sensualism, whether that of women or their husbands.[655]

Augusta Evans Wilson never addressed the issue of abortion explicitly. The topic may have been too disturbing to her, or she may have considered it incompatible with her ideal of "elevating" fiction. Never would she stoop to creating a story that contained "more truth than romance." Romance was for her the highest truth, and she would write from this conviction until her death, producing novels that closely resembled her pre-war fiction both in style and content.

Nursing had always been, for Evans Wilson, an activity that rivaled her writing in importance. During the Civil War she turned her Mobile home into an infirmary which was christened "Camp Beulah," and much of her energy went into nursing wounded

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[654] James C. Mohr, *Abortion in America: The Origins and Evolution of National Policy, 1800-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 46-47; Harland, "A Christmas Talk," 48.
[655] Mohr does, however, argue that the abortion was associated with feminism in that women's search for higher social status was denounced as a "fashion." Harland, "A Christmas Talk," 53; Mohr, 107-8, 111-112.

soldiers. Still she found time to produce a few pro-Confederate articles and one major work, *Macaria; or Altars of Sacrifice*. According to her biographer, Evans scribbled the novel on scraps of wrapping paper as she sat by the cots of her patients.[656]

Macaria has been described as a Confederate propaganda novel, and so it is. Dedicated as "a woman's inadequate tribute to the noble patriotism and sublime self-abnegation" of the Confederate army, it contains none of the bitter criticisms of Confederate leadership that Evans Wilson vented in her private correspondence.[657] It is instead an elaborate panegyric to the Southern cause and a scathing indictment of the soul-strangling North. It is probably in consequence of its propagandistic intent that this novel is a stylistic regression. In its stiff, melodramatic prose, equally stiff characters, and strained dialogue, *Macaria* resembles *Inez*, itself a propaganda novel, more than it does the livelier *Beulah*. Nevertheless, *Macaria* shows the growing complexity of Evans's thought, and the weakness of its prose must have been due in part to the physical and emotional strain under which the author was working.

During the Civil War, Evans Wilson's religious and political loyalties melded, and this unity is reflected in *Macaria*. Much of the space in this long novel is dedicated, like the author's earlier works, to the conversion of its readers, and Evans sent her manuscript to the North as well as arranging for its publication in the Confederacy.[658] Of the three main characters, the two women explicitly undergo conversion experiences and by novel's end they have dedicated themselves to the service of God and country. Contemporary social issues are also raised in the novel. Some of these are political

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[656] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 105.
[657] Evans (Wilson), epigram, *Macaria*, 4.
[658] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 102. The 1992 edition of Macaria by Louisiana State University Press runs 406 pages of small print.

stands common to Southern-rights radicalism (the dangers of universal suffrage and demagoguery, the moral poison of abolitionism, and the tragedy of cultural and even physical decline), but Evans also addresses broader cultural questions, including women's role in society, the tension between individualism and community, and the moral significance of art.

Macaria follows the fortunes of three young friends in an unnamed Southern town: the wealthy planter's daughter Irene Huntingdon, the poor law student Russell Aubrey, and Russell's orphaned cousin Electra Grey. Evans Wilson draws strong contrasts between the characters of the three. Irene, an extraordinary beauty and daughter of privilege, is nevertheless lonely. Her temperament is tranquil, her intellect is "of the masculine order, acute and logical" rather than imaginative, and she has strong moral principles that set her apart from the self-indulgent society in which she moves.[659] Russell, although handsome, is prematurely stern, the result of his determination to overcome his family's poverty and disgrace (his father was executed as a criminal). Russell has a passionate, hot-tempered nature, well-suited for the fire-eating politician he will eventually become. Electra, a frail but intense girl, is a gifted artist and spiritual seeker. *Macaria* is, from the start, a tale of thwarted romance. Electra loves Russell, but Russell is in love with Irene. Irene is attracted to Russell, but her domineering father hates the Aubrey family and insists that his daughter marry her cousin Hugh Seymour.

The three friends part ways as they approach adulthood. Irene's domineering father sends her to a fashionable school up north to separate her from Russell. Repelled by the climate of "envy, ridicule, malice, and detraction," Irene becomes distant and

[659] Evans (Wilson), *Macaria*, 38-39.

haughty (Evans attributes this unhealthy moral atmosphere to human nature rather than Northern culture).[660] Russell remains in his Southern hometown, studying law under a local attorney. He is drawn into politics as the secession crisis deepens, and becomes the chief political rival of Irene's father. Electra meets an artist, Mr. Clifton, who offers to take her on as his pupil. Seizing the opportunity, Electra travels to New York where she lives with Clifton and his mother. Under his tutelage she achieves a measure of artistic recognition. Clifton is in love with Electra and although he is dying of consumption he implores her to marry him. Electra refuses, telling him that marriage can be founded only on love, not on gratitude and pity. She does, however, nurse him until his death.

The onset of the secession crisis reunites the three friends in their Southern home. Irene infuriates her father by refusing to marry Hugh, insisting that she will never marry. At the same time, she keeps the devoted Russell at a distance, much to his bewilderment. Becoming an evangelical Christian, she devotes herself to the service of the poor. Russell wins a local election, but instead enlists in the army as the state secedes. Before he leaves to fight, Russell learns from Irene that she has always loved him, but would not marry him against her father's wishes. Electra, returning from her art studies in Europe, slips back into the Confederacy from Cuba despite the danger from Union ships. At the end of the tale, Russell is killed in battle, while Irene and Electra (who also converts to Christianity) resolve to stay unmarried and to render themselves useful by opening a school.

Electra, who is to be an art instructor at the school, provides the closing visual image for the novel. Her "Modern Macaria" is a grand allegory of the Confederacy.

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[660] Ibid., 73-74.

Two female figures stand at the center of the canvas. The first, Independence, is stern and triumphant, mantled in red and holding aloft the Confederate banner. The second, Peace, is robed in white and extends her hand in benediction. The figures are surrounded by images of women as mothers, wives, and lovers mourning their lost men. Like Electra and Irene themselves, the two central figures represent Evans's dream for the Confederacy. It is a woman-centered dream, and the final words of *Macaria* are a ringing summons to women to live out their lofty calling:

> "Rise, woman, rise!
> To thy peculiar and best altitudes
> Of doing good and of enduring ill. . . .
> . . . . . . Henceforward, rise, aspire,
> To all the calms and magnanimities,
> The lofty uses and the noble ends,
> The sanctified devotion and full work,
> To which thou are elect for evermore!"[661]

The feminist implications of *Macaria* have been of considerable interest to historians of women. With this novel, Evans Wilson made a clean break with the domestic novel formula of a happy ending in marriage, and feminist scholars have read this as a declaration of woman's emotional independence. Not only do the heroines remain single, but each expresses a desire for meaningful employment. Irene, frustrated with the enforced idleness of privilege, yearns for useful work. "Everybody ought to be of some use in this world, but I feel like a bunch of mistletoe, growing on somebody else, and doing nothing."[662] Electra is determined to support herself, and she is frankly ambitious for her art. "What woman has done, woman may do," she tells Clifton. "A

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[661] Evans greatly admired Elizabeth Barrett Browning and quoted her works frequently. This passage is from *A Drama of Exile*. Evans (Wilson), *Macaria*, 415.
[662] Evans (Wilson), *Macaria*, 51.

glorious sisterhood of artists beckons me on; what [they] have achieved, I also will accomplish, or die in the effort."[663]

Yet the celibacy of Irene and Electra is complex and ambiguous. Both women are in love with Russell, and neither will consider union with another man. Electra (whose name means "unmarried") remains single because her love is unrequited. Irene refuses Russell not because she wants to remain single and independent, but out of deference to her father's wishes. Unlike Evans herself (who merely waited until her father died before entering a marriage he opposed), Irene determines that she will never marry at all. Paternal authority has its limits, however, for Irene defies her father in refusing to marry her dissolute cousin, and is disinherited for her disobedience. Marriage without love was "a grievous sin," as Electra tells Clifton, and even a patriarch could not command sin.[664]

Evans Wilson also portrays the singleness of her heroines as a tragedy, not a fulfillment of feminist desires. The tone of *Macaria* is relentlessly intense; its characters must constantly steel their wills to endure mental torture. For the passionate Electra in particular, her rejection by Russell is a source of continual humiliation and psychic pain. The cool Irene suffers less keenly, but she too experiences an inner emptiness. For both women, Russell's death removes any possibility of romantic happiness in this life. Indeed, Evans Wilson creates stark images of each woman as a victim of Fate. As Electra contemplates her move to New York and separation from Russell, the "stony face of her merciless destiny seemed to frown down at her, cold, grim, Sphinx-like."[665] Even

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[663] Ibid., 70, 144.
[664] In response to Clifton's argument that Electra would learn to love him, she replies, "Mr. Clifton, to marry without love would be a grievous sin; I dare not. We would hate each other. Life would be a curse to both, and death a welcome release." Ibid. 131.
[665] Ibid., 68.

Electra's artistic dream is oppressive, for Evans remained deeply conflicted about womanly yearnings for fame and accomplishment. Electra tells Clifton, "Afar off gleams my resting place, but ambition scourges me unflaggingly on."[666] Irene, having defied her father, sees a grim vision of her future.

> The starry veil concealing the Holy of Holies of her Futurity had swayed just once, and as quickly swept back to its wonted folds; but in that one swift glance she saw, instead of hovering Cherubim, gaunt specters, woful [sic], appalling as Brimo. At some period of life all have this dim, transient, tantalizing glimpse of the inexorable Three, the mystic Moirae, weaving with steely fingers the unyielding web of human destiny. . . . Irene's little feet had become entangled in the fatal threads, and, with no thought of flight, she measured the length and breadth of the web, nerving herself to battle to the death.[667]

Having painted this bleak picture, Evans Wilson shines a ray of hope and comfort on it through her religious/nationalistic vision. She depicts the Confederacy as a true civilization in which the arts will not only flourish among the elite, but also become available to the populace as a whole. The practical Irene, having read John Stuart Mills, sees her proposed School of Design as providing alternative careers for women, since they cannot all be "mantua-makers, milliners, or school-teachers."[668] For the bereaved heroines, Christianity adds a sense of higher purpose to their earthly future and promises contentment, if not joy. Irene tells Electra, "It is true that you and I are very lonely, and yet our future holds much that is bright. You have the profession you love so well, and our new School of Design, to engage your thoughts; and I a thousand claims on my time and attention." The sense of desolation remains, but Irene comforts Electra with the

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666 Ibid., 144.
667 Ibid., 115-116.
668 Ibid., 410.

thought that unmarried women are superior to those who enter a loveless marriage. Again, Evans Wilson quotes Browning:

> And since we needs must hunger – better, for man's love,
> Than God's truth! better, for companion sweet,
> Than great convictions! let us bear our weights,
> Preferring dreary hearths to desert souls![669]

Evans Wilson had maintained the same belief that she had expressed in an 1860 letter to Rachel: unmarried women were less happy than wives and mothers, but could yet find a sense of peace in the knowledge that they were serving God.[670]

Finally, Christianity offered the promise of true happiness beyond the grave. Russell, having been converted by his mother's teaching and Irene's influence, dies peacefully in the expectation that he will find this happiness. Irene, present at his bedside, tells him that she can live out the rest of her life uncomplaining, knowing that she will spend eternity with him in Heaven.[671] Here again, Evans Wilson drew inspiration from Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Like many of the domestic novelists (Terhune included), Evans Wilson struggled with the fear that strong human loves were a sin, a form of idolatry. At various points throughout the novel, the characters call their loves their "idols." Clifton accuses Electra of idolatry in her love for Russell, and she admits that she has been unable to tear him out of her heart. At Russell's death, both Irene and Electra pour out a heart-rending lament over the loss of their "idol." Irene, however, quotes Browning's Sonnet "Futurity with the Departed" both to comfort her friend and to affirm their love for a man:

> . . . God keeps a niche

[669] Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "Aurora Leigh," Fifth Book, in Evans (Wilson), *Macaria*, 413.
[670] Augusta Jane Evans to Rachel Heustis, 30 July 1860, in Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 18.
[671] Evans (Wilson), *Macaria*, 402-403.

> In Heaven, to hold our idols: and albeit
> He brake them to our faces, and denied
> That our close kisses should impair their white,
> I know we shall behold them raised, complete,
> The dust swept from their beauty – glorified,
> New Memnons, singing in the great God-light![672]

Evans Wilson, writing in the midst of dying soldiers, saw a need to create a literary alternative to the traditional happy ending of the popular novel in marriage. The theme of thwarted romantic love and religious consolation would reappear in some of her post-war works, most notably *Vashti* (1869).

There is another new note in *Macaria*, intermixed with this exalted theme and strangely at odds with it. To a much greater degree than in her previous works, Evans Wilson dwells on the physical characteristics of her hero and heroines. This is in part because Irene represented Evans's ideal woman, and in particular her ideal of feminine beauty.[673] Yet the preoccupation with physical beauty is itself new in Evans, and her long descriptive passages have a sensuous quality. The novel opens with a detailed portrait of Russell, whose athletic physique, the novelist tells us, is rare in "these latter days of physical degeneration."[674] A number of passages dwell lovingly on Irene's magnificent beauty, and Electra's confrontations with her lovelorn mentor have an erotic charge. This fascination with bodily perfection, and the erotic suggestions that exist in tension with the author's ideal of purity, would reappear in her later works, particularly *Infelice*. Jane Turner Censer has noted that popular novelists in the post-war period, such

[672] Ibid., 128, 131, 405-407.
[673] Evans wrote to Rachel Heustis, "I am very glad that you like my Irene. She is the noblest character I ever painted, and my ideal of perfect womanhood." Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson) to Rachel Lyons (Heustis), 14 June [1864], in Sexton, ed., *A Southern Woman of Letters*, 104.
[674] Evans (Wilson), *Macaria*., 5.

as Amelie Rives, Henrietta Hardy Hammond, and later Kate Chopin, were moving in the direction of greater sexuality and sensuality in their heroines.[675] Evans Wilson, while consciously deploring this trend as immoral, nevertheless absorbed some of the new sensibility.

Mary Virginia Terhune eschewed the new sensualism, but she was influenced by the ideologies of the Gilded Age to a much greater degree than was Evans Wilson. Always the extrovert, and always a liminal Southerner, identified with the Upper South but with close connections to the North, Terhune had been exposed throughout her life to a wide range of ideas and social influences and had struggled to reconcile competing loyalties. She was far more flexible than her Mobilian colleague, but with the heartache of her personal experiences and the social upheavals of the Gilded Age, this very elasticity left her disoriented and often bitter. In many ways, she would embrace the new pragmatism, the fascination with health and science, and she was not immune to the white middle-class fears of national degeneration that were inspired both by Darwinist ideology and the massive wave of immigration in the late nineteenth century. While retaining her Christian convictions, Terhune became far more skeptical of evangelical romanticism. Her sense of a hidden, enchanted dimension to reality faded. The stream of her magical imagination flowed underground for some years, revealing its presence only by an occasional, muffled gurgle. Finally it bubbled to the surface again, this time through the imaginations of the children she loved.

The Civil War had been a shock to Terhune, and the following months and years brought more grief. The first blow came at Christmastime 1865. The Haweses were

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[675] Jane Turner Censer, e-mail communication to author, 22 June 2006.

joyfully preparing for their first Christmas together since the start of the war, but Terhune recalled in her autobiography that her mother had an eerie presentiment of disaster on the night of December 24. Three times she was awakened by a sense of a presence in the room. It blew in the window, rustled past the bed and out the door into the hallway. The "colored people" of the household interpreted this as a warning, but Terhune dismissed their fears as superstition. On Christmas Eve afternoon Samuel Pierce Hawes was at his office, working in a cheerful mood, when he suddenly collapsed. The abundant evergreens he had ordered to celebrate what he had called "the happiest day of my life" were pushed aside to make room for his stretcher as it was carried into the house. He died an hour later, without having moved or spoken. Terhune had lost her beloved father and most devoted fan, but she concluded that he had indeed entered upon "the happiest day of his life."[676]

Back in Newark, Terhune kept up her demanding schedule as mother, pastor's wife, and author. She found joy in her family, and consolation at Sunnybank, but family tradition also records that the years at Newark were a period of marital discord for the Terhunes. Edward and Mary Virginia were both strong personalities, and despite their mutual affection there was also a professional and personal rivalry between the handsome, charismatic minister and the popular author whose books brought in more income than her husband's salary. The Alice affair could not be forgotten entirely, and there were other sore points between the couple as well.[677]

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[676] Harland, *Autobiography*, 412-416.

[677] Frederick Fritz Van de Water, "Talented Family," 58-59, and personal memories as told to Karen Manners Smith, in Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 321-322.

And then there were more bereavements. The couple's infant daughter Myrtle died in September 1869, casting a pall over even the happy summers at Sunnybank. Still more devastating was the death of their ten-year-old daughter Alice, possibly from diabetes, in 1874. Virginia's mother died later the same year, bringing her face to face with her own mortality. It was under the strain of these losses that Terhune's health went into decline, while the misanthropical tendencies that she had fought against as a teenager re-emerged and threatened to gain the upper hand. The two-year "loitering" in Europe was for her a fight to recover both her physical health and her spiritual well-being, and from this experience she acquired a conviction that these two things were intimately connected. The realization brought a new focus to her sense of mission. In seeking to convert her readers, the post-war Terhune would attach as much importance to their bodily wholeness as to their spiritual health.

Terhune's writings from the 1860s to 1880 mirror her mental and physical struggles. The novels she wrote in the 1860s and early 1870s have a bleak quality, and often unhappy or bittersweet endings. At the same time, Terhune sought to share the joy of her life at Sunnybank with her readers. In May of 1869 she began a series of essays entitled "Sunnybank Papers," published in the popular magazine *Hours at Home*.[678] The pieces are lighthearted accounts of idyllic summer days, and Terhune gave them whimsical titles such as "Concerning Cauliflower and Cognate Subjects" and "Poultry and Their Perils." She wrote about her family members, identifying them only by nickname (it was a pattern she would repeat in later autobiographical writings). The six-

[678] Karen Manners Smith speculates that in turning to the autobiographical essay Terhune may have been seeking publishing options other than *Godey's*, which was then claiming the exclusive right to publish her short stories. Smith, "Mary Virginia Terhune" (Ph.D. diss.), 310.

month-old Myrtle is "Dot," a "bewitching compound of plumpness, frolic and dimples." Alas, by the time dimpled Dot made her appearance in print in October of 1869, the real Myrtle was dead, probably from infantile diarrhea. Her grieving mother published one more essay in November, making no mention of Myrtle, then discontinued the series. She would not touch autobiography again until she began *Loiterings in Pleasant Paths* more than a decade later.

If the "Sunnybank" essays reveal Terhune's ongoing love for nature and her enjoyment of her summer vacations, her novels of the period reflect the personal hurts and moral confusion of her daily life. In 1867 and 1868, she published two novels about unhappy marriages, *Phemie's Temptation* (which was first published in installments in *Godey's*) and *Ruby's Husband*. *Phemie's Temptation* was published together with a novelette entitled *Charybdis*. All three works fit into the category of Terhune novels that Karen Manners Smith has aptly labeled "dismal." They are bleak tales of human misery, and their bitter tone reveals the author's disillusion and anger. The plots are unredeemed by any sense of moral uplift or spiritual resolution, such as Evans Wilson used to sweeten her tragic stories. Some of the dismal novels limp their way into a happy or at least bittersweet ending, but even this does little to relieve the depressing effect of the whole. Terhune would produce more grim literature in the early 1870s. *True as Steel* (1872) while not in the "dismal" category, has darkly sensational elements that do not appear in the author's earlier works. At the climax of the tale, a madman murders his own illegitimate child and sets fire to a house. *Jessamine*, published the following year, is another truly dismal production.

Of the dismal works, *Phemie's Temptation* deserves a closer look for what it reveals about its author's state of mind. It is the most feminist of all of her books, and among the least romantic. The novel is set in the gritty, workaday world of an industrial city. Its heroine Phemie Rowland, who resembles the author both in feature and in personality, is an honest, bright woman who supports her mother and siblings by working as a bookkeeper. Terhune's general tone has hardened in this work. She admires courage and strength in both men and women and treats weakness, especially in men, with contempt. She laces her narrative with acid comments about working women who labor long hours, for patronizing employers, earning "nearly half the sum paid to men who did the same work, only not quite as well."[679]

Yielding to a yearning for marriage, Phemie weds Robert Hart, an attractive but shallow man who is offended when he learns that she has become a published writer. Robert is unfaithful to his wife, becomes a drunkard, and eventually deserts her. Through all these trials Phemie remains loyal to her husband, conforming to the romantic ideal even as her sodden mate tramples it in the mud. In the middle of the story, the author offers the promise of a redemptive ending. When Phemie's brother urges her to seek a divorce on the grounds of desertion, she refuses quietly, quoting St. Paul, "If in this life only we have hope, then we are of all men the most miserable" (I Corinthians 15:19). She has been praying that Robert will be restored to his right mind, and believes that once he has looked into his daughter's eyes, he will never be able to leave again.[680]

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[679] Marion Harland, *Phemie's Temptation* (New York: Sheldon and Co., 1869; reprint, Madison Square Series, Best Novels by Best Authors, New York: G.W. Dillingham, Publisher, 1889), 18 (page citations are to the reprint edition).
[680] Ibid., 252-254.

What happens next is a harsh parody of that pious happy ending. Robert does return, rougher and more drunken than he was before. Phemie, who has become a self-supporting writer, takes him in and supports him with difficulty as he makes a feeble pretense of seeking work. The crisis comes when he attempts to punish their daughter harshly for a minor infraction. Terrified for her child's sake, Phemie finally obtains a divorce. Here Terhune reveals her own deep ambivalence toward the values she had once held so confidently. Divorce was a sin in her eyes, but remaining in a dangerous and degrading marriage was no option either.

The end of the novel is a sardonic commentary on the great chasm that lies between pious idealism and gross reality. "I am not writing a story with a moral," Terhune tells her readers. "If I were, I should narrate how the wife elected to follow the husband's wanderings, and how her death with her baby of starvation in a garret, resulted in his reformation and conversion to decency and piety. I am describing things that have been, and that are."[681] In the world of things that are, Phemie lives as a desolate divorced woman, while Robert disappears. Phemie's unsympathetic sister Olive, however, supplies an edifying interpretation: this is what has come of Phemie's being a strong-minded woman. Thanks to Olive, writes the author, "my story has a moral after all.[682]

Romance and enchantment join morality as casualties of "the things that are." On the night of their betrothal, Phemie had sung a love song to her husband, *Robert! Robert! toi que j'aime! toi que j'aime!* [683] On the eve of her desertion, as she stands at the window waiting anxiously for the husband who never comes, a weary organ-grinder serenades her

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[681] Ibid., 307-308.
[682] Ibid., 311.
[683] Robert! Robert! you whom I love! you whom I love!

with the same tune. "The instrument was shrill and wheezy; the high notes were wiry, and the low ones a husky grunt, and the time was execrable, but the air rang in her ears like the lament of her yearning spirit; haunted her for years afterwards." Phemie hurls some coins at the organ-grinder and, in a furious pantomime, orders him to leave.[684] In the glow of romantic evangelicalism, Terhune had written of minute providence and particular providences. Here, she introduced her readers to perverse providences. Even Phemie's name is a scathing indictment of romanticism. "Euphemia," Greek for "words of good omen," means both solemn silence and songs of praise.

In an age of romance gone sour, it was safer to take a practical approach to life. Terhune still believed in the domestic vocation of women and, in-between dismal novels, she decided to promote this vocation by taking up a whole new genre: a simple cookbook for such young and inexperienced housewives as she herself had once been. *Common Sense in the Household* (1871) was the first in a long series of domestic advice books and articles, several of which reiterated the theme of "common sense": *Eve's Daughters, or Common Sense for Maid, Wife and Mother* (1881), *Common Sense in the Nursery* (1886), and a syndicated column for the *Chicago Times* entitled "Common Sense in the Home" (1911-1917).[685]

Terhune was not alone in entering the domestic advice market. In the 1870s and 1880s there was a veritable explosion of household and cooking manuals, most of them authored by women. The popularity of the new genre was a response to technological changes that altered housekeeping in the post-war years, and also an affirmation of

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[684] Ibid., 228.

[685] The last "common sense" book was *The New Common Sense in the Household*, published in 1922 (a year after Mary Virginia's death) by Christine Terhune Herrick. Of the three Terhune children that survived to adulthood, Christine seems to have been the closest to her mother in temperament and values.

woman's domestic vocation in reaction to other factors that were promoting women's entrance into the public sphere.[686] Terhune herself, with her new awareness of the need to maintain physical health, urged women to take full advantage of the latest technologies, and to avoid overstraining themselves.[687] A few years earlier, she had overworked to the point of endangering her life, and she had become convinced that women in general had made a bad habit of self-sacrifice.

If not the only contestant in the field, Terhune was one of the most successful by far. Not only had she already made her mark as a writer, but she transferred her skills in fiction to her new métier. She wrote to her readers in a warm, friendly style that inspired their trust. Moreover, her recipes and instructions, clearly written and tested by herself, really did help young, middle-class women manage their homes. Having established herself in this new line of writing, Terhune expanded well beyond how-to advice. Her chef d'oeuvre in this arena, *Eve's Daughters*, was a combination of practical advice, medical information, personal anecdotes, social and religious commentary, and meditations on the distinctive experience and vocation of women. It represents, better than any other work, the thinking of the mature Mary Virginia Terhune. She had, by this time, integrated her religious and moral passion with her "common sense" pragmatism.

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[686] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 339.

[687] Terhune's growing concern for physical health manifested itself in other ways as well. In 1870, she helped to manage a YWCA in Newark. She, Edward, and her children each maintained separate memberships there. Terhune also became worried about overconsumption of sweets, especially modern candies containing artificial (and poisonous) additives. Here she was torn, for she was quite fond of sweets and *Common Sense* contains numerous recipes for desserts. On the other hand, she discouraged or prohibited her children (both real and fictional) from eating sweets, urging them to eat fruit instead. Terhune's worries in this area were possibly tied to a family history of diabetes. Her daughter Alice may have died of this disease (the child in *My Little Love*, modeled on Alice, is forbidden sweets and fruits by her doctor after she becomes ill), and Albert Terhune's daughter Lorraine had Type 1 diabetes which eventually killed her. Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 315; Marion Harland, *My Little Love* (New York: G.W. Carleton & Company, 1876), 380; Litvag, *Master of Sunnybank*, 257.

Like her advice writing, Terhune's fiction was beginning to re-crystallize by the mid-1870s. Something of the old romantic sensibility revived, but it was now combined with a keen appreciation of the ridiculous. The author's satire was amusing enough, provided the reader did not rub up against its cutting edge. If the city had been the citadel of vice in Terhune's pre-war fiction, city and country now came equally under attack. If the vicious had been the subject of condemnation in the earlier works, the virtuous were now no longer exempt from the novelist's enjoyment of the absurd. At the same time, Terhune reaffirmed her belief in the truth and nobility of Christianity. Even her sense of wonder re-emerged, but it was now tinged with sadness and with a poignant awareness of the fragility of life.

That Terhune's mid-1870s works are permeated with a sense of vulnerability and loss was unsurprising. They were written when she was mourning Alice and her mother, and fighting against her own serious illness, which resembled tuberculosis.[688] *From My Youth Up* (1874) is the first of two novels written during this time. It is the story of an impoverished minister, Felix Hedden, and his family in rural New Jersey. The story is narrated by the minister's ward, May Hedden, a young orphaned girl whose face is marred by a birthmark.[689] Although the pastor is deeply spiritual, he is too remote and

[688] Karen Manners Smith has raised reasonable questions about the seriousness of Terhune's illness, pointing to the novelist's lifelong habit of dramatizing the events of her life as well as certain episodes that suggest that she was never exactly at death's door. In 1876, the same year that Terhune received her alarming diagnosis that she had only three months to live, she also found the strength to take a trip to Lake Superior, as well as to the Centennial Exposition in Columbia (this last according to Albert Payson Terhune's memoir, *To the Best of My Memory*). Nevertheless, she had been coughing up blood for months, and her condition was sufficiently serious that Edward was deeply worried, and felt it necessary to resign his position as pastor at the Newark Church, and take his wife on a two-year trip to Europe. Harland, *Autobiography*, 420-421; Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 371, 373.

[689] The heroine sees her birthmark as a symbol of her blighted parentage (her father was a bigamist), and Terhune herself suggests a connection between physical and moral defects in this novel. By the 1880s, Terhune would become increasingly interested in the problems of people who suffered from physical or

intellectual to be appreciated by his rough flock (Terhune pokes gentle fun at the minister's mumbling sermons which inevitably put his congregants to sleep). Felix, his saintly wife, and their children endure poverty and social rejection in the midst of the joy they experience in their love for God and each other. The passages describing the family's piety would be cloying were the author not in earnest. Such faith, she tells her readers, is rare even in Christian families, and it is precisely because of this family's suffering that Jesus Christ is very real to them. At one point, the eldest son, observing his mother in prayer, sees "the light of the PRESENCE on her face."[690]

The novel is, withal, infused with a sense of melancholy ("The Lamentations of Jeremiah" serves as a Scriptural framing device), and its romance ends in loss and betrayal, reflecting the author's own saddened awareness of human limitations. May's fiancé Carl Cromer, a devout and sensitive man whom she has loved "from [her] youth up," dies suddenly of an illness toward the end of the tale. In his last words he inadvertently reveals to May his hopeless love for another woman. When May confronts her rival after her fiancé's death, she finds her to be a physically beautiful but shallow woman. May probably serves as a mouthpiece for the author's own views when she reflects:

> I had not learned then what I believe firmly and on ample evidence now; namely, that the love of most women is far more loyal and courageous than that of men. Husbands and lovers have died sooner than reveal the guilt of wives and mistresses, but perished protesting their own innocence of complicity in the crime. Women, with more farsighted devotion, have boldly avowed themselves the criminals, and suffered with joy the death of the body – triumphant in the thought that by self-

mental defects. This was the subject of *Handicapped* (1882), a collection of short stories published by Scribner.

[690] Marion Harland, *From My Youth Up* (New York: G.W. Carleton & Company, 1874, reprint, New York: G.W. Dillingham Co., n.d.), 35-43 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

> immolation they secured the safety and honor of the one beloved. Moral cowardice – I set it down deliberately – is oftener a masculine than a feminine trait.[691]

Unlike the Terhune's dismal novels of the 1860s, however, *From My Youth Up* offers a transcendent reinterpretation that redeems the earthly tragedy. When May confesses her heartbreak and humiliation to her mother, the saintly Mrs. Hedden answers that Carl, now in heaven, can see May "eyes purged from prejudice and fleshly desires," and recognize her true worth. She urges her daughter to "wait for the Hereafter – for the abundant recompense!" The author goes on to suggest that Carl himself had spoken to May through her mother's inspiration.[692] May, although she never marries, finds contentment in her extended family and in her hope for the Hereafter.

In 1876, Terhune published a novel that was a memorial to her lost child, Alice. The narrator of *My Little Love* is a young man, Barry Haye, who befriends six-year-old Ailsie Darling (Alice). Terhune skillfully adopts the voice of the youth who, callow and sickly at the beginning, grows in integrity and strength through his love for the imaginative, precocious child. The two friends enter into a mock engagement early in the novel, but as they mature Barry decides that Ailsie is indeed the only woman he wishes to marry, and that he is willing to wait until she is eighteen. Ailsie, a wise child-woman, reciprocates "Mr. Barry's" love and their betrothal becomes real despite the amused skepticism of the Darling family.

It is an odd love story, one that probably could not be written today, yet there is no suggestion of pedophilia in the tale. Erotic love is a promise for the future, as Barry

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[691] Ibid., 281.
[692] Ibid., 381-382.

acknowledges when, at last, he confesses the seriousness of his love to Ailsie's devoted and protective aunt: "I told you, years ago, that she was my evangel. . . . Let her love me, still, without bashful tremor until I dare teach her what love is, and what love I have felt for her. Trust to my honor not to forestall the declaration by a day."[693] The aunt, surprised and frightened at first, finally gives the prospective union her blessing. The day of declaration never arrives, however, for Ailsie, like Alice, dies of a wasting disease at the age of ten, and Barry remains a bachelor for life.

As with its predecessor, an undertone of melancholy pervades this novel. Terhune also suggests that there is a spiritual contest between darkness and light underlying the characters' quiet lives. On the one hand, they trust in the goodness of Providence, chiefly symbolized throughout the novel by the Thanksgiving holiday. Ailsie herself is a devout Christian, although not at all in the mode of the sentimental child-heroine (she has a ferocious temper, and her ladylike dignity borders on haughtiness). At the same time, a series of strange mishaps, terrifying to a child, take on the character of portents and suggest to Ailsie's frightened family and friends that she is living under a kind of curse.[694] Ailsie, however, dies firm in her faith shortly after Thanksgiving. Before her death, Barry overhears her singing an Advent hymn as Christmas approaches, "O my Saviour, quickly come."

Ailsie is an engaging child, and the novel itself is engaging for all its strangeness. It was not particularly popular, however. Reviewers praised its religious qualities and refrained from strong criticisms, apparently because they were aware that the character of

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[693] Harland, *My Little Love*, 315.

[694] There is no evidence that the real Alice experienced the kinds of attacks suffered by the fictional Ailsie, which included two frightening encounters with drunken men and a lightning strike that kills a neighbor.

Ailsie was based on Terhune's own child.[695] The sadness and eerie qualities of the story, and the questionable nature of the romance may have rendered it unattractive to readers. Having paid her tribute to her daughter, Terhune would write no more novels until 1883, when she struck out in a new direction with a work of historical fiction.

It was in her advice literature, however, that Terhune now spoke most convincingly to her readers, and it was to this genre that she devoted most of her effort after she returned from Europe in 1878, restored to health.[696] After a joyous homecoming at Sunnybank, the family moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, where Edward had obtained a post as minister of the First Congregational Church. It was while living there that Terhune, then fifty years old, produced her magnum opus in the domestic advice category. *Eve's Daughters, or Common Sense for Maid, Wife, and Mother*, was first published in 1881, and it was a great success, selling 20,000 copies in the first two years and earning high praise from reviewers as well as the medical profession.[697] This work restated, in self-help form, the gospel of the domestic novel: the centrality of woman in the life of the nation. Its epigram was by the English poet Emily Pfeiffer: "It is not too much to say of the women of a Nation, that they are the molds in which the souls of its men are set." If women were to rise to the occasion, however, they needed to be strong, physically and mentally, and Terhune had become convinced that women needed good, practical advice on how to take care of themselves and their children.

Now in ripe middle age, Terhune had reconciled the idealism of her youth with the sober and sometimes bitter realism of her early adulthood. In her introduction, she

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[695] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 363-364.

[696] This full recovery suggests that, whatever Terhune's illness was, she had not been suffering from tuberculosis.

[697] Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 440-441.

writes of both the high potential of woman and her shortcomings, and she frankly admits that domestic ideology, despite its vaunted reverence for women, had been riddled with hypocrisy:

> I saw Man, -- owning Woman as his mate with but one, and that the least noble side of his dual nature; -- the conscious oppression of her by the coarse and sensual, the repression of her intellectual strivings by the arrogant who brook not even the shadow of a partner on the throne of Self. With pain and surprise I saw the unconscious tyranny of the refined and chivalrous. The velvet glove needs no iron hand within to keep Woman – the flattered Angel of Home and Queen of Hearts – in her place.[698]

Such a bitter denunciation would seem to set the stage for a rejection of domestic ideal, but Terhune, while admitting that misogyny was widespread even in the enlightened 1880s, saw this as all the more reason to awaken woman to the dignity of her mission as wife and mother. Hypocrisy, after all, was the tribute that vice paid to virtue. And so, dedicating her book to her "sisters, the wives, mothers, and daughters of America," Terhune set out to speak directly to the women she wished to convert and motivate.

The structure of *Eve's Daughters* roughly follows a woman's lifespan. Terhune begins with advice on caring for infants and small children, then discusses adolescence and early adulthood, then mature womanhood and aging. After addressing miscellaneous topics, including dress reform and the evils of gossiping, she returns to a discussion of the woman's life cycle, this time focusing on marriage, pregnancy and childbirth. Much of the book is devoted to the subject of physical health, for Terhune had come to believe that bodily health was the essential foundation for personal well-being. Throughout *Eve's Daughters*, she cites a wide range of medical experts, both men and women. She

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[698] Marion Harland, *Eve's Daughters: Common Sense for Maid, Wife, and Mother* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881, 1885), iv.

had, moreover, come to share the belief, widespread among medical authorities of the period, that women's health was in decline. Unlike such prominent experts as Dr. Edward Clarke of Harvard University (whom she quotes frequently), Terhune did not attribute this deterioration to excessive study.[699] It was rather, she claimed, a result of women's ignorance of their own bodies, particularly of their sexual capacities. It was time, she argued, to discard the "false delicacy" that made women ashamed of "the holiest mysteries of their natures."[700]

The emphasis that Terhune had come to place on the body is perhaps the most striking characteristic of *Eve's Daughters*. She insisted both on the goodness of the body and on the need to respect its limitations. Overwork, such as had contributed to her own health crisis, was to be avoided at all costs. "You may make rebels of your bodily functions," she told her readers. "You cannot enslave them." Judicious treatment of the body was in fact a religious duty as well as a joy. "As you regulate each jarred section in consonance with the design of the Creator, you will grow into delighted appreciation of the fitness and beauty of the structure it is the fashion to decry as a clog upon the immortal soul." Menstruation, Terhune suggested, had a therapeutic function. Since, in her view, women had a tendency to work too hard and to become too emotionally involved in their tasks, she advised them to "acknowledge the gentle and wholesome ministry of the Rhythmic Check upon your impetuosity; the Sabbatical calming of hot and high life-currents."[701]

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[699] At a time when increasing numbers of women were entering higher education, a number of medical experts argued that excessive mental strain wore down women's health and damaged their reproductive capacities.
[700] Harland, *Eve's Daughters*, iii, 79.
[701] Ibid., 224-225.

Sexuality especially was an area in which women needed to be taught a religious respect for their bodies. In a chapter titled "Reverence of Sex," Terhune urged mothers to disabuse their daughters of the "low-caste contempt of [their] womanhood," and to teach them the significance of "The Temple of the Body."[702] The phrase was a reference to St. Paul, who in enjoining believers to sexual purity had called the body "a temple of the Holy Ghost" (I Cor. 6:19). Reverence of sex included reverence for woman's domestic role, and Terhune argued that man's sphere of action was "really, after all, no wider or higher" than woman's.[703]

If health was a duty, illness might well be a sin, and on this point Terhune's admonitions took on a harsh tone. Impatient of self-indulgent hypochondria in women, she approvingly quoted a school-girl who announced that no one should be proud of being "delicate," and that the proper term was "sickly." Going further, she took "wicked satisfaction" in quoting from Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man*:

> We civilized men do the utmost to check the progress of civilization; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick . . . There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who, from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to small-pox. Thus the weak members of civilized societies propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race.

After this crude foray into social Darwinism, Terhune pulled back and took a Christian perspective. "Heaven and humanity forbid," she admitted, "that we should deal roughly, even in thought, with the feeble and stricken ones who, from shattered earthly tabernacles oftentimes see farther into the world that sets this right, and into the counsels of its Ruler than do our fleshly eyes!" On the other hand, she argued, women should not

[702] Ibid., 77.
[703] Ibid., 76.

be needlessly handicapped, not encouraged to believe that robust health and hearty appetites were in themselves "coarse."[704] Terhune believed, moreover, that people with serious and hereditary health problems had a moral responsibility to refrain from marriage and child-bearing.

Healthy couples, on the other hand, should have children freely, although only "by consent, and not a matter of chance or unmanly persecution." Rejecting the use of artificial contraception, Terhune insisted that fecundity could be effectively regulated by natural means. She was aware of Thomas Malthus's arguments about the dangers of overpopulation. To answer this objection, she quoted from William Rathbone Greg's "Enigmas of Life" (1872), which argued that natural laws, guided by Providence, would "reduce human fecundity in proportion as mankind advances in real civilization, in moral and intellectual development."[705] The subsistence crisis Malthus predicted could be averted through human progress, and did not need to be checked by coercive means.

In discussing marriage, Terhune affirmed the goodness of intimacy on every level, and she restated her conviction that marriage was an absolute and permanent union, "the love and fidelity of one man toward one woman, and that woman his wife."[706] At the same time, she urged unmarried women not to live solely for the sake of catching a husband, and not to compromise themselves by seizing the "chance" to marry a man they would not have chosen as a husband, merely out of fear of remaining unmarried. "Chance!" she exclaimed. "How I loathe the accepted phrase! There is *no* chance in the Universe ruled by GOD. If the word signifies room, time, occasion for work for Him and

[704] Harland, *Eve's Daughters*, 131-134.
[705] Although Terhune refers to him as "Dr. Greg," Greg was a businessman, politician and philosopher. Ibid., 431.
[706] Ibid., 417-418.

His children, your hands may be worthily filled without outraging your womanhood by selling yourself in the shambles."[707]

While affirming marriage, Terhune also frankly addressed the problem of male adultery which she admitted was widespread. The pain and wrong of adultery did not, in her view, abrogate a woman's marriage vow. She urged wives whose husbands were unfaithful to confront them calmly, pointing out the dangers to the couple's happiness and to his reputation. A wife could do no more, and if the husband continued his adultery, her best course was to "take up the heavy cross appointed for you to carry." As consolation, Terhune offered her observation that many women she knew had achieved great heroism and saintliness through this trial. "Of whom the world is not worthy! My spirit bows in unspoken homage in the presence of a wronged wife who yet makes no open sign of her desolation."[708]

Terhune ended her advice tome with a chapter on child birth, and this she opened with a fierce denunciation of abortion. "The evil is deadly," she wrote, "and the feeling that prompts to the commission of the crime, widespread." As she had argued in "A Christmas Talk with Mothers," she again suggested that at the root of abortion was "a failure to value aright our mission as the mother-sex." Next to God himself, she repeated, it was primarily women who were makers and molders of the human race. "One *man* in a million leaves his mark on a generation. The humblest mother – 'thinking God's

[707] Ibid., 398.
[708] "Of whom the world is not worthy!" is a reference to Hebrews 11:38, describing the loneliness and suffering of the Old Testament prophets. Ibid., 417.

thoughts after Him' – may leave her impress of these on living epistles that are to transmit them to the eternities."[709]

It was, ultimately, in the raising rather than merely the bearing of children that woman left her mark. Terhune quoted the Chicago physician Lelia G. Bedell to this effect: "Herein is true heredity." Here she was reiterating the antebellum doctrine of feminine influence, using the late nineteenth-century language of physical fact and medical authority. She went on to reaffirm her faith in a spiritual reality that encompassed and transcended the physical:

> The imagination hesitates to grasp the full import of [Bedell's] saying. Yet what does it teach us that we did not know already – at least in part? That none of us liveth unto himself and none of us dieth unto himself. That your child, in the neglect of her commonest duty, risks the comfort of others. That the invisible, but potential moral and spiritual "sphere" of influence is not a mystic's dream. That in moulding ourselves we are building for Time and Eternity.[710]

In struggling with her personal hurts and her intellectual confusions, Terhune had in the end come full circle. She held firm to the ideals she had embraced in her girlhood, and she had worked out, to her own satisfaction, answers to the practical and ideological objections to these values. Judging from the sales figures for her books, she also continued to speak for a significant portion of American women and men.[711]

Evans Wilson promoted these same values, but she adhered firmly to the genre of the novel. While she sometimes addressed postwar intellectual and political issues in her fiction, she made no attempt to adapt her literary style to late nineteenth-century tastes. After *Macaria*, she buried the lifeless body of her beloved Confederacy, with high

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[709] Ibid., 435.
[710] Ibid., 95-96.
[711] While both sexes read novels, Terhune wrote her advice literature exclusively to women and women seem to have constituted the large majority of her readers in this genre.

honors, and returned to the subject that had motivated her to write *Beulah*: the promotion of the Christian faith in a secularizing society. Evans Wilson, like Terhune, maintained a sizeable readership, and in fact her most successful novel was published shortly after the war.

St. Elmo (1867) is, like *Beulah*, a conversion drama. In this case the heroine, Edna Earle, is converted early in the novel and is secure in her Christian identity. The suspense centers on her relationship with the novel's rakish anti-hero, St. Elmo Murray. Edna is a poor orphan girl who has been raised by her grandfather in rural Tennessee, and has educated herself through reading. When her grandfather dies she travels to Georgia to find work in a factory, but en route she is injured in a train wreck.[712] A wealthy widow, Mrs. Murray, takes her in to nurse her, and she becomes the older woman's ward. While living at Le Bocage, the Murray family mansion, Edna encounters Mrs. Murray's son, the erudite but brutal St. Elmo. St. Elmo creates a test to see whether Edna is in fact the honorable Christian woman that she appears to be. Edna of course passes the test; St. Elmo begins to question his cynical view of the world and falls in love with Edna. Edna also falls in love with St. Elmo in spite of herself.

The independent Edna refuses to be adopted by Mrs. Murray, preferring to support herself. While still living at Le Bocage, she begins a career as a writer. When she comes of age, she leaves the Murrays and moves to New York City where she takes a position as a governess. She does her writing late at night and eventually achieves success as an author and scholar. The learned Edna (she has mastered Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and knows some Arabic, although her knowledge of Chaldee is sadly limited) is

[712] In the popular literature of the industrializing post-war era, train accidents come to substitute for riding accidents as convenient crises on which to turn plots.

motivated by a sense of religious mission: she has determined to discover how the universal truth of the Gospel underlies all the mythologies of the world.[713] Like Beulah, however, Edna overworks to the point where her life is endangered, and despite her literary fame she remains lonely. She finally chooses to give up her writing and to marry St. Elmo, who by novel's end has repented and become a Christian. His bitterness, it turns out, was due to his having been betrayed and humiliated by his betrothed and his closest friend. St. Elmo becomes a minister, and the happy couple is united in holy matrimony and in service to God.

St. Elmo represents a development in Evans's religious thought. Rather than skeptical philosophy, she has become interested in the question of how to understand the concept of Christian truth in relation to the multiplicity of religious beliefs in the world. As Edna's scholarly project indicates, Evans believed that a single Providence underlay the development of the world's different religious traditions, and that Middle Eastern religions in particular contain fragments of historic Christian events. At one point, she has Edna analyze an Arab ornament engraved with a ram's head. A crescent lies over one head, and a star over the other, and Edna proclaims that the star represents the star of Bethlehem. Her interlocutor objects that she is ignoring the centuries of antagonism between Christianity and Islam, but Edna defends her interpretation. The following passage provides a taste of Evansian scholarly interpretation:

> You forget, Mr. Leigh, that Mohammedanism is nothing but a huge eclecticism, and that its founder stole its elements from surrounding systems. The symbolism of the crescent he took from the mysteries of Isis and Astarte; the ethical code of Christ he engrafted on the monotheism of Judaism; his typical forms are drawn from the Old Testament or the more modern Mishma; and his pretended miracles are mere repetitions of the

[713] Evans (Wilson), *St. Elmo*, 101.

> wonders performed by our Saviour – for instance, the basket of dates, the roasted lamb, the loaf of barley bread, in the siege of Medina. . . . Besides, sir, you know that Sabeanism reigned in Arabia just before the advent of Mohammed, and if you refuse to believe that the Star of Bethlehem was signified by this one shining on the ram's horn, at least you must admit that it refers to stars studied by the shepherds who watched their flocks on the Chaldean plains.[714]

To Edna and her creator, the centrality of Christianity and the parallels to other religious systems were self-evident. Evans Wilson's interest in the subject, however, reflects a growing concern on the part of American Christians over how to validate their faith in a world of many faiths and in an era when overseas mission had taken on increasing importance for evangelicals.

In other respects, *St. Elmo* reflects many of the same themes, and conflicts, that shaped the plot of *Beulah*. One persistent theme is the nature and role of women. The heroines of both novels are similarly strong-willed and intellectual, although Edna lacks Beulah's coldness. Evans Wilson continued to work out in her fiction her conflict over feminine ambition, and in each novel the scholarly heroine, at the hero's insistence, leaves off her writing for wifehood. From a feminist standpoint, this is patriarchal domination at its most blatant, but to the extent that Evans Wilson herself found ambition burdensome, Guy Hartnet and St. Elmo Murray are less tyrants than mouthpieces for one side of the author's own conflicted desires.

Evans Wilson's early heroines often appear to be the victims of their own ambition. Neither Beulah nor Edna find much joy in their work. They are not so much led to their careers as driven by them, and both work such long hours that they endanger their lives. Edna's work is superior to Beulah's in that she does have an authentic

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[714] Ibid., 90.

mission, yet it is one that threatens to make a martyr of her. While writing and working as a governess, Edna only gets about two hours of sleep a night. In a similar fashion, Electra in *Macaria* explicitly describes herself as "driven" by ambition, although in this instance Evans Wilson affirmed the legitimacy of an artist's hunger for artistic accomplishment.

There are indications that the novelist herself was as driven as her heroines. Evans Wilson is described as having often stayed up all night while working on her first novel, and Alabama historian Willis Brewer states that she wrote the 440-page *Beulah* in the space of two months.[715] Evans was not strong, and like her heroines she kept up her demanding work pace through sheer will power (since Terhune's *Eve's Daughters* had not yet appeared to warn her against such self-enslavement!). In 1870, Evans became dangerously ill, and at this point her husband demanded that she cut back on her activities, thereby playing a similar role to that his wife had assigned to her heroes.[716] Given Augusta's ambivalence and physical exhaustion, wifely obedience may have come as a relief.

The problem was not merely one of overwork, however. Evans also believed that the hunger for fame was at odds with womanly gentleness and modesty (useful work was another matter, and the author does not criticize Irene Huntingdon for her charitable activities). In *St. Elmo*, even more than in *Beulah*, Evans stresses that woman lived from the heart, and could not be happy with work alone. She might achieve great things, but

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[715] Willis Brewer, *Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men* (Montgomery: Barrett & Brown, 1872), 423.
[716] It is not clear whether Lorenzo Wilson specifically demanded that his wife reduce the time she spent on writing, although she did so. Unlike Hartnet and Murray, he did not prohibit his mate from writing altogether, and in fact he was proud of her authorial accomplishments. Most likely, Mr. Wilson's primary motivation was his fear for Mrs. Wilson's health. Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 173.

her heart yearned for love more than accomplishment. In the intellectual Edna, this womanly propensity results in a civil war between her head and her heart over the still unregenerate St. Elmo. Evans depicts the conflict with humor. Edna's head rejects St. Elmo as immoral and untrustworthy, but her heart rebels against this sober judgment and impudently sings, "St. Elmo Murray is my king! St. Elmo Murray is my king!" Appalled, Edna determines to conquer her heart even if she must crush it in the process. Beulah had made a similar resolution, when disturbed by her emotional weakness.[717] Edna's heart knows best, of course, and for all its weakness it triumphs in the end. In the same way, Evans Wilson suggested, woman through her quiet love exerted greater power for change in the world than did man with his headship.

This reign of the heart has a mystery about it that is closely tied to Evans Wilson's belief in the workings of Providence. Unlike Terhune, Evans Wilson did not believe in supernatural events – no ghosts haunt her writings, and she showed no interest in spiritualism. She explicitly taught her readers that miracles did not occur in the modern world but that God might guide human beings to provide direct answers to prayer. In *St. Elmo*, an impoverished young girl prays for the miraculous healing of her grandfather's blindness. Her prayer is answered through St. Elmo's agency, since he arranges for the old man to have an operation that restores his sight. This episode parallels the larger theme of St. Elmo's eventual conversion, which occurs as a result of Edna's heartfelt prayer. Evans Wilson comments, quoting Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur*,

> . . . . "More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
> Rise like a fountain for him night and day.[718]

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[717] Evans (Wilson), *St. Elmo*, 183-184, 192; Evans (Wilson), *Beulah*, 118.
[718] Ibid., 218.

Despite her naturalistic ideology, Evans Wilson's writings have a magical quality that resembles Terhune's. Like Terhune, she creates a tension between pagan fate and Christian Providence, suggesting that what appears to be inexorable fate is in fact the workings of a benevolent design.[719] Moreover, Evans's metaphors take on the quality of signs or portents.

In *St. Elmo*, as all of her works, Evans Wilson portrays a spiritual reality that exists alongside the material world and, while it does not directly alter that world, nevertheless infuses it with mystery and transcendent purpose. The church in the Murrays' hometown is almost a character in the novel. When St. Elmo is first rejected by Edna, he enters the empty building at night. It is lit only by the full moon, and in that light the image of Christ in the stained glass window appears to threaten judgment on the still unconverted hero. On the couple's wedding day, the sunlight on the same window blazes through the red cloak of Christ and falls upon the floor "like sacred, sacrificial fire."[720] Doves, favorite symbols of holiness and innocence for Evans Wilson, flutter into the action at significant moments. The spiritual clash between the pure heroine and the repulsive (anti-)hero is mirrored in external events. When St. Elmo bullies the child Edna at the garden in Le Bocage, she evades him by picking up a book that lies on the grass. When she hands it to him the pages "happen" to open to a picture of the murder of Thomas Becket. "Malice prepense! or the devil!" mutters St. Elmo.[721] Throughout the novel, Evans Wilson creates stark contrasts, both in natural events and in plot twists, to suggest a wrestling match to the death between good and evil.

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[719] Ibid., 44.
[720] Ibid., 285, 490.
[721] Ibid., 55.

The drama of *St. Elmo* was immensely appealing to the reading public, who not only bought copies by the hundreds of thousands (one million after the first four months, according to the publisher G.W. Carleton) but honored the book by naming children, towns, ships, houses, and various consumer goods after the hero or heroine, or their home Le Bocage.[722] In eschewing political messages and returning to her religious mission, Evans Wilson had recovered her authentic voice. Her style would always be considered overwrought by modern standards and was so even by the standards of many of her contemporaries, but her best writing conveyed to her readers a sense of high moral suspense and left vivid images imprinted on their imaginations. With *St. Elmo*, Evans had mounted to the pinnacle of her writing career.

In her succeeding novels, Evans Wilson would explore variations on the drama of Christian conversion. Two of those novels fall within the time frame of this study, *Vashti; or, Until Death Us Do Part* (1869) and *Infelice* (1875). *Vashti* was less popular than Evans Wilson's earlier novels (with the exception of *Inez*), probably on account of its bleakness. It sold very well nevertheless, and remained in print for years.[723] The novel reflects the author's fears about rising divorce rates and the general decline of morality in America. As its subtitle indicates, the book is a call for absolute marital constancy.

Vashti follows the theme of *Macaria* in that it explores the experience of three characters, one man and two women, whose romantic yearnings are thwarted but who

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[722] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 129.
[723] According to Fidler, Evans Wilson originally sold the copyright for *Vashti* to her publisher Carleton for $15,000. When the publisher realized the profits this novel would earn, he voluntarily tore up the contract and returned the copyright to Evans, sending her royalty payments for years. The story suggests that Evans did not anticipate that her fifth novel would be a great success. Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 166-167.

find consolation in their Christian faith. In this case, however, no grand catastrophe of war has ruined their hopes, but only sordid everyday evil. *Vashti* is also a kind of *St. Elmo* with the gender roles reversed, in that this time it is a woman who has become embittered and faithless because she discovers on her wedding day that she had been betrayed by her husband and her best friend.

The woman in question is the title character, Vashti Carlyle.[724] Vashti is another grey lady, quite similar to Terhune's "Mrs. Rashleigh" in *Nemesis*.[725] She is cold, sedate, and elegant. Her dress is grey, her eyes are grey, even her hair has turned prematurely grey from the shock of her injury, and when she is introduced to the reader she is walking under a grey sky faintly studded with stars.[726] So spectral is her appearance that a stranger meeting her for the first time imagines she is a ghost. Vashti is, in fact, a kind of living ghost. Although she does not seek revenge, her wrongs have deprived her of all joy in living, and since she is too young and strong to die she passes her days as a recluse, with her painting as the only activity she still cares for.

The hero of the story is Dr. Ulpian Grey, a virtuous Christian who returns to his mother's home after several years of traveling. Upon his arrival, he learns that his mother has adopted a girl from the local orphan asylum, a darkly beautiful teenager

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[724] Evans's reasons for choosing the name "Vashti" for her title character are uncertain, unless it is an allusion to her reclusiveness. Vashti appears in the book of Esther as the queen of Ahasuerus, and she is deposed for refusing to show herself to the king's guests at a royal banquet (Esther 1:1-22). A brief article in the Richmond *Watchman and Observer* notes that exotic biblical names such as Vashti were quite common among the Puritans, but have since given way to more ordinary names. *Watchman and Observer*, 7 August 1851, p. 206.

[725] It is possible that Evans read *Nemesis* and was influenced by it. She was accused of plagiarism, or at least of derivative ideas, on more than one occasion. Evans always denied these charges, arguing that she had come to her ideas independently.

[726] Augusta Evans Wilson, *Vashti, or Until Death Us Do Part* (New York: G. W. Carleton and Company, 1869; reprint, New York: A.L Burt Company, 1897), 81 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

significantly named Salome Owen.[727] Salome represents Evans Wilson's first attempt at creating an evil heroine, a feminine St. Elmo. At novel's beginning, she is lazy, self-centered, and so deliberately malicious that she herself comes to believe that she has a demon. Her language is melodramatic, resembling the language of the cartoon villain Mazzolin in *Inez*. As with Terhune's Agatha (*Sunnybank*), however, the girl's wickedness is mitigated by the fact that she became hardened at an early age, having grown up abused and neglected in an alcoholic family. Salome initially hates Ulpian because she believes he will deprive her of her inheritance, but she eventually falls in love with him, and his example and affection purify her character. Ulpian does not love Salome, however, and he falls in love instead with Vashti, believing her to be a widow. Vashti must disappoint him, for she remains true to her husband out of principle.

From this unpromising triangular set-up, the novel brings each character to his or her bittersweet destiny. To escape her hopeless love for Ulpian and her jealous hatred of Vashti, Salome travels to Europe, making a living as a gifted singer. She loses her voice to illness, falls into poverty, but in the process is finally converted to Christianity. She returns to her hometown to live in chaste friendship with Ulpian. Ulpian, for his part, accepts that he will never marry. His resignation strengthens his faith, and he devotes himself to his profession. Vashti's husband returns to her, ill with smallpox (here the experienced nurse Evans Wilson describes the ravages of the disease in stomach-turning detail). Out of duty to her husband, Vashti nurses him back to health, contracting

[727] By tradition, "Salome" was the name of the daughter of Herodias, wife of King Herod. In the New Testament account, her dancing charmed Herod into promising her anything she desired. Herodias instructed her daughter to request the head of John the Baptist, whom Herodias hated (Matthew 14: 6-11; Mark 6:21-29). Salome has often been represented in Western art and literature as an evil seductress.

varioloid in the process. She dies quietly, alone in her garden, at peace because she has been true to her marriage vows to the end.

The drama of *Vashti* is an interior one, and hinges chiefly on the question of whether Vashti and Salome will find salvation. Salome, like the biblical seductress whose name she bears, seems constitutionally perverse. Vashti is of faultless integrity, but alone of Evans Wilson's heroines, she is almost unfeminine in her harshness. Her voice is "full of a hopeless, sneering bitterness, as painfully out of place in a woman's voice as would be the scream of a condor from the irised throats of brooding doves, or the hungry howl of a wolf from the tender lips of unweaned lambs."[728] Evans Wilson suggests that a similar evil clings closely to each woman. Vashti always wears a sapphire ring cut in the shape of a coiled asp. Salome is attacked by a dog while attempting to spy on Vashti, and the attack leaves a scar on her wrist that encircles it like a serpent. While both women finally escape the serpentine snare, the overall melancholic tone of *Vashti* resembles the pious but sad Terhune novels of the mid-1870s. Both authors had recently experienced great personal losses. If Terhune were in mourning for her daughter and mother, Evans was grieving for her father, who probably died while she was writing the novel. *Vashti* is dedicated to him. She was also still mourning her lost Confederacy.

Evans Wilson intended for *Vashti* to be an uplifting witness to the comfort of the Christian faith. At the end of the tale, Ulpian Grey bears his loss patiently, "comforting himself with the assurance that, 'the evening of life brings with it its lamp'; and looking eagle-eyed across the storm-drenched plain of the present to the gleaming jasper walls of

[728] Evans Wilson, *Vashti*, 81.

the Eternal Beyond."[729] Evans Wilson's readers looked in the direction she pointed and embraced her message, although not with the same enthusiasm that they had embraced *St. Elmo*.

While the theme of moral decay continues, the mood lightens somewhat with Evans Wilson's next novel, published six years later and dedicated to her husband and mother. *Infelice* has an odd plot, and like all of Evans Wilson's novels it throbs with pain and yearning, with pulsating hearts pounding against adamantine wills. Like *Vashti*, the novel is a story of a desecrated marriage, and of the indissolubility of marriage. Like *Nemesis*, it features a double-stranded plot about a wronged woman bent on revenge, and her beautiful, innocent daughter who knows nothing of hatred. Unlike *Nemesis*, the novel provides a happy ending for both generations.

Minnie Merle, the beautiful but penniless mother-heroine of *Infelice*, was deserted by her husband Cuthbert Laurence shortly after their marriage at the instigation of his worldly father. Cuthbert later remarries a lumpish but wealthy Englishwoman. Minnie's sole ambition in life is to prove herself Cuthbert's legal wife so as to establish her daughter Regina's legitimacy and assure her rightful inheritance of the Laurence family fortune. She pursues this just objective, however, with hatred for the Laurences and a seething desire for vengeance that corrupts her own spirit. Indeed, Minnie says, she would offer all that she has as an oblation to Nemesis.[730] Even the Greek proverb makes its appearance once again, as Minnie, anticipating the success of her efforts, gloats, "Oh mills of the Gods! how delicious the slow music of their grinding!"[731]

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[729] Ibid., 472.
[730] Evans Wilson, *Infelice*, 289.
[731] Ibid., 505.

Because of her hatred for her husband, it is difficult for Minnie to look at her innocent daughter Regina, who closely resembles her father. She leaves Regina, first in a Catholic convent, then in the care of her lawyer, Erle Palma, a cold and haughty man.[732] Regina is beautiful and pure, and a great lover of animals. Evans Wilson uses Regina's pets (doves and other fowl, rabbits, and a dog), all of them snow-white, to symbolize her young heroine's childlike purity. The child loses several of her pets to birds of prey, a suggestion that she will not be able to maintain her innocence as she grows up alone in a harsh world. Erle, however, is a conscientious protector, and as Regina comes of age he falls in love with her.

Minnie hatches an elaborate plot to ensnare her errant husband and father-in-law. A beautiful woman, but so changed that Cuthbert no longer recognizes her, she takes on a new identity as an actress with the preposterous name of Odille Orphia Orme. As an acclaimed tragedienne Orme wins the love of both men and, manipulating their desire for her, arranges to have them attend a play she has written. The play, entitled *Infelice*, is actually the story of her own betrayal, and when they see it both libertines are shocked into admitting their guilt. In the meantime, however, Regina has come to know her father and feels a bond with him, and she intercedes for him with her mother. Cuthbert is less wicked than his father, and Evans Wilson increases the reader's sympathy for him over the course of her story. In the end, Nemesis strikes selectively. The elder Laurence collapses and dies, Cuthbert's second wife and daughter perish at sea, but he himself survives to obtain his Minnie's forgiveness and be reunited with her, while Regina marries her Mr. Palma.

[732] A strong sympathy for Catholicism is evident in this novel, an indication of how far Evans had moved beyond *Inez*.

Like *St. Elmo* and *Vashti*, *Infelice* is saturated with religious meaning and romantic imagery. Two themes run throughout this laboriously passionate novel: purity vs. corruption, and pagan fate vs. Christian mercy. Both were themes that preoccupied Evans Wilson as she emerged slowly from mourning the Confederacy but continued to reject the cultural developments of the late nineteenth century. She especially condemned the increasing sensualism she saw in her society (although *Infelice* itself has some erotic passages). She developed a special love for the color white, which she uses repeatedly in *Infelice* to symbolize purity. As noted earlier, Evans Wilson herself collected white birds only for her estate at Ashland.

Her continued fascination with Nemesis suggests that Evans Wilson was, indirectly, working through her hatred of the "soi-disant" American republic that had crushed her beloved Confederacy. The call for mercy is a theme in *St. Elmo* and *Vashti* as well, and Evans Wilson was evidently aware that she could not reconcile her hatred and yearning for revenge with her Christian faith. The happy ending of *Infelice* suggests that by 1875 she had moved closer to a resolution in favor of Christianity. Despite its cheerful resolution, *Infelice* is the least well-known of Evans Wilson's works, perhaps because its curious story and the element of bigamy made it less attractive to readers. Even so, *Infelice* had a successful run in the 1870s and 1880s. If Evans Wilson had isolated herself physically, she remained spiritually in sympathy with a significant proportion of the American reading public.

Terhune and Evans Wilson had chosen different paths in responding to the cultural upheavals of mid-century America. Terhune widened her repertoire while distancing herself from the romantic evangelicalism of her youth. Evans Wilson held fast

to her romantic vision while enclosing herself away from her rapidly changing society. Both women continued to proclaim a distinctive mission for womankind and to believe that in their writing they were fulfilling that mission. If their confidence in their ability to alter society faded, the letters they received from their readers confirmed that they could at least make a difference in individual lives. These testimonies were a source of comfort to the two novelists who knew that their day was fading. They remembered them as they walked, like the shadowy Vashti, under a silver-grey sky in which a few stars shone dimly.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION: THE VISION RECEDES

Mary Virginia Terhune and Augusta Jane Evans Wilson had been formed, as women and as writers, during the decade and half that preceded the outbreak of the Civil War. It was an era of strong contrasts. The evangelical romanticism of the early nineteenth century, with its heroic ideals and poetic sensibility, was at its height, yet in the 1850s religious disaffection was already gnawing at its edges. The political skies darkened as the second party system collapsed and secession crisis approached. It was an age of general economic prosperity, yet the possibility of a sudden downturn was never far distant. Rapid social changes undermined the status and security of the traditional elites and, from their perspective, the national order seemed on the verge of degenerating into chaos.

In the midst of these myriad changes, Terhune and Evans Wilson found both a spiritual home and a sense of purpose in their evangelical faith and in the domestic ideology that was closely tied to that faith. Having arrived at this home through a process of personal struggle, they had both the conviction and the desire to share what they had found. Along with their sister domestic novelists, they became, in essence, lay preachers to a reading public that found their religiously infused fiction highly palatable. Having been formed by their evangelical culture, they were now in a position, or so they hoped, to play a part in its growth. They wished to convince their readers of the reality of a

hidden, spiritual landscape that intersected with the material and often materialistic world in which they moved. It was the particular genius of women, they thought, to apprehend this hidden dimension.

In their evangelical faith and romantic sensibility, Terhune and Evans Wilson were typical of the women domestic novelists, both Southern and Northern, of the pre-war era. The writings of both authors, however, had unusual characteristics that help to account for their prominence. Terhune's works were distinguished by their emotional frankness and humor, and her artistry grew over the years. Evans Wilson stood out for her intellectual aspirations and her unusual tolerance for ambiguity. Both novelists avoided the labored piety and bathos that had earned for their genre the deprecating label of "sentimental novel," and both sought to depict in stark terms the conflict between their evangelical vision and the materialistic world. The costs of Christian commitment, they taught their readers, were real.

Even so, the Civil War era was a crisis for both Terhune and Evans Wilson, as well as for the romantic evangelicalism they represented. It was not the violence that disheartened them, for their vision had always had a heroic and sometimes tragic aspect. It was, rather, that the banality and grime of the newly invasive material world threatened to overwhelm the enchanted spiritual landscape in which they had moved. Terhune, aching over her husband's attraction to her sister, and Evans Wilson, perspiring in her Mobile kitchen, each was forced to partially dismantle her romantic vision. For the nation as a whole, the ghastly monotony of the war muddied and finally shattered the

ideals of the pre-war years.[733] Post-war America would build on a new, more pragmatic foundation and evangelical Christianity would follow suit, thriving with renewed energy but shedding its earlier, romantic sensibility.

Terhune and Evans Wilson responded to the new cultural climate in divergent ways that reflected their regional affiliations as well as their differing personalities. Terhune, who retained her strong identification with Virginia but became a Northerner by adoption, was both more exposed and more receptive to the cultural characteristics of the new age. Emerging from a period of bitterness in the late 1860s, she combined the newer values with the old. The mix was an imperfect one, at times more of a conglomerate than a smooth blending. She embraced the post-war pragmatism with her shift to domestic advice writing, while her new concern for physical strength reflected both the era's emphasis on bodily health, and, to some degree, its Darwinian preoccupation with "fitness." Terhune nevertheless retained something of her earlier, magical sense. The fairies were now relegated to childhood, but with her strong empathy for children Terhune retained emotional access to that enchanted world. She also continued to believe in the reality of the supernatural and in the workings of Providence.

As Terhune aged, she increasingly returned in her mind to her youth in "Old Virginia," and she sought to portray this lost world, with its flaws as well as its beauties, to new generations. The stories she told her grandchildren became the basis for two collections of charming short stories for children, *When Grandmamma Was New* (1899)

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[733] I have portrayed the Civil War as a personal and aesthetic crisis for the domestic novelists. In addition, Mark Noll has argued that the Civil War was a theological crisis for evangelicals because their biblical interpretation did not enable them to resolve the debate over slavery or the sectional crisis, and because the war cast doubt on their beliefs about divine providence. As a result, according to Noll, evangelicalism was undermined in the late nineteenth century. Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

and *When Grandmamma Was Fourteen* (1905), while *An Old-Field School-Girl* (1897), a novel suitable for children, was in many ways based on her own unhappy memories of her abusive tutor James Naylor. Her autobiography, written for adults, was also largely a leisurely and rambling account of a girl's growing up in Old Virginia, while her last novel, *The Carringtons of High Hill*, was a plantation novel.

Terhune returned to the past in her personal life, as well. In 1896, she read the obituary of the Reverend W. A. Campbell, the husband of Virginia Eppes Dance, and was inspired to write to her old confidante. The two women revived their friendship, and in her letters to her "dear old friend" Terhune reminisced about the joys of honeysuckle and long conversations on moonlit nights, sounding much like her old self. Indeed, she wrote, "I am so little changed in myself, that those days have never seemed far away from me. I find my thoughts busy with them every day."[734]

As before, Terhune urged Eppes in her genially imperious manner to strengthen their friendship, but there was now a new theme to her admonitions. She reminded Eppes that most of their friends were dead, and their turn would come soon. "The air blows chill from the dark river, when I think of it," she wrote.[735] In later letters, Terhune would emphasize her ongoing good health (in 1911, at age eighty, she boasted that she was able to do as much work as she had at forty). Nevertheless, in remembering her roots Terhune

[734] At one point in this correspondence, Terhune recalled a strange event, possibly as an oblique allusion to the disturbances that had come into her life and had created a distance between herself and Eppes: "Do you recollect that, one midnight, when we were thus engaged [in a long conversation], an earthquake rolled 'from the east even unto the west'? I shall never forget it, and how eerie the moonlight seemed afterward." Terhune loved moonlight, and she strongly associated the moon with her friend "Eppes," as well as with her own conversion which taken place under a "harvest moon." Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune to Virginia Eppes Dance Campbell, 25 June, 1899, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

[735] This letter was written on the occasion of Powhattan Dance's death. "Powhie," Eppes's younger brother, had also been a close friend of Terhune. Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune to Virginia Eppes Dance Campbell, 29 January, 1899, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.

seems to have been preparing herself for death. Her youth remained vividly present to her, and in her old age it was enveloped in a golden haze even when she recalled its hardships.[736] Life, she acknowledged, was a "chequered" experience, but her own had been largely happy and from the vantage point of old age she had "on a clear day a fine view of the Delectable Mountains."

For decades, Terhune had used a chill wind as a metaphor for approaching death. Now, as the "Delectable Mountains" came nearer, the wind became warmer. In 1921, she published a poem about her own imminent death in *The Continent*, a Presbyterian magazine.

> Do I rehearse a waking dream?
> The wind tonight blows from the sea;
> Between me and the conscious stars
> Wave pale blooms of the locust tree.
> Sweet mystic stirs are in the air,
> Blending in music on my ear
> The peace of heaven is in my soul
> As I think what may be drawing near. . . .
>
> Could I forecast that blessed hour,
> The winds would blow fresh from the sea
> Swaying between me and the stars
> The blossoms of my favorite tree.
> With tender thoughts of home and friends
> All foes forgiven, seven times seven,
> My prayer half said, I'd fall asleep
> To speak a glad "Amen" in heaven.[737]

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[736] "My youth is more vividly present with me now than events that occurred twenty years ago. I am continually surprised to find old age so full of delights. Sometimes, I am almost frightened at my own happiness." Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune to Virginia Eppes Dance Campbell, 5 February, 1911, Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[737] Marion Harland, "In Sight of Shore," in Van de Water, "Talented Family," p. 33, quoted in Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), 560-561.

In this poem the dying Terhune had fully returned to the lyrical Christianity of her youth; "nightfall" remained for her a time of magical beauty. It was fitting that the persevering believer in "particular providences" would die in June of that year, when the white blossoms of her favorite locust tree were in full bloom. Terhune's religious vision remained with her to the end.

Augusta Evans Wilson of the Deep South confronted a different task in the post-war era. Having roundly rejected the cultural changes of the post-war era, and withdrawn into splendid isolation in her Springhill Avenue mansion, she still had to come to terms with the death of her beloved Confederacy and her hatred for its killers. In this task she had ample company, for a host of embittered ex-Confederates, women in particular, were desolate over the Confederate defeat and sought consolation in visions of heaven-directed revenge. Like them, she invoked Nemesis and imagined a fearful judgment upon the wicked victors, although the mills of the gods might grind slowly. Yet Evans Wilson's dilemma was deeply individual, predated the secession crisis and was, at heart, religious. Her resolution was likewise religious and in an important respect Evans Wilson separated herself from her fellow mourners. She did not embrace the ideology of the Lost Cause but instead returned to the internationalist evangelical vision she had held in the antebellum years.

The moral conflict within Evans Wilson's psyche lay in the struggle between her admiration for powerful, unyielding personalities and her recognition of the need for mercy. The tension appears as early as *Inez*. Toward the end of the novel, the heroine Florence Hamilton becomes happily engaged to Dudley Stewart, but Stewart comes close

to breaking the engagement when he discovers that she had briefly been a Catholic, and has concealed this from him. Florence has kept silence out of fear, knowing that her lover despises the Roman Church, but this lack of candor becomes, in itself, the chief reason that Stewart is tempted to reject her. In the end, Stewart forgives his betrothed her weakness and the two are happily married.

The theme of struggle between adamant wills (righteous or otherwise) and soft hearts recurs throughout Evans Wilson's writing. Mercy, the morally superior combatant, wins at the end of each novel, yet the steely will seems to have held a powerful attraction for the author, for after each defeat it resurrects itself, hydra-like, for a replay in the next work. Beulah Benton and Guy Hartnet must both relinquish their cold pride before they can be married. The noble but harsh Russell Aubrey must learn gentleness before he is ready to die on the battlefield, and Irene must sicken to the point of death before her self-willed father is prepared to forgive her filial defiance. Edna Earle, like Beulah, must learn that her own heart is to be respected, not "crushed" in its love for its wayward hero.

The Confederate defeat added a new emotional urgency to this perennial concern of Evans Wilson. Since she had wholeheartedly identified herself with the secessionist cause, its loss became interwoven with her earlier drama of cold strength of will vs. gentle forgiveness. Like other "uncompromising secessionists," Evans was convinced of the righteousness of the Southern cause and was able, for a time, to reconcile her evangelical faith with her detestation of the Union. Like her friend Walter Clopton Harriss, she could hate the Yankees with a "christian hatred." Following the forced

reunification of the nation, she neither desired nor felt able to forgive. She expected, she wrote, "to enjoy the dire retribution" that God would visit on the "Synagogue of Satan."

The problem seems to have been that, in the long run, Evans Wilson could not reconcile persistent hatred with her evangelical faith which insisted, as uncompromisingly as any secessionist, on the necessity of forgiveness. Gradually, over a period of several decades, her Confederate righteousness yielded to her Christian belief in mercy. While she did not directly address the topic of the Civil War in her literature until her 1902 novel, *A Speckled Bird*, this interior process is worked out in her earlier post-bellum writings. *St. Elmo*, written soon after war's end, sidesteps the issue and re-presents the *Beulah* drama of faith vs. skepticism. The author's next two novels, however, deal directly with the consequences of unyielding bitterness and the desire for revenge. Vashti Carlyle, the wronged wife, is bitterness personified. Although she maintains her integrity, she is joyless and devoid of warmth. Her death, after she has fulfilled her final duty to her husband, comes as the release she had hungered for from the start of the novel. Minnie Merle of *Infelice*, another wronged wife, lives for revenge and becomes corrupted by it. Yet by mercy, working through her innocent daughter, Minnie's husband is not destroyed but restored to her.

With *A Speckled Bird*, published in 1902 but set in the 1870s and 1880s, Evans Wilson was at last ready to address the subject of the Civil War directly.[738] The novel opens with a conversation between a regal Confederate widow, Mrs. Maurice, and her pert granddaughter Eglah. Mrs. Maurice is yet another adamant figure, and the author

[738] In 1887, Evans Wilson published *At the Mercy of Tiberius*, a mystery novel that had a more regional flavor than any of her other works. The novel makes an additional appeal for mercy in arguing that even hardened criminals can be redeemed.

paints a sympathetic but disapproving portrait of her as a noble, but cold and overly rigid woman. Although she has undertaken the care of her dead daughter's child, Mrs. Maurice is unable to love Eglah because her daughter had married a Northerner against her wishes. The motherless Eglah turns to her nurse for affection, and this devoted servant becomes her lifelong "mother." The author had been strongly attached to her own mother and maternal tenderness was, in her view, the chief of feminine virtues. The lack of this tenderness in Mrs. Maurice was by Evans Wilson's standards a serious character flaw.

The development of Evans Wilson's own character parallels her literary progression toward mercy. As a young woman, she had been described as charming, but serious to the point of sharpness. As she aged, acquaintances portrayed her as gentle and pleasant, with a simple manner of speech that bore no resemblance to the elaborate dialogues of her characters.[739] An early twentieth-century newspaper article on Evans Wilson describes her as having, in the end, softened toward the Northerners she had once despised. Upon receiving the gift of a book dedicated to "The Women of the North and the South," she stated, "Ah, well! The women of the North as well as of the South are good and true."[740] Like her Upper South compatriot, toward whom she also softened, Evans Wilson seems to have attained an inner peace as she aged. By 1909, she realized that death was near and spoke of it as an expected, perhaps welcome, event. The event arrived suddenly on a spring day in 1909.

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[739] Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 82, 180.
[740] "Mrs. Wilson in War Times," 10 May, 1909, *Mobile Register*, p. 2.

In the end, Mary Virginia Terhune and Augusta Evans Wilson retained the values they had firmly embraced as young women: their evangelical faith, a romantic love for beauty and mystery, and a belief in the power of womanly influence. In this last they were bolstered by the continued popularity of their works. Having made their reputation in the 1850s, both authors retained their commercial success for the duration of their careers. In the case of Terhune, that success shifted from her fiction to her domestic advice books in the late nineteenth century, although her novels continued to sell well. She even won a measure of serious critical acclaim for two novels she published toward the end of the century, *Judith: A Chronicle of Old Virginia* (1883) and *His Great Self* (1892). The latter, her first work of historical fiction, was a starkly unsentimental portrait of the colonial planter William Byrd II. Works such as these won Terhune plaudits from such literary eminences as Thomas Nelson Page and Francis Pendleton Gaines.[741] Critics of Evans Wilson continued to excoriate her pedantic style and lack of realism, but in the 1880s the novelist won an intellectual champion of her own when classics scholar William S. Wyman of the University of Alabama argued that she was in fact depicting truth at its highest level, a transcendent realism far superior to the dull, photographic realism of the "literary ennuyé." Professor Wyman further asserted that the educated public, far more enlightened than the self-appointed guardians of high literature, loved

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[741] Page opined that Marion Harland was far superior to the popular women authors with whom she was often associated, including Evans Wilson, Caroline Hentz, and E.D.E.N. Southworth. Gaines commended Terhune's willingness to examine the darker aspects of plantation life, including slavery. Thomas Nelson Page, *The Old South* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), p. 88, and Francis Pendleton Gaines, *The Southern Plantation: A Study in the Development and the Accuracy of a Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 52, in Smith, "Marion Harland" (Ph.D. diss.), p. 474-475.

Evans Wilson's books precisely because they were "genuine romances of a very high order."[742]

The reading public may well have held the sentiments Wyman ascribed to it. Evans Wilson and Terhune did remain popular throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. A study of lending libraries, conducted in the last decade of that century, reveals an important difference in the nature of the two writers' popularity. Three of Evans Wilson's novels, *St. Elmo*, *Beulah*, and *Infelice*, appear in a listing of the hundred books most often loaned out by public libraries (at 49, 33, and 27 percent, respectively), while none of Terhune's books make the list. On the other hand, "Marion Harland" ranks thirty-fourth in a listing of the fifty most popular authors, a roster on which Evans Wilson's name does not appear.[743] Such data suggest that, while the prolific Terhune did not write any "blockbuster" books on the order of Evans Wilson's most popular novels, her many books enjoyed a steady, moderate popularity. The collection of a lending library, moreover, would probably not have included Terhune's hugely successful cookbooks, although it might well have contained the author's more general advice books such as *Eve's Daughters*.

If such evidence of ongoing popularity, and the steady income that accompanied it, was reassuring to the two novelists, it was the personal testimonies of readers that did the most to convince these literary champions of "influence" that, in doing well, they

[742] The article in which Wyman defended Evans Wilson was unsigned, but a thank you note Evans Wilson sent him, and a later, signed article, identifies him as the author. William S. Wyman, Tuscaloosa *Gazette*, 8 December, 1887, in Fidler, *Augusta Evans_Wilson*, 192-193.

[743] The percentages given for the most popular books refer to the proportion of participating libraries that listed this title among their one hundred most popular works. In other words, 49 percent of the libraries in the survey included *St. Elmo* among their top one hundred. The popularity of individual authors was calculated in the same way. The study was conducted by the publishing firm of J. Selwin Tait and Sons, who stated that they had included "all the important libraries in the United States" in their survey. Hamilton W. Mabie, "The Most Popular Novels in America," *Forum* XVI (December 1893), 508-510.

were also doing good. For Terhune, the encouragement began with her family, who took pleasure in her writing before she had achieved her reputation as a published novelist. Her father in particular had launched her career by publishing her "bantling" novel *Alone* at his own expense, proclaiming that he "believed" in it. Until his death in 1865 he was her most devoted reader, staying up all night to read each of his daughter's newest productions.[744] It was in gratitude for this support that Terhune dedicated her *Autobiography* to him. Terhune's siblings also enjoyed her writings and were delighted when they could recognize the real-life counterparts of her characters.[745] When Horace Hawes joined the Confederate army out of loyalty to Virginia, he inscribed a passage from *Alone*, a paean to his home state, in the pocket diary he carried with him.

The neophyte author also received heartening praise from established professionals in the literary field, including poet and editor George D. Prentice, humorist Fred Cozzins, and novelists Lydia Sigourney, Grace Greenwood, Anna Cora Mowatt Ritchie, and, most notably, Henry W. Longfellow. Longfellow wrote to Terhune twice and she especially treasured his first letter, in which he noted approvingly that the copy of *Alone* he had read (and passed along to his wife) was marked as the sixth edition. "That looks very like a guide-board pointing to Fame," he wrote. "I should think you would feel as does the traveler in the Tyrol who sees, at a turn in the rocky pass, a finger-post with the inscription – 'To Rome.'"[746]

The young novelist also received some curiously cranky backing from an unexpected quarter. Some three months after *Alone* had first arrived on the bookstands,

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744 Harland, *Autobiography*, 245, 251-253.
745 Ibid., 241-242.
746 Ibid., 263.

she received a letter, postmarked from Baltimore and signed "James Redpath," telling her that her book was full of faults and he detested both her politics and her theology. "All the same," he predicted, "you will make your mark upon the age. In the full persuasion of this, I write to pledge myself to do all in my power to forward your literary interests. . . . I have influence in more than one quarter, and you will hear from me again." The abolitionist journalist was as good as his word. Every week for months afterward, Redpath sent Terhune clippings of reviews he had published in newspapers across the country. Some were laudatory, others lamented that her fine talent should be perverted by her politics and theology, all drew attention to her work.

Only after five years did Terhune learn what had motivated her cantankerous benefactor. A brilliant émigré from Scotland, James Redpath (1833-1891) had achieved success as a journalist and critic, but a series of misfortunes embittered him and prompted him to adopt a nomadic life. In her autobiography, Terhune provides this account of how Redpath discovered her as an author. During a stay in Richmond, he had become so depressed that he had determined to shoot himself in Hollywood Cemetery, then a popular park. On his way there, however, he stopped off at Morris's bookstore and the proprietor, learning of his profession, gave him a copy of *Alone* to read. Redpath walked to the cemetery and settled down in a secluded corner with the book, postponing his suicide until sundown when the crowds had returned to town. By evening, he had arrived at Chapter 16, in which Lynn Holmes attempts to engage in a duel but is prevented by his friends. Holmes dies suddenly of a fever shortly afterward, but not before he has begun to pray. It was this passage, Redpath told Terhune, that had persuaded him to abandon

his plan of suicide and restored his religious faith. He then made a vow that he would publish one thousand notices of the book that had saved his life.

Terhune was touched by Redpath's generous promotion of her work and developed an affection for him (the two met on only one occasion, around 1874). With reason, however, she doubted his claim that her book had been the sole cause of his redemption. Persons intent on suicide ordinarily do not meander into bookstores, after all. Terhune suspected that "other influences . . . wrought upon the lonely exile during the still hours of that perfect autumn day" and that it had suited his "whim" to ascribe his change of heart to *Alone*.[747] It was, withal, a serious whim that could motivate such a dedicated ideological enemy to perform such a devoted act of friendship. Redpath's testimony shows that popular works of religious fiction could have a profound impact on their readers.

One promoter who was well aware of the potency of popular fiction was James Cephas Derby, the first major publisher of Terhune's as well as Evans Wilson's novels, and a personal friend of both women. The firm of Derby and Jackson, one of the most successful in the United States at the time, had a talent for identifying works that would be well received by the reading public, publishing them in handsome, well-crafted

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[747] In her *Autobiography*, Terhune writes that Redpath's story was also published in an "appreciative biographical sketch" written by a friend after his death. Redpath's own account of his travels in the "Slave States" makes no mention of Terhune or *Alone*, but indicates that he visited Richmond on each of his three trips south to "aid the slaves." He became familiar with Hollywood Cemetery on his first trip, when he was distressed to learn that deceased slaves were consigned to a separate "nigger burying ground." His second trip, in the autumn of 1854, coincides with the time of the incident described by Terhune (*Alone* was released in May of 1854), and he makes a vague reference to having read only a "volume of fiction" on the subject of the physical condition of the slaves, his main objective having been to learn their "feelings and aspirations. Harland, *Autobiography*, 264-268; James Redpath, *The Roving Editor: or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* (New York: A.B. Burdick, 1859, reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 1, 3, 299-300 (page citations are identical in the original and reprint editions).

volumes, and advertising them effectively.[748] Derby published accounts of his contacts with both novelists, as well as information about their publishing careers, in a long (728 pages) account of his publishing career entitled *Fifty Years Among Authors, Books and Publishers* (1884). In a 5-page section devoted to Terhune, he described her career as "an uninterrupted success," noting that her novels had been published abroad in England and Germany.[749] He also quoted from a letter written him by actress and author Anna Cora Ritchie, lauding *A Hidden Path* as both a regional and national achievement:

> . . . let Virginia produce a few more such writers, and the cry that the South has no literature is silenced forever! 'The Hidden Path' is a work that North or South, East or West, may point to with the finger of honest pride, and say *our daughter* sends this message to the world – pours this balm into wounded hearts – traces for wavering, erring, [sic] feet this "Hidden Path," which leads to the great goal of eternal peace.[750]

Derby devoted more attention (eleven pages) to Evans Wilson, whom he admired for her high intelligence and personal charm. Acknowledging that her writings were often considered pedantic, he nevertheless avowed, "Anyone who has had the opportunity of engaging in conversation with this brilliant and learned writer will bear me out in saying that she is anything but pedantic. She never makes an unseemly show of learning, and it is characteristic in her to talk away from herself."[751] Derby provides some information about the reasons Evans Wilson had to believe that her writing, erudite references and all, had a favorable influence upon her readers despite the jeers she endured from critics. She wrote Derby that on several occasions while traveling by train

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[748] Newspaper clipping, n.d., n.p., in Mary Virginia Terhune Papers, Duke.
[749] Derby mentions the "Tauchnitz series of English novels" published in "Leipzic" (sic) between 1841 and 1943. *A Hidden Path* was also published in Leipzig as part of the Alphonse Dürr series. Derby, *Fifty Years Among Authors*, 564.
[750] Ibid., 565.
[751] Ibid. 396

over the past twenty years, she had overheard strangers discussing her books and what they knew about her person.

> . . . and listening to all of these I have never yet heard a harsh criticism or an unkind word. Once a lady remarked that the newspaper stated that I had restricted my studies to encyclopedias and dictionaries, but she doubted it, because there were some things in 'St. Elmo' and 'Macaria' which could not be found in any cyclopedia, and she had searched many.
>
> You can imagine how I enjoyed this, from the fact that at the moment I did not own a solitary cyclopedia, but soon after purchased of you Appleton's – the first cyclopedia I ever owned.

Evans Wilson also wrote Derby that she had derived much happiness from letters received by two men, one in Europe and another in America, who had written to tell her that her novels had converted them from lives of "vice and infidelity" (an obituary of Evans Wilson raises this number to six). They and their families regularly prayed for her. Evans Wilson added that she took great comfort in the influence she had over American youth. Numerous young people from across the country had written to ask her for directions in their studies, and in choice of reading materials.[752]

Based on the statements they heard, or overheard, and the letters they received, both Terhune and Evans Wilson had reason to believe that their writing had a significant impact on the lives of their readers. These were, of course, readers who largely shared in the romantic values and aesthetic tastes of their authors, who inhabited the same semi-enchanted interior landscape. One of Terhune's correspondents enthused over her works in as purple a prose as ever flowed from the pen of Evans Wilson: "I always read with romantic feeling and all the enthusiastic sensibility of genius, those miscellaneous

[752] Derby, *Fifty Years Among Authors*, 396-397, 399; "Mrs. Wilson in War Times," 10 May, 1909, *Mobile Register*, 2.

effusions which gem with a dew-rosed shower of aureolas the galaxy of letters and throw a drapery and charm over the elysian fields and starry realms of fairy dream-land." This writer, who lived in Halifax County, North Carolina, assured Terhune that her works had "an extensive circulation" and were read "with great avidity and delight" in that area.[753]

During the Civil War and afterward, however, that romantic sensibility faded even among the evangelicals who had been among its chief purveyors, while American society as a whole took on a more secular as well as a more pragmatic cast.[754] Protestant Christianity in the late nineteenth century faced new intellectual challenges, primarily over the implications of Darwinian evolution and the influence of German "higher criticism" on biblical studies.[755] Neither Terhune nor Evans Wilson actively addressed these issues, although Evans Wilson did argue against Darwinism in *Infelice*. It was possible, during these years, for the majority of believers to ignore the intellectual battles over the nature of the Christian religion, and to concentrate on good works (more needed than ever in the age of rapid immigration and urban growth) and evangelism. The crisis grew slowly, and would not come to a head until the 1920s when the mainstream Protestant churches would splinter into "fundamentalist" and "liberal" camps. By then, both Terhune and Evans Wilson were dead.

Yet, if the intellectual rift was long in coming, the cultural shift was both earlier and broader in its effects. The champions of hidden heroism and women's influence

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[753] Granville S.P. Brown, M.D., to Mary Virginia Hawes (Terhune), 4 August, 1856, in Mary Virginia Hawes, "Diary," p. 257 of typed transcript.

[754] One indication of this trend is the change in the character of the New York *World*, the paper started by Evans Wilson's former fiancé James Reed Spalding. Spalding had intended the paper to be a champion of Christian orthodoxy, but in 1863 the *World* jettisoned its religious identity entirely in order to recover from its financial difficulties. Spalding switched to the *New York Times*, and the *World* eventually gained a reputation for sensationalism. Derby, *Fifty Years Among Authors*, 392.

[755] Higher criticism, a new school of biblical scholarship that originated in Germany, applied secular methods of textual analysis to the Christian scriptures.

were losing influence over the society as a whole, even while they continued to inspire individuals. Many of the next generation shed the romantic, magical vision and the domestic ideology that was entwined with it. By the early twentieth century, it had virtually disappeared and fairy-land was reduced to a childish fantasy.

In the case of Terhune, this generation gap appeared in her own family, although she does not seem to have realized how deep it was. The rift was widest in her relationship with her son Albert Payson Terhune, a blunt, hearty, talented man who was strangely divided within himself. "Bert" became a successful journalist and writer of popular dog stories, but always regretted that he had not become a literary writer. A heavy drinker and former boxer, he boasted of the adulterous liaisons of his youth but was also deeply in love with his wife Anice. A church-goer who had written about his faith, he reveled in his contempt for Christian doctrines and morality. He could wax lyrical about the beauties of Nature and the joys of friendship with small animals, and he could spout humorous profanities with equal gusto.

Bert Terhune was torn between love and hatred for his mother and her Christianity, an ambivalence he revealed in his letters to his closest friend, his nephew and Belle's son Frederick Fritz Van de Water. In one of his last letters to Fritz, Bert, then dying of throat cancer, described his wandering thoughts after he had forced himself to attend church with his wife:

> . . . to stay awake I figured out the kind of sermon <u>I</u> would have preached. And the only texts that would come to my memory were "I am a like a pelican in the wilderness, I am like an owl in the desert (Psalm 102; Verse 61) and "I am like a sparrow alone on a housetop" (Psalm 102; Verse 7). And I couldn't remember seeing a sparrow <u>alone</u> on a housetop or even a wire. Always there were <u>two</u> of them and they were fornicating . . . and I yanked myself back to the holy occasion and wished to kick myself in the

> semi-useless urino-genitals for carrying such thought into the House of God. And I went further, by wondering why . . . I could not fill my mind, at church, with sweeter and nobler thoughts; and why, at all times I can't feel humbler and smugger and more cringing; or pin a saintly look on my ugly face and saintly thoughts in my alleged mind. And on the way out, I yearned to make simian faces at the gentle and kindly neighbors who gazed on me so pityingly. On the level, Fritz, "I fear I am not in my perfect mind."[756]

For Bert Terhune and his generation, the romantic evangelical vision had shrunk to a pinpoint.

[756] Albert Payson Terhune to Frederick Fritz Van de Water, 14 July, 1940, Albert Payson Terhune Papers, Rutgers.

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