2009-01-01

Rival Radical Feminists--Frances Willard and Ida B. Wells: The Rhetorical Slugfest of Two Nineteenth-Century Queen Bees Over Lynching

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RIVAL RADICAL FEMINISTS—
FRANCES WILLARD AND IDA B. WELLS:
THE RHETORICAL SLUGFEST OF TWO
NINETEENTH-CENTURY QUEEN BEES OVER LYNCHING

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FRANCES WILLARD AND IDA B. WELLS:
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NINETEENTH-CENTURY QUEEN BEES OVER LYNCHING

By

ANITA AUGUST

DISSERTATION

Presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
AUGUST 2009
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have evolved without the guidance, care, and mentoring of Dr. Elaine Fredericksen. During the course of my professional and academic career at UTEP, Dr. Fredericksen and I have morphed not only into colleagues, but also into friends. She has never doubted my scholarship and contribution to the discipline I so love—Feminist(s) Rhetoric(s) Historiography. Without the commitment and faith in my potential as a scholar, this project would have remained a vision lacking the intellectual encouragement and counseling of Dr. Fredericksen. Her faith in my scholarly potential is the reason why this project was accomplished.

Dr. Beth Brunk-Chavez was invaluable in helping me comprehend the gender and racial complexities of the nineteenth-century. In fact, she illuminated the social, political, and cultural trauma that Frances Willard and Ida B. Wells experienced in the nineteenth-century. Her scholarly intelligence of the nineteenth-century was an essential aspect of my interest in feminist(s) rhetoric(s), and without her knowledge, it would have been impossible to suggest a new “rhetorical feminist” orthodoxy for viewing the Reconstruction Era.

Dr. Irasema Coronado was critical to this project because of her knowledge and commitment to social justice, and her broad scholarship of political science and its relation to the lived experience. She told me that scholarship circulates and is a dynamic process—that I should consider what I want scholars behind me to walk away with. Her message was not lost. In fact, it strengthened me during the long gestation of this project.

Dr. Helen Foster was also a major force in my scholarly development. She encouraged me to “Th!nk B!gger”—a challenge I keep posted on my computer that I hope is expressed in this project. Her guidance as a mentor and her example as an activist scholar always renewed me
in moments of confusion and distress.

Dr. Kate Mangelsdorf was actively involved with my admission to the Rhetoric and Writing Studies program. Her invisible support throughout the years during my graduate coursework and the writing of this project helped me to focus on the goal that she believed, from the beginning, I was capable of accomplishing.

As cohorts, Héctor “X” Carbajal and Cristina D. Ramirez were invaluable. How do you, at this stage, say thank you without being sentimental? It is because of these two—my brother and sister—that I discovered how transformational rhetoric is.

Fellow cohorts and graduate students Lucia Dura, Robert Tinajero, Myshie Pagel, Dr. Brian McNely, Nikki Aggee, and Shawn Miller assumed higher roles than they realized. Their questions in class were essential to the writing of this project, which made mine more focused.

Myriam Kadri-Ramirez was a friend throughout my graduate studies and remained one both during the conception and writing of this project. She reminded me to stay balanced and urged me to create even during moments of disillusion to emancipate my ideas. It worked!

Kev, my life partner, supplied mental relief, laughter, and soulful intimacy in ways that the structure of language cannot articulate. What philosophy can you assign to Old School Love? Simply put, he was there—this fact only surfaces at the end.

Taylor and Dylan Marie—my beauties—are cool—there is simply no other way to describe them. Their births have contributed significantly to the texture of my humanity. It is highly unlikely that any theory or methodology will convenience me otherwise.

I say thanks to all of you!
ABSTRACT

*Rival Radical Feminists* considers the role of gender and race as master status determining traits and examines them as influential social markers of identity and representation within a nineteenth-century feminist social movement (FSM)—the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). *Rival Radical Feminists* examines how, within a FSM where gender issues understandably govern the political narrative that the philosophical core of the movement shifts into separate and competing spheres when gender issues intersect with racial prejudice? Specifically, *Rival Radical Feminists* argues that when both political actors are female, with one circumscribed politically by her gender, like Willard, and the other by both her race and her gender, like Wells, issues of power and conflict over these master status positions vie for rhetorical and ideological dominance within a FSM. Further inquiries are: Which identity representation dominates? Why? What are the historical, political, and social conditions that allow such transformation? How do they influence the geographical, political, economic, and social locations for women, both black and white, within the private and public sphere, then and now? Finally, what are the circumstances, which allow some marginal groups membership into the political culture while refusing other marginal groups access?

*Rival Radical Feminists* draws from several scholarly domains to examine a constellation of issues surrounding the rhetoric of Willard and Wells over lynching. For example, it explores the Reconstruction Era and the Reconstruction Amendments (13th, 14th, and 15th) to interconnect and situate the robust (re) representation of white women and free black women before, during, and after the Civil War to gain citizenship. *Rival Radical Feminists* evaluates theories of identity politics, critical race theory, geographies of space, feminist social movement rhetoric, and visual rhetoric to assess the perspective of gender and race. Finally, *Rival Radical Feminists* examines
ethics, morality, religion, and nineteenth-century feminist activism to analyze and provide incisive rhetorical inquiry into the transformation of *becoming* for women as America shifted from slavery to a post-slavery nation.
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CHAPTER 1

Understanding the Oratorical Legacy of Reconstruction in the Rhetoric of Frances Willard and Ida B. Wells

But where one considers different historical characters from the standpoint of a total development, one could encourage each character to comment upon the others without thereby sacrificing a perspective upon the lot. This could be got particularly, I think, if historical characters themselves (i.e., periods or cultures treated as “individual persons”) were considered never to begin or end, but rather to change in intensity or poignancy.


During the nineteenth-century, a strong feminist social movement (FSM) challenged the cultural, social, and political forces. For instance, as the progressive president of the most prominent and dominant FSM, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), Frances Willard made woman’s suffrage a central tenet. She also recognized that the inclusion of black women to the organization would greatly boost the cultural drift (Eggan) of the nation, now that it was unified over the issue of slavery, despite the devastating losses of the Civil War\(^1\). However, Willard’s revolutionary decision to include black women in the WCTU would have to confront the social distance that black women and white women experienced in the larger society. Anti-lynching crusader and orator, Ida B. Wells, would emphasize Willard’s moral paradox over lynching as an active and vocal member of the WCTU.

Additionally, as white and black women moved into patriarchal domains, they received increased resistance from males, both white and black, against the new social practices, which ran counter to social and cultural restrictions on women who move outside the domestic sphere. Although Willard was a progressive thinker and religious reformist, the massive changes in black

representation perhaps overwhelmed even her non-coercive rhetorical style. However, as a young anti-lynching orator and WCTU member twenty-two years younger, Wells’ coercive approach to Willard’s position on lynching illuminated how members of dominant groups, despite their alleged liberal moral and political stance adapt to the complex challenges of cultural inclusion demanded by previously oppressed groups.

In this first chapter, I will examine identity politics in Willard and Wells within the political culture\(^2\) of the Reconstruction Era and the women’s political culture\(^3\) within the WCTU. The contentious coalition struggle for empowerment through citizenship united white women and free black women, though at the expense of black women’s agency within the WCTU who struggled with both their race and gender representations. However, for white women, gender issues, enshrined in the cult of domesticity, were trumped by the politics of race when black men were enfranchised by the Fourteenth Amendment—a right many white women felt they deserved after their service during the Civil War. This chapter provides a typological examination of Willard’s and Well’s conflict over lynching through a rhetorical interpretation of citizenship in relation to the oratorical legacy of Reconstruction, which constructed their identity not only as women within a transforming America, but also as sociopolitical actors within a FSM. This chapter argues that Willard’s and Well’s rhetorical rivalry over the politics and ethics of lynching was unavoidably influenced by the oratorical shift in the nineteenth-century from a collective to individual morality. Further, with Willard circumscribed politically by her gender and Wells by both her race and her gender, this chapter will consider the role of gender and race as “master status determining traits” (Hughes 357) and examine them as influential social markers of


The rhetorical culture of the nineteenth-century was radically changed by the politics of identity\textsuperscript{4}, which was deeply influenced by the Reconstruction Era, a time of immense evolutionary shift in the political and social consciousness of America. Indeed, Gregory Clark and Michael S. Halloran believe identity reformation was related to the shift in “[oratorical] culture [which] was transformed by an emerging individualistic spirit that, in diverse social and institutional forms, challenged the traditional principle of collective moral authority by establishing as a new principle the moral authority of the individual” (3). No-where would this new ideology\textsuperscript{5} of the self express itself more clearly, and particularly in white women and free black women, than in nineteenth-century feminist social movements (FSM) like the WCTU, an organization also challenged and changed by the transforming ambiguities of the Reconstruction Era.

For Willard and Wells, bringing awareness and countering conventional and long-established attitudes toward gender and race were principles upon which their activist and civic rhetoric was based. Yet, despite their individual conceptions of these influential sociopolitical markers of identity and representation, neither women was stifled by these conceptions in her rhetoric given the denial of legal, civil, political, and social rights—in short, power. According to Michel Foucault, this subordination of the individual by the state is more than an extended footnote of the state’s authority. Rather, it is a marker of subjugation heavily influenced by a harmonious relation with hegemony that “imposes a law of truth on him which he must

\textsuperscript{4} I am referring to gender, race, class, sexuality or any socially recognized identity, which is brought to the foreground and creates attitudes that displace a subject and generates political, social, and/or economic inequalities.

\textsuperscript{5} I am relying upon Althusser’s notion of ideology, which argues that a system of beliefs is engraved in the subject and influences her views in the political culture. Also, ideologies are used to subjugate subjects as well.
recognize and which others have to recognize in him” (781). Foucault’s radical mode of inquiry further intimates a duality in the subject that restricts and terrorizes a subject’s tendency for self-definition arguing, “It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects” (781).

However, in *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics* Sidney Tarrow contends that the question of agency, any action that the sociopolitical actor takes to undo hegemonic power, becomes avoidable. Further, he asserts agitation is not performed in an essentially individual space; rather, it involves multiple agents of change also shaped by the same invention discourses of power systems who want to resist under the umbrella of a social movement. Tarrow writes,

[. . .] people engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change and then, by strategically employing a repertoire of collection action, create new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention. When their struggles revolve around broad cleavages in society, when they bring people together around inherited cultural symbols, and when they can build on or construct dense social networks and connective structures, then these episodes of contention result in sustained interactions with opponents—specifically, in social movements (19).

Wells’ lack of agency within the larger population and the popular FSM was the rhetorical foundation upon which she built her criticism of Willard’s ideological endorsement of lynching black men. Indeed, in Wells’ mind, Willard’s reticence to speak out definitively and publicly against lynching signified her allegiance to the ideology of the Southern Conservatives who believed “True [White] Womanhood” needed defense from the preying sexual urges of black men. Central to Well’s rhetorical strategy was to place emphasis on the WCTU’s and Willard’s
Christian morality—the ethical structure of both the organization’s and Willard’s rhetoric. From Well’s perspective, as expressed in *On Lynchings*, the WCTU and Willard like “the Antebellum south and the New South” were “wedded to any method […] for the subjugation of the young manhood of the race” which included “murdering, burning and lynching” (47) as exchange for protection of “True [White] Womanhood” wholesomeness and propriety. Wells’ criticism of the WCTU’s moral standards, but particularly of Willard’s Christian morals and ethics, echoes Clark’s and Halloran’s position that “every individual has a natural right to *freedom of conscience and action*” (11). Therefore, Wells would publicly press Willard to expose the genuine meaning of her comments, which for Wells were neither neutral nor contradictory on Willard’s connection of race, lynching, and politics.

By conceptualizing Willard’s position on lynching as a moral paradox, Wells created discord within the WCTU by criticizing and challenging the admired Willard’s ideology. Like many abolitionists, Willard’s rhetoric was interwoven with the reformist idealism of Methodism—a revivalist theology of the Second Great Awakening (1780-1830), which advocated societal change a responsibility of religious institutions as much the political system for the development of a just society. In this respect, Willard’s and Well’s challenges to their lack of authorial presence in the private and public spheres no doubt stimulated their oratory as social and political actors as Methodists. However, if we take a rhetorical interpretation of the legacy of Reconstruction politics, we will see that it also animated the leading question of the nineteenth-century for white women and free black women—citizenship. In fact, challenges to their disempowered subject status were focused on, as Clark and Halloran have claimed, “a rejection of traditional institutional authority” (11). Thus, Willard’s and Wells’s counter-

6 Emphasis is mine.
discourse not only critiqued the privileges of free citizens—it also questioned the parity and egalitarian nature of citizenship, which was bound to their lack of agency.

Constructing and Addressing the “Woman Question” and the “Race Question” in Willard’s and Well’s Consciousness-Raising Rhetoric

The “Woman Question” in American political culture has always been a topic of conversation, debate, and conflict in the social order. While patriarchal conceptions of women have historically fixed them in a political and socially disenfranchised location, it is the dynamic intersubjectivity between the woman question and race question that has produced the most vibrant counter discourses on the patriarchal representation of women. For instance, societal beliefs, myths, and traditions that regulate and institutionalize the cultural production and human value of women in both the private and public sphere work hand-in-hand to stress and reinforce the location of women in the social structure. Yet, despite the shifting rhetorical interpretations to individualism in the nineteenth-century, there were no exceptions to the patriarchal dimensions of women’s representation. Therefore, women created their own guides to sociopolitical criticism as a mode for social change, which according to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “might be called a feminine style to cope with the conflicting demands of the podium” (12). For example, she notes, “Audience members will be addressed as peers, with recognition of authority on experience [. . .] and efforts will be made to create identification with the experiences of the audience and those described by the speaker” (13). She argues, “The goal of such rhetoric is empowerment “(13) and by violating traditional conventions of elocution in her speech and discursive practices, the feminine speaker is no longer isolated from her audience. Therefore, Campbell maintains, “consciousness-raising is an attractive communication style to people working for social change” (13) given old rhetorical structures break down between the speaker and her audience. For Campbell, the feminine style of consciousness-raising to counter the
masculine view as the scale for an effective rhetor was revolutionary since she posits “the very act of speaking publicly violated concepts of womanhood” (14), which were also under vigorous debate in the nineteenth-century.

Likewise, for Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L Griffin, feminist rhetors develop distinctive rhetorical strategies with regard to their gender, and counter to patriarchal rhetorical practices to define and critique the social order from a feminine perspective. In agreement with Campbell, Foss and Griffin, believe inclusion rather than exclusion opens discourse between the audience and the rhetor to provide meaningful interaction. For Foss and Griffin that is an invitational rhetoric, which they define as “an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination” (5). They go on to say that by blurring the boundaries between the rhetor and the audience offers “an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor’s world and to see it as the rhetor does” (5) thereby establishing a space for a shared perspective. For Foss and Griffin, then, with an invitational rhetoric neither frame of reference liberates one perception over the other; since the overall objective is collective interest over individual pursuits. They argue “in presenting a particular perspective, the invitational rhetor does not judge or denigrate other’s perspectives but is open to and tries to appreciate and validate those perspectives, even [I argue when] they differ dramatically from the rhetor’s own” (5). This is particularly true on issues of gender and race when these representations are used to suppress agents in a specific location that excludes them from the sociopolitical order.

To Barbara Welter, patriarchal feminist norms are characterized in the prescriptive and totalizing representation of “True Womanhood” ideology, which she writes “[. . .] could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity” (152) and, like slavery had its philosophical roots in religious systems—namely, Christianity. Indeed, the
historical social and cultural influences that impose this uniform identity construction on women has consistently been refused given that neither political nor social cultures are static. They transform in distinct directions, more ideologically grounded than before, though in unmarked rhetorical territory to embody an explicit sociopolitical crisis, such as woman’s rights and the abolition of slavery—both articulated in the same ethical and moral discourse—Christianity—which used theological rhetoric to legitimatize their subjugation as noncitizens. For example, during the nineteenth-century religion’s appeal in the public’s imagination offered a moral coherence to the contradictions in the separate spheres ideology. However, as women illuminated the incongruities in the Bible regarding their social and cultural treatment their political consciousness was also raised, which enlivened the rhetorical approach of their social protest.

The key rhetorical canons sociopolitical actors like Willard and Wells used for consciousness-raising were the third and fifth—style and delivery. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle argues one cannot dominate the other in rhetorical expression. For Aristotle, they both involve approaches that inform one another, and although there are oratorical provinces where they converge, it is the orator’s unique expression in a stylistic manner, which attributes to the delivery of the speech and creates an invigorating process of method (style) and mode (delivery). “For it is not sufficient to have a grasp of what one should say,” Aristotle maintains “but one must also say these things in the way that one should, and this makes a great contribution to the character that the speech projects” (1404A). Although Aristotle admits both canons have their deepest roots in the arts; he nonetheless cautions rhetors against an overdetermined reliance on style and delivery to convey their arguments. He goes on to say “Justice requires contention from the facts themselves, so that all other aspects apart from demonstration are ancillary”
For both Willard and Wells, justice—that is, impartiality in rights, privileges, and benefits—would have direct and particular significance in their personal and professional lives not only as women, but also as professional orators. Therefore, it is worth synthesizing Willard’s and Well’s stunning and unabashed belief in the redemptive quality of the law’s inherent integrity to perform its Constitutional function although legally in the sociopolitical culture, both Willard and Wells were virtually invisible as a woman and as a woman and a black. For example, in 1889, when Wells divided her time between the feminine profession of teaching and the analytical, and one can argue, masculine profession of journalism, her identity as a sociopolitical actor was being groomed. Indeed, not only did Wells come to voice in relation to her marginalized status as a woman, but more profoundly—as a black woman.

Indeed, after the revolutionary act of suing the Chesapeake, Ohio & Southwestern Railroad for forcibly removing her from a first-class car after she refused to sit in a segregated section, the “Race Question” for Wells began to assume even greater privilege than the dynamics of being a woman. Her judicial knowledge of citizenship, rights, and liberty developed from her defeat of the Chesapeake, Ohio & Southwestern railroad, which went to the Supreme Court. Commenting on the Court’s decision, Wells observes in *Crusade for Justice*, her autobiography, that,

The gist of that decision was that Negroes were not wards of the nation but citizens of the individual states, and should therefore appeal to the state courts for justice instead of to the federal court. The success of my case would have set a precedent which others [blacks that is] would doubtless have followed. In this, as in so many other matters, the South wanted the Civil Rights Bill repealed but
did not want or intend to give justice to the Negro after robbing him of all sources from which to secure it. (20)

Ideologies used to subjugate women were, in a sense, the mirror image of the ideological and philosophical nature of slave subjugation and domination. Therefore, like Wells, Willard was all too familiar with her limited citizenship, though as a white woman. From this marginal boundary, Willard, like Wells, developed a lively social politic, which closely examined the affairs of women and the consequences of women’s marginal status. Although Willard understood her full prescription and threat under the law as a woman, and understood women’s different legal composition under it compared to men, Willard framed her consciousness-raising rhetoric around theological conceptions of morality first, and the law second. However, Wells, as a woman and a black understood how deeply unprotected she was by the legal system, so she voiced her consciousness-raising rhetoric around interpretations of the law first, and theological conceptions second.

On the other hand, Willard, as an influential orator, reflected on her role as a woman in every endeavor that she engaged to illuminate the innumerable possibilities awaiting women outside the cult of domesticity. For example, while learning to ride the bicycle at the age of fifty-three, Willard joined that task with a theological influence to analyze the impact that women’s social hindrance had on their ideological and sociological capacity to flourish. “If I am asked to explain why I learned the bicycle I should say I did it as an act of grace, if not actual religion” (72). Although Willard acknowledges the health benefits of riding the bicycle, she admits her new venture was not based on purely health needs. Indeed, it emerged from the “Woman Question,” which was prominently featured in her rhetoric throughout her life. Willard says

I also wanted to help women to a wider world, for I hold that the more interests
women and men can have in common, in thought, word, and deed, the happier will it be for the home. Besides, there was a special value to women in the conquest of the bicycle by a woman in her fifty-third year, and one who had so many comrades in the white-ribbon army that her action would be widely influential. (73)

In the final part of her essay, Willard articulates in more detail that bicycle riding is not only a healthy lifestyle choice, but a consciousness-raising act based on self-empowerment, pointing out,

I did it from pure natural love of adventure—a love long hampered and impeded, like a brook that runs underground, but in this enterprise bubbling up again with somewhat of its pristine freshness and taking its merry course as of old.

Second, from a love of acquiring this new implement of power and literally putting it underfoot.

Last, but not least, because a good many people thought I could not do it at my age. (73)

While both Willard and Wells were deprived of the total vision of citizenship articulated in the Declaration of Independence and attempted to disable institutions they saw as hostile and complicit in their isolation by their consciousness-raising rhetoric. Although risky, it can be argued religion played a more prominent role in stripping Willard of her social and political rights, and the law played a crucial role in disabling Wells’s capacity to participate in the socio-political order given the tone and agenda of each orator’s consciousness-raising rhetoric. Indeed, for both Willard and Wells, what emerged from their identity paradoxes as a woman and as a
black and a woman, were ontological narratives of self—that is, narratives about the nature of being as each interpreted it. In linking the symbiotic discourses of gender and race to citizenship, both women were in a judicial and theological dispute over their location within the sociopolitical culture, which structured their being around prescriptive norms, values, and symbols. By asserting their constructed conceptions of identity in cultural dressing, Willard and Wells also disputed the patriarchal influences and visions of their representation. In doing so, they consistently illuminated the limitations of patriarchal definitions in comparison to their constructions of identity.

In “America’s Racial-Ethnic Cultures: Opposition Within a Mythical Melting Pot,” Bonnie L. Mitchell and Joe R. Feagin note that by engaging in a culture of resistance or oppositional culture, marginalized groups in response to the loss of social and political rights, privileges, and benefits will,

[…] preserve dignity and autonomy, to provide an alternative construction of identity (one not based entirely on deprivation), and to give members of the dominant group an insightful critique of their own culture. From this perspective, members of oppressed subordinate groups are not powerless pawns that merely react to circumstances beyond their control, but rather are reflective, creative agents that construct a separate reality in which to survive. (69)

Although Mitchell and Feagin illustrate the special significance of preserving essential aspects of cultural legacy, they do not attach importance to the invisibility and seeming indifference of the power dynamic of political systems and its interplay in relation to these deeply embedded cultural markers of identity, which are also complicit in the subject’s discipline in the social order. Further, they take no notice of these cultural institutions of disciplinary power as
normalizing agents on the subject to acquiesce willingly to its non-coercive authority, as opposed to the seemingly coercive force of political institutions or what Foucault calls, the “rituals of truth” masked as knowledge (*Discipline and Punish* 194). However, they cogently point out that these cultural artifacts serve as a pretext for reform by the social order when they come in contact with and/or misinterpret and/or ignore pronounced sociopolitical ideology, which identifies, contains, and limits subordinate groups in their difference. Mitchell and Feagin explain that:

> While maintaining strong links with the past, all cultures are in a constant process of reformation in response to pressures of the context in which they operate. These cultures of resistance retain some precontact elements, most noticeably in their systems of meaning and in subtle aspects of appropriate interpersonal interaction. At the same time, they alter the usage of elements of the larger culture to conform to their specific attitudes toward themselves and their world. (70)

In spite of such opposition, Mitchell and Feagin conclude that various approaches to structural and material changes will occur to counter “the interplay of these forces and the ensuing conflicts and diverse formulations of racial [ . . . ] ethnic [and women’s] cultures” thereby to “provide the wealth of lived experience from which social change continues to emerge” (70). Willard’s and Wells’s identity in the social order as a gendered and/or racialized noncitizens nourished their consciousness-raising campaigns, which enabled them to revolt against sociopolitical forces. Their subordinated status as a woman and as a black and a woman also informed and shaped their polemic over the ethics, morality, and legality of lynching.
Material Bodies and the Economic Politics of Lynching

In the nineteenth-century, white women’s and black men’s and women’s bodies were legally defined and judicially argued in rhetoric with economic and political content, influences, and consequences. Although lynching made no economic sense to slave-owners, given that the bodies of slaves were a valuable commodity, it was not unheard of lynching slaves for trivial infractions (Dray 2003), albeit this form of corporeal punishment was infrequent. However, for Wells, the interconnection between the material body of the slave and its economic worth was apparent and she argues, significantly united to the agency of the slave and the politics of lynching (Allen et al. 2000). That is, one could destroy the spirit—but not the physical body, because as Wells notes, it was “too valuable” (Red Record 5). By breaking the unity of the spirit and its relation to the body, an opposition is created between these two spheres of consciousness in the slave to disrupt any urge for identity. That is, any convincing argument a slave could conjure to justify their humanity would be disabused by a conflict between the body and mind. As Wells points out, “the Southern white man owned the Negro body and soul” and she concludes, “It was to his interest to dwarf the soul and preserve the body (Red Record 5).

Immediately following the Civil War, a rise in black lynchings increased exponentially. Indeed, writes Jacqueline Jones Royster, “during the post-Civil War era, lynching and other acts of mob violence against African Americans [. . .] steadily increased, with the first peak occurring in 1892” (9). Royster quotes Wells’s statistics in the Red Record when Blacks were targeted more than other racial groups for lynching, and particularly blacks in the South and she concludes that “a distinctive shift occurred” (10). For Wells, the rapid advance in black lynching was directly related to the rise of black prestige and economic achievements into the social order during the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877), which played a pivotal role in racial uplift. Given
these intertwining facts, Wells argues “a new system of intimidation came into vogue” (*Red Record* 5) to obstruct the brisk progress of black social and economic mobility:—lynching.

Indeed, Wells’s analysis of lynching became part of her rhetoric in the black-owned and progressive newspaper, *Free Speech*, in which she partly shared ownership. Believing the law’s view and response to the increased lynchings was negligible and unlawful; Wells skillfully removed the romantic notions of American society in her *Free Speech* editorials by sharply contrasting this dominant view under a moral canopy with the lived reality of black life. For Robert S. Cathcart, when the vision of a society collides with a lack of moral response to one of the most fundamental ideologies of the social structure, such as equality, challenges to the national ideals will occur. For Cathcart, “[…] confrontational rhetoric occurs only in special and limited circumstances, such as periods of societal breakdown or when moral underpinnings are called into question” (104) to signify, with rhetorical force, an absence of ethics within the sociopolitical structure. Cathcart argues that confrontational rhetoric is not unpatriotic. In contrast, he maintains, it is provocative discourse, that threatens not the balance of the sociopolitical order, but seeks to constrain conflicting and exploitative ideologies that frustrate the moral ambition of the political culture. He says, “It is this confrontational aspect—the questioning of the basic values and societal norms—that makes true movements a real threat that cannot be explained away as a temporary malfunction of the system or as the conspiratorial work of a handful of fanatics” (104). Further, Cathcart maintains that agitation as a critical approach to restore and perhaps clarify and reshape social order is necessary in times of sociopolitical unrest.

By 1892, the task of arousing outrage over lynching had become acutely personal for Wells. Thus, her identity as a confrontational rhetorician was radically transformed from
American agitator to international anti-lynching orator. For some scholars, The Lynching at the Curve in Memphis of three black men—Calvin McDowell, Henry Stewart, and especially Wells’ close friend, Thomas Moss, cast Wells into extreme absorption of her anti-lynching crusade, which was resistant to and opposed any discourse—legal or moral—that might reveal non-action and/or a silent bias toward the ideology behind lynching. Believing Memphis was safe prior to the lynching of McDowell, Stewart, and Moss, Wells wrote their murders “[. . .] opened my eyes to what lynching was really about,” this event confirmed her earlier theorizing that lynching largely aimed to suppress the economic advances of blacks. That is, she maintains, lynching provided an “An excuse to get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property” *(Crusade* 64). Wells, like many blacks, shared a collective vulnerability and felt equally victimized with each death attributed to lynching. As such, the increased intensity and dimension of Well’s confrontational rhetoric after the Lynching at the Curve clearly illustrates Cathcart’s point, which posits,

> Through confrontation the seekers of change (the victims) experience a conversion wherein they recognize their own guilt, transcend the faulty order and acquire a new perspective. This “symbolic rejection of the existing order is a purgative act of transformation and transcendence. It affirms the commitment of the converted to the movement—to the new understanding . . . and hence it endows them with a new condition ‘substance’—with a new identity, a new unity, a new motive. (107)

Wells’ identity as a black and as a woman had become politicized with the increase in lynchings. In terms of this issue, she was shaped by her race more than her gender—that is, her chances of being lynched were more distinctly related to her race than her gender. Further, she knew the
dynamics and consequences of her vocal anti-lynching campaign made her a target as well\(^7\).

Already deeply disenchanted with the legal non-action in America over lynching, Wells needed new tactical response. Therefore, Wells contextualized lynching under a religious morality—and particularly under Methodism—a social reformist faith of which both she and Willard were lifelong converts and active members. Believing moral outrage would perhaps lead to federal defense, Wells’s confrontational rhetoric bridged Christian evangelicalism to politics. By mapping the political act of lynching to a lack of Christian morality, which she believed as a Second Awakening Methodist was not separate and distinct from one’s politics, Wells problematized the nature of Christian morality and its relation to the progressive notion of woman and black citizenship. In the end, Wells firmly perceived politics as having a distinctly religious component—a conception that would shape and create rhetorical stress among her, the WCTU, and Willard.

Willard was an inspiring woman—in the WCTU, America, and the United Kingdom. Her significance as an inspirational and rousing orator for women’s including women of color, and human rights should not go unnoticed given the comprehensive political, social, and economic collapse of civil and legal rights in the nineteenth-century for these marginalized groups. Given this fact, the central approach for Willard’s social reformism was whole—both the private and public sphere contributed substantially to the disintegration of the civil and legal stature of these subjugated groups within the social order, and to inequality and exploitation, which she would vigorously confront under her expansion of the WCTU’s platform as its second president.

However, Willard, like Wells a devout reformist Methodist, believed moral stagnation

\(^7\) Wells’ life was under constant scrutiny after she wrote an article arguing that white women and black men were in volunteer sexual relationships. At one point she even relocated to New York to escape threats on her life.
increased the failure of the order of things in the polity. Therefore, the political elements that contributed to the moral weakness of the systems and institutions of society and presented religiously stimulated rhetorical opportunities for unraveling the functions of power were critical to bringing political and moral coherence to the conflict over women’s and human rights. And it is here, as a self-conscious activist for women’s and human rights, that Willard’s position on the lynching of black men blurs for Wells, given her extraordinary commitment to Methodism and her progressive critique on the immorality of slavery.

For instance, in her diary on the day of the militant abolitionist’s John Brown’s hanging, December 2, 1859, Willard critically assesses not only the inhumanity of his execution, which she renounces, but also the politics over slavery which sanctioned his capital punishment. Willard writes that John Brown,

[. . .] risked his life to help his fellow men—the slaves of the South, & he has lost it. I do not believe him to have been insane or fanatical. I believe him to have been a Christian man of strong, unwavering mind. I believe that in his sight who is greater than Virginia and her rulers, John Brown’s intention was righteous—and his death the death of a martyr [. . .]. Posterity will view it so. A shame has come upon our Nation today that no repentance shall avail to dissipate.

(Writing Out My Heart 51-52)

Although Willard is firmly against the hanging of Brown, she affirms her patriotism and commitment to American ideals saying, “Because I love my Country truly, I could weep for her today [. . .]” (52) since, she seems to argue, Virginia’s lawmakers are conceptually, but most importantly, morally wrong both on the slavery issue and Brown’s hanging. In the evening of that same day, when the confirming news of Brown’s execution arrives, Willard writes of the
compounding emotional impact it had on her and laments, “I feel mingled anger, pity, and disgust” (52). Despite her anguish, Willard is quick to support the inherent justice she believes is embodied in the law and which is ultimately guided by, “[. . .] the Power that transcends all other powers” who operates “sure & steadfast” (52) in spite of immense moral ambiguities.

Indeed, Willard’s and Well’s re/interpretation over their cultural production within the social order not only compounded the tension between black social representation and white panic over lynching, but it also fostered competition among two sociopolitical marginalized groups and increased their fear of each other. For David Sibley, when marginalized groups who have been pushed to the borders of a society compete for inclusion within a limited sociopolitical landscape, “internal fear is externalized and security is gained through associating fear with an external threat” aimed at he surmises “from an array of ‘others’ (6) who are also seeking to transform and/or affect their current social representation as different into a acceptable sign for inclusion within the social and political order.

Master Status and the Myth of the “We-Image” in the WCTU

Despite the evolutionary development of a society and the advancement in its cultural, social, and political patterns, there is a conception that progression creates coherence in ideology and identity among the polity. That collective identity is achieved through the struggle for social justice and former incarnations are lost and forgotten. In his seminal essay “Dilemmas and Contradictions of Status,” Everett C. Hughes notes that “advance of a new group [. . .] to a new level of positions is not accompanied by complete disappearance of such stereotypes but only by some modification of them” (356). For example, within the WCTU, where collective action was vital to erase the imposing social and political constraints upon both black and white women, the “we-image” did not favor the agency and status lost by black women, who voluntarily
conformed to the WCTU’s ideology and authority on social action. Hughes argues that Blacks, as a racial category, are in a specific classification with influential and distinctive representations that are produced by an American system of identity construction. “Membership in the Negro race, as defined in American mores and/or law, may be called a master status-determining trait,” which, he argues, “[. . .] tends to overpower, in most crucial situations, any other characteristics which might run counter to it” (357). However, gender, in America is also considered a “master status determining trait” since its representation, like race, denies or permits (especially for males) self-authorization and is influenced by traditionalist views of womanhood construction.

Because of this duality, black women were often forced into a representation dilemma within desegregated FSM organizations like the WCTU. That is, they were ideologically coerced into assigning their racial representation and gender representation into a hierarchy based on their level of struggle within the private and public sphere. A differentiation which is neither easily recognized nor clearly packaged in neat categories given both identities as symbolic sites within the social structure is not contained within their own representation—they overlap and often unnoticed.

In his essay “The Formation of We-Images: A Process of Theory,” Stephen Mennell, cautions that this kind of adaptation by outsiders to a movement creates an unequal power balance making it difficult for the characteristics of the “we-image” to emerge since the outsider’s marginality within the larger society becomes a source of myopic focus within the movement:

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8 Although this reference to Blacks was commonly used in 1945 and not considered offensive, as a Black woman I find it distasteful. The preferred terms are Black or African-American as a racial category for Americans of African descent whose ancestors were slaves.

9 The term “master status determining trait” is no longer used exclusively in relation to Blacks, as Hughes used in 1945. Now, the term is applied to all racial groups and both genders, rather than a specific raced group i.e. Blacks, with socially constructed characteristics.
When the power ratios between established and outsiders is very unequal, the oppressed and exploited cannot escape from their position. This is one of the conditions which makes it most likely that they will take into their own we-image what the established say about them. This process of stigmatization is a very common element in domination within such highly unequal power balances, and it is remarkable how across many varied cases the content of the stigmatization remains the same. (182)

Mennell notes the branding of the other as “different” locks them within a particular identity which are both racial and nonracial in character suggesting, “The outsiders are always dirty, morally unreliable, and lazy, among other things” (182). Further, Mennell argues, by characterizing the outsider with such abrasive rhetoric “the opprobrium heaped on them by the established may enter deep into the consciousness of the members of the outcaste” (182) causing internal fragmentation and reproducing external hostilities within the movement. For example, although Frances E. W. Harper was an active member of the WCTU, serving in leadership positions and speaking at national conventions (Mattingly 85), she recognized black women were treated as outsiders within the WCTU. Though a supporter of the WCTU’s social action initiatives and their ideology on women’s rights; Harper, similarly to Wells suspected it was difficult for some white members of the WCTU to move away from the post Reconstruction view of blacks. As a result, Harper publicly acknowledged in an essay the complex relations between the old models of black representation, which she believed still weighed heavily in the minds of liberal whites and the inferior assumptions that they were attached to. She says,

Some of the members of the different Unions have met the question in a liberal and Christian manners; others have not seemed to have so fully outgrown the old
shards and shells of the past as to make the distinction between Christian
affiliation and social equality, but still the leaven of more liberal sentiments has
been at work in the Union and produced some hopeful results. (Boyd qtd in
Mattingly 86-87)

Within the WCTU, gender issues maintained a particular domain, and understandably so, given
that as a FSM the WCTU was an organization devoted to the social, political, and economic
needs of women. However, as Harper noted, within the WCTU some white members
consciously or unconsciously created a rhetoric of exclusion for its black members and Harper
asked “if black sheep must climb up some other way” (Harper qtd in Mattingly 87) if black
women are in truth not equal members? In their essay “Collective Identity in Social Movement
Communities,” Verta Taylor and Nancy E. Whittier exam the politicization of collective identity
within the context of social movement communities, noting the marginality exercised over
outsider groups within the larger society are often projected within the movement. For Taylor
and Whittier, this kind of privilege grants permission from a theoretical perspective, but they
argue “Paradoxically, [. . .] for groups organizing to pursue collective ends, the process of
asserting “who we are” often involves a kind of reverse affirmation of the characteristics
attributed to it by the larger society” (111). Yet, despite Willard’s attempt to maintain the
dominance of gender issues within the WCTU, the social, political, and economic issues of race
that Wells elevated in relation to lynching possessed an important position in the rhetorical and
cultural shift in the historical evolution of America.

**Protest in the WCTU**

In 1893, Wells traced what she considered to be hostile comments Willard made regarding
lynching to a New York newspaper in 1890 after Willard’s “tour in the South” (On Lynchings,
Although the Southern abolitionist sympathizers, like Willard, were philosophically against lynching, they did not take a political or public stance against it. Wells rejected Willard as a sympathetic spectator, for although she was the “daughter of abolitionists” (109), as president of the most influential women’s rights movement in America, Willard provided little movement support to counteract the prevailing notions on the ethics, morality, and legality of lynching. In fact, in Well’s view, Willard seemed to reinforce the ideology of lynching when she characterized black men as preying sexual deviants to keep track of around white women. Wells writes in Crusade she was aware, perhaps as an active member of the WCTU, of Willard’s trip to the South and equally cognizant of how Willard racially characterized the act of lynching with black men. Wells notes,

As to Miss Willard, I had very keen recollection of her first trip throughout the South in her capacity as president of the National Women’s Christian Temperance Union. She had been figuratively wined and dined by the best white people of the South. She made an opening for and received recognition of her organization such as never before. She was charmed by the culture and hospitality of those by whom she was entertained. (112)

In this passage Wells’ competence as a skilled rhetorician and a talented investigative journalist in her task to define Willard as an adversary, rather than an ally of black empowerment are brilliantly demonstrated. For instance, Wells subtly but harshly indicts not only Willard’s patriarchal status as president of the WCTU, Wells also cleverly shows contempt for the privileges that came with Willard being a middle class white woman. To complete her task, Wells invokes three of the canons—arrangement, style, memory—to portray Willard as a hypocritical and decadent populist. From the beginning, Wells’ arrangement of her proofs
begins by establishing Willard’s social and class standing by emphasizing her “first trip [my emphasis] throughout the South” and “in her capacity as president of the National Women’s Christian Temperance Union.” Regarding Wells’ style, it is deliberately simple to display the extravagance of Willard not only being “wined and dined” but by the elite, that is to Wells “the best white people of the South” who like Willard, only spoke of reform, but did not act on it. As added proof to Willard’s false kinship with blacks and the woman question, Wells draws attention to Willard’s own political ambition saying, “She made an opening for, and received recognition.” Further, Wells presents Willard as though she were the solitary consciousness of the WCTU by labeling it “her organization.” However, Wells’ most serious condemnation of Willard is particularly offensive because it implies Willard’s motives for going to the South were not consciousness-raising but to be “entertained” by the very people who showed a tolerance for the lynching of black men. Finally, in detailing these events Wells’ memory is both voyeuristic and embittered. That is, Wells’s gaze upon Willard’s activities still appears obsessive after so many years. In addition, her resentful feelings towards Willard’s status and privilege as a middle class white woman, along with the gratification in Willard’s moral failure are also apparent in Wells’ recollection. Still, throughout Crusade Wells continues to reflect on Willard’s trip to the South and began to question, like so many blacks who heard of Willard’s comments why Willard did not defend on principal the representation of blacks. Wells comments

> When she went back North there appeared an interview in the New York Voice, the organ of the temperance forces, in which she practically condoned lynchings. Every Negro newspaper in the South quoted and criticized that interview. Marked copies of their journals were sent to her, my own in the number. But so
far as anyone knew, Miss Willard had never retracted or explained that interview. (112)

Through her comments in Crusade, Wells presented Willard’s remarks to temperance members. The fact that Wells could do this illuminates her stature among the overwhelmingly white middle-class women within the WCTU. Yet, her claim that Willard’s rhetoric clearly shows her ideological alliance to Southern Conservatives, which condoned the lynching of black men, appears to have been dismissed by the WCTU hierarchy based on Willard’s strong ethos as president of the WCTU. Nonetheless, Willard’s reluctance to help reform the representation and image of black men would also be placed under intense scrutiny not only by Wells, but also by other prominent black orators such as Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, also a member of the WCTU, and Frederick Douglass, the most influential black orator on slavery, civil and legal rights of the nineteenth-century. Wells appears to have given a lot of thought to the specifics of Willard’s comments and looked for a way to expunge Willard, being familiar with her as the pioneering leader and moral consciousness of the WCTU. Yet, in Wells’s conception, the boundaries were neither blurred nor accidental—Willard, she believed, intentionally located the striking image of white women, rape, and black men in the minds of whites. Wells continues in Crusade to have an internal discourse on the matter and seems still dismayed by Willard’s betrayal and reckless comments:

Having this in mind I could not truthfully say that Miss Willard had ever said anything to condemn lynching; on the contrary she had seemed to condone it in her famous interview after returning from her first visit in the South. Of course, my statements were challenged by temperance followers. Not having a copy of the interview with me, I could not verify my statement. It looked as if I was
making an attack on the two most noted Americans [Rev. Moody]\textsuperscript{10} abroad. But I never mentioned the names of the two individuals in my lectures. I spoke in a general way as to conditions among our Christian moral forces. But when someone in the audience would ask the pointed question naming these two persons, there seemed nothing else for me to do but to tell the truth as I knew it.

(112-113)

According to Wells, Willard’s controversial statements were made when she was asked in the New York interview “‘What do you think of the race problem and the Force Bill’” (\textit{Red Record} 62). Willard replied,

Now, as to the ‘race problem’ in its minified, current meaning, I am a true lover of the southern people—have spoken and worked in, perhaps, 200 of their towns and cities; have been taken into their love and confidence at scores of hospitable firesides; have heard them pour out their hearts in the splendid frankness of their impetuous natures. And I have said to them at such times: ‘When I go North there will be wafted to you no word from pen or voice that is not loyal to what we are saying here and now.’ Going South, a woman, a temperance woman, and a Northern temperance woman—three great barriers to their good will yonder—I was received by them with a confidence that was one of the most delightful surprises of my life. I think we have wronged the South, though we did not mean to do so. The reason was, in part, that we had irreparably wronged ourselves by putting no safeguards on the ballot box at the North that would sift out alien

\textsuperscript{10} Dwight Moody was a popular evangelical minister in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Both Willard and Wells were at one time followers of his reformist religion philosophy.
illiterates. They rule our cities today; the saloon is their palace, and the toddy stick their scepter. It is not fair that they should vote, nor is it fair that a plantation Negro, who can neither read nor write, whose ideas are bounded by the fence of his own field and the price of his own mule, should be entrusted with the ballot. We ought to have put an educational test upon the ballot from the first. The Anglo-Saxon race will never submit to be dominated by the Negro so long as his altitude reaches no higher than the personal liberty of the saloon, and the power of appreciating the amount of liquor that a dollar will buy. New England would no more submit to this than South Carolina. ‘Better whisky and more of it’ has been the rallying cry of great dark-faced mobs in the Southern localities where local option was snowed under by the colored vote. Temperance has no enemy like that, for it is unreasoning and unreasonable. Tonight it promises in a great congregation to vote for temperance at the polls tomorrow; but tomorrow twenty-five cents changes that vote in favor of the liquor-seller. (Red Record 62-63)

The most quoted section of Willard’s interview is when she appears to agree with Southern Conservatives on lynching by replying,

I pity the southerners, and I believe the great mass of them are as conscientious and kindly intentioned toward the colored man as an equal number of white church-members of the North. Would-be demagogues lead the colored people to destruction. Half-drunken white roughs murder them at the polls, or intimidate them so that they do not vote. But the better class of people must not be blamed for this, and a more thoroughly American population than the Christian people of the South does not exist. They have the traditions, the kindness, the probity, the
courage of our forefathers. The problem on their hands is immeasurable. The colored race multiplies like the locusts of Egypt. The grog-shop is its center of power. ‘The safety of woman, of childhood, of the home, is menaced in a thousand localities at this moment, so that the men dare not go beyond the sight of their own roof-tree.’ How little we know of all this, seated in comfort and affluence here at the North, descanting upon the rights of every man to cast one vote and have it fairly counted; that well worn shibboleth invoked once more to dodge a living issue. (*Red Record* 63)

Willard concludes her interview with the New York Voice arguing “The fact is that illiterate colored men will not vote at the South until the white population chooses to have them do so; and under similar conditions they would not at the North” (*Red Record* 63). With exuberant disapproval, Wells observes Willard’s final comments in the interview this way:

> Here we have Miss Willard’s words in full, condoning fraud, violence, murder, at the ballot box; rapine [the word *raping* is assumed], shooting, hanging and burning; for all these things are done and being done now by the Southern white people. She does not stop there, but goes a step further to aid them in blackening the good name of an entire race, as shown by the sentences quoted in the paragraph above. These utterances, for which the colored people have never forgiven Miss Willard, and which Frederick Douglass has denounced as false, are to be found in the Voice of October 23, 1890, a temperance organ published at New York City. (*Red Record* 63)
Willard, in an excerpt from her Presidential Address at the WCTU’s national meeting in 1894, acknowledges to her audience the rhetorical dimensions her public conflict with Wells had taken by addressing Wells’s charges. She begins “Much misapprehension has arisen in the last year concerning the attitude of our unions toward the colored people, and an official explanation is in order” (Erbach). By privileging her framing of the conflict in the New York Voice over Well’s conception to her audience, Willard locates her comments on black male outrages against white women within the immoral sexual behavior of white men on black slave women. In connecting rape to both white and black men, Willard’s rhetorical appeal to her audience, largely liberal upper and middle class white and black women, links sexual perversion to maleness—a connection her audience believed was a reflection of all women’s lack of agency in the social structure regardless of their racial category.

And now about the lynching controversy. Some years ago on my return from the South I was interviewed by a representative of the New York Voice, and stated that as one result of my observations and inquiries I believed that it would be better if not only in the South but throughout the nation we had an educational rather than a color or sex limit put upon the ballot. To this opinion, without intending the slightest discrimination against any race, I still adhere. I also said that in the South the colored vote was often marshaled against the temperance people by base political leaders for their own purposes, and still hold to that statement. Furthermore, I said that the nameless outrages perpetrated upon white women and little girls were a cause of constant anxiety, and this I still believe to be true; but wish I had said then, as I do now, that the immoralities of white men in their relations with colored women are the source of intolerable race prejudice.
and hatred, and that there is not a more withering curse upon the manhood of any
nation than that which the eternal laws of nature visited upon those men and those
homes in which the helpless bondwoman was made the victim of her master’s
base desire. (Erbach).

Willard’s dominant framing of the controversy confronted two paradoxes that Wells’s claim
placed on her Methodist values and beliefs: first, that her moral standards were relaxed in white
men and black slave women relations and second, that justice should have no racial boundaries
when both black and white women’s bodies are violated. However, it is important to note the
key feature of Willard’s speech considered the uneven social space of women, both black and
white, within the social structure. For Willard, then, identity, and particularly women’s lack of
agency, was the locus of WTCU counter-reforms. In neither case, she strategically mapped, does
she believe rape morally acceptable; and she emphasizes that the law and moral outcry should
not refuse its power to bring justice to the male perpetrators—both black and white. In short,
Willard seemed to proclaim in her Presidential Address—that Wells missed the point.

Although Wells was present at the 1894 national meeting, her voice was restricted by
WCTU leaders. “At the convention, WCTU leaders had minimized Well’s effect, not only by
limiting her time for speaking, but also by positioning her address after that of two members of
her own race who praised Willard and the WCTU” (Well-Tempered 77). Despite casting Wells
to the periphery of the national meeting, “Willard’s efforts at silencing her critics was ineffective
for a number of reasons” (Well-Tempered 77), which this chapter argues included the crucial
location of the Reconstruction Era where representations of blacks were enthusiastically being
recast and resisted. This dimension of establishing a new interpretation of black identity post
slavery also had its cleavages in the transformation of white identity given the dynamic relation
of blacks and whites in a slavery society. Nevertheless, for both Willard and Wells, the tension between the productions of these new spheres of identity during the Reconstruction Era, provided the conceptual map in which the ideological parameters of their conflict were grounded.

Although Willard recognized the moral, social, and historical significance the slave issue would have, in the end, Willard was not about reconceptualizing the system as Wells was. Rather, she argued for a pronounced moral configuration in the judicial process. In fact, she was committed to the role of the system, believing its structure was clear—that is, the characterization and purpose of the systems and institutions of power. Willard’s confrontation with the systems and institutions of power was on their interpretation regarding the rights and privileges of women within the social order, while Wells’s debate with these establishments of power was on the conception of their arguments regarding the civil rights of blacks within the legal order. Ironically, both Willard and Wells believed restructuring the systems and institutions of power was a matter of supreme interest to the rhetorical development of their arguments—for Willard, in the social and political order, and for Wells, in the legal/judicial and social order.

Like Wells, Willard emphasized the vital role religion played in the political culture to restrain unfair, unequal, and unethical sovereignty over a targeted group of people. Indeed, for Wells, the high moral card that Willard played was exactly the proof she needed to shed light on what she considered Willard’s true nature—neither defender nor protector of human rights—as a Methodist—when it came to the particularly Southern conventional attitude on lynching black men. Wells also used this information to politically mobilize her anti-lynching crusade and to pressure Willard, as the most widely recognized social and political agent of change on women’s
and human rights issues, into a public denouncement of the Southern Conservatives’ stance on lynching. In short, Wells recognized the rhetorical situation—the intersubjective activity between rhetor, issue, and audience. Given the urgency of the social crisis—increased lynching with no federal defense—the kairotic moment—Willard’s reckless comments, as a high-profile moral agitator, not only created a rhetorical space for Wells to speak on the act of lynching, but it was also a critical moment for Wells to bring increased political awareness to the American public on the factual roots of why black men were being lynched. Commenting on Wells’s rhetorical skills, Carol Mattingly in *Well-Tempered Women* observes that “Wells was both an eloquent orator and sophisticated rhetorician” and concludes “She had carefully chosen the time and place to criticize Willard for her racist comments” (80), which quickly gained national and international attention given the public character of the veteran radical and the young revolutionary, which was buttressed by a recognized and respected abolitionist that both women respected and considered a friend.

**More Reaction Against Willard’s Interview on Lynching**

In one of his most recognized speeches delivered on January 9, 1894, at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in Washington, D.C., Frederick Douglass, like Wells, took immediate offense to Willard’s conception of blacks. As a black male, Douglass’ reaction to Willard’s portrait of black men was deeply personal given his efforts to shift the visual and political perception of blacks. He and Willard shared an interest in collective social action for white women and black men and women. In his speech titled “The So-Called, but Mis-Called Negro Problem,” Douglass offers a corrective in a mixed black and white—female and male audience to Willard’s packaging black men as immoral sexual predators:
And now comes the sweet voice of a Northern woman, of Southern principles, in
the same tome and the same accusation, the good Miss Frances Willard, of the
W.C.T.U. She says in a letter now before me, “I pity the Southerner. The problem
on their hands is immeasurable. The colored race, “she says, “multiplies like the
locusts of Egypt. The safety of woman, of childhood, of the home, is menaced in
a thousand localities at this moment, so that men dare not go beyond the sight of
their own roof tree.” Such then is the crushing indictment drawn up against the
Southern negroes, drawn up, too, by persons who are perhaps the fairest and most
humane of the negro’s accusers. But even they paint him as a moral monster
ferociously invading the sacred rights of women and endangering the homes of
the whites. The crime they allege against the negro, is the most revolting which
men can commit. It is a crime that awakens the intensest abhorrence and invites
mankind to kill the criminal on sight. This charge thus brought against the negro,
and as constantly reiterated by his enemies, is not merely against the individual
culprit, as would be in the case with an individual culprit of any other race, but
it is in a large measure a charge against the colored race as such. (Douglass).

Douglass’s reaction to Willard’s comments sternly cautions her, as a moral and public voice
within the WCTU and the nation, against locating blacks within old identity repertoires. Like
Wells, Douglass knew Willard’s comments were grounded in Social Darwinism ideology, which
characterized blacks as biologically inferior and endorsed the strict confinement of women to the
domestic sphere based on their gender construction.

Cornel West, in his influential essay, “A Genealogy of Modern Racism,” concludes the
scientific approach was the premier model used to structure and define race and that the core of
these standards of racialized beauty and intelligence can be traced to the Enlightenment—an intense intellectual period, which, in West’s view, created a ideological space for exploitation and othering. West continues his claim, arguing the normative gaze, that is “an ideal from which to order and compare observations [of beauty, intelligence and humanity]” were not accidental, but was theorized, powerfully constructed, and “consciously projected and promote[d] by many influential Enlightenment writers, artists, and scholars” (97). Sociologist, Steve Fenton, echoes West, submitting “racism was not a natural universal form of social differentiation but a specific historical and […] specifically or predominantly ‘Western/European’” (51-2) construct. West also suggests that by using science and reason, the rhetoric of the Enlightenment intelligentsia took on an “intellectual legitimacy” (105) which, rather than cross out the political underpinnings of race in America, coincides with the incontestable issues of class, gender, and ethnicity, which also stress rhetoric, to reflect hierarchies. It was difficult to recast these allegedly truths about blacks since the overreliance of scientific thought was a prevalent practice in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century (Bizzell and Herzberg 791-99); though in Willard’s and Well’s argument, the epistemological break 11 from the authoritarian theories of science in relation to the inferior intelligence of white women and black women and men was demonstrating some successes.

Since both Willard and Wells had travelled broadly in the United Kingdom 1 and in the same circles, their public and vitriolic brouhaha begin to acquire more ideological meaning as lynching was being situated as much a moral issue as a matter that required legal adjudication. Willard created a wall of rhetorical silence in reaction to Wells’s confrontation by refusing to answer her critics and their accusation, which according to Barry Brummett was neither an accident nor a rhetorical trick. For Brummett, strategic silence is legitimate when exercised in a

11 This refers to a new way of thinking about scientific thought (17th century) and being released from its privilege as a code to produce subjects through the strict apparatus or knowledge of science—thus, break.
manner to affect events when an agent is vulnerable to new challenges. Brummett writes “Silence becomes [my emphasis] strategic only when talk is expected” and he maintains “Silence is [my emphasis] strategic when someone has pressing reason to speak, but does not” (289).

Many reactions to Willard’s silence, including Wells’s, believed Willard’s silence was a mistake and announced her veiled ideological agreement with the Southern Conservatives. Indeed, for Willard’s critics, her silence appeared to be a strategic error given it not only increased speculation about her critical judgment, but also mounted suspicion on her image as the moral embodiment and representation of the WCTU’s progressive social and political agenda. From Brummett’s perspective, a rhetor’s speechlessness “allows unchecked inference about one’s motive and actions” (293-94), which for Willard gave legitimacy to Wells’s argument that Willard exhibited racial prejudice against black men.

Willard’s refusal to speak out early and definitively on her comments only increased the rhetorical tension between her and Wells. However, as Cathcart notes, victories with special significance can still occur despite pronounced opposition—both verbal and silent. Confrontation in social movements, Cathcart maintains, is not a destructive call to arms. Instead he argues, confrontation is a critical and analytical push between rival agents to define their competing discourses, and to suggest and discover possible if not common, ideological space for moral reaction to moral panic in the social order. In his words confrontational rhetoric [. . .] is a symbolic enactment which dramatizes the complete alienation of the confronter. As a rhetorical act it is more consummatory than instrumental. It takes a form which prevents the receiver from construing its meaning as an expression of personal dissatisfaction or as a prod toward more rapid response to grievances. Confrontation demands a response that goes beyond the actions of
the confrontation itself. It is a dramatization created by the forced juxtaposing of two agents, one standing for the evil, erroneous system and the other upholding the new or “perfect” order. These two agents must be brought into conflict through confrontation in order for both to recognize that what is called for is a moral response appropriate to the moral accusation communicated by the act of confrontation. (108)

The awareness for rival agents, then, is to establish their ideological distinctions. That is, as Cathcart suggests they should draw out the specific features of their opposing discourses for movement action, despite intense and bitter ideological conflict. For David Snow and Robert Benford, this involves framing; namely, the agents’ defining or rhetorical packaging of their perspective on the confrontation. Framing, they posit, allows the agent to designate distinct metaphors, symbols, and rhetoric for judgment. This framing scene, as Snow and Benford imagine, takes place within the values, belief systems, and morals of an agent’s experience, perception, and representation—in short, identity. In Snow’s and Benford’s understanding, framing “refers to interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the “world out there” by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action within one’s present or past environment” (137). By anchoring one agent in a defender moral camp, and locating the other agent in an offender moral camp, both characterizations—defender and offender—are obscured by the framing process. Like the initial confrontation, which is also bound up in contested issues of identity and agency, the representation of self embodies time, space, and place. That is, by a historical and social construction that has redressed its reaffirming power as conventional, while obscuring potent signs that point to or reinforce agency.
Although Cathcart’s argument is well taken, in my view, it creates a sharply drawn good/evil dynamic among rival agents and does not promote a productive bridge to coalition building. In fact, it secures rival agents and particularly agents from the margins of society with limited social and legal power more securely within their identity construction. For instance, Willard could not define her subjugation as a white woman without framing it within the domestic sphere where her marginal status was circumscribed, no more than Wells could characterize the issue of lynching outside her identity as a black. Therefore, both representations were framed within Willard’s and Well’s ideological position; and thus, influenced and reinforced their rhetorical and discursive strategies.

Indeed, the confrontation of the issue for rival agents within a movement is interlocked with the pronounced impact the issue has on the agent. In short, how close does the moral panic resonate in the agent’s lived experience? For both Willard and Wells, their subjugation as a woman and as a woman and a black revealed animosities driven by the systems and institutions of power, which erased the ideological and historical aspects of Willard’s and Well’s civil and legal rights—both aspects inextricably intertwined and concentrated in the fervent debate over gender (white women’s protection), race (black men’s deviant sexual urges), and the politics and morality over lynching.

**Reconstruction and the Clash of Cultures over Citizenship**

Although Reconstruction did not stimulate black economic empowerment, it helped usher in a new consciousness regarding the role blacks would play in the transformed political culture now that the nation’s moralizing over slavery was complete with the unification of the North and the South. With the enactment of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, which secured the rights of former slaves and barred race-based voting respectively, the crossing of a new era in the
political geography with former slaves participating signaled the broad transformations ahead.

However, what still remained in the new sociopolitical order was the “woman question” which widened rather than narrowed to create a more equitable society for white women. For both these groups, dissolving traditional ideologies which linked black women and men and white women’s identities to social Darwinism was also growing increasingly impotent in its justification to dominate their representations with science. Yet, despite the fragility of scientific racism and sexism to define and confine them, white women, like freedwomen and men, were still framed in terms of non-citizens rather than citizens\textsuperscript{12} in spite of their patriotism\textsuperscript{13} demonstrated during the Civil War. Regardless of these ideological obstacles, both groups still believed citizenship and enfranchisement were inseparable from the ideals embedded in the new construction of America which they helped to produce.

Indeed, the Civil War marked the turning of the tide for bringing together ideological arguments among white women and black men and women that would challenge the widely accepted notions of citizenship. Yet, as the deep-seated and long-standing notions of the black image were shedding its symbolic container of inferiority, blackness to white women, and particularly to white men, brought a new danger with it in the transformation—the increased demand for enfranchisement. This decree for political inclusion by blacks would make them enfranchisement competitors with their most supportive ally in the antislavery movement—white women—a civic entitlement they believed due them over the demands of blacks based on natural rights and their service during the Civil War. However, if the emphasis of citizenship in the nineteenth-century shifts to a feminine rhetorical framing, then rights and privileges take a


\textsuperscript{13} Hundreds of women, both black and white provided support during the Civil War; however, their patriotic service is still one of the most under represented contributions to the war effort.
dominant role in the discourse and “rhetorics of citizenship” P. Joy Rouse argues “demands a revised [my emphasis] definition of the citizen” (116) in light of the masculine conceptions of citizenship that marked them as second-class or marginalized citizens, if indeed they were considered citizens at all. For example, during the Civil War women, both black and white, enjoyed increased status in the social order. By participating in the war effort, the substantial crack they made in the myth of the ‘True Womanhood Ideal’ by volunteering created a new representation of womanhood, both black and white, which contradicted the duality of their roles between the private and public spheres. For women, the social stresses of the war impacted their lives as much as the men who fought the war, and for once and they were not captives to the domestic, and thus inferiority arguments attached to their feminine identities.

According to Civil War historian, James M. McPherson, “In every respect except death and wounds in camp and battlefield, the Civil War affected the female half of the population as profoundly as the male half,” and he maintains women also “played vital roles in economic and social mobilization” (15), two essential aspects of post-Civil War growth. Indeed, the softening of gender strictures, which contributed to them being anchored in the domestic sphere allowed women to make solid and valuable service contributions. By ungendering service contributions during the Civil War like serving as spies, knitting socks for soldiers, and manufacturing uniforms and ammunitions McPherson claims, the feminine presence would not only subjugate the conventional epistemology that firmly established war in the public sphere as a strictly masculine domain, it would also reshape the dynamics of the domestic sphere (Battle Cry 34-37).

Aileen S. Kraditor asserts this perspective of a reincarnation of the domestic sphere by women’s service noting “When the Civil War began, the women, still abolitionists as much as they were fighters for women’s rights, suspended their annual conventions and threw themselves
into the war effort, to which they made notable contributions” (3). These women saw patriotism and its concomitant service and activism as a by-product of citizenship. Yet, ironically, by placing the suffrage movement on hold during the Civil War, Kraditor explains, white women’s expectations on how their service would be interpreted were impossibly high and “after the war’s end they resumed their demands for equal rights and for the vote, expecting the Republican party, out of gratitude for the women’s war activities, to respond more favorably than before” (3). Furthermore, white women underestimated the shift in the cultural and historical landscape that extensively altered the political path to citizenship. They erroneously believed that their fate was secured given the historical roots of their resistance to the legacy of patriarchal domination in the social order and their service to the country during the Civil War.

While McPherson and Kraditor rightly validate white women’s patriotic service and contributions during the Civil War efforts, Reconstruction historian, Eric Foner argues in *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution—1863-1877*, that free and freed black women and men also wanted enfranchisement as the prize in recognition of their war service. Foner posits “If the war opened doors of opportunity for women, it held out hope for an even more radical transformation in the condition of the tiny, despised black population of the free states” (25). If the institutional and structural changes of the Civil War democratized the social order and as Foner notes “Reconstruction witnessed the birth of the modern black community” (102); it was the ideology in the Emancipation Proclamation, Foner argues, which compelled a dynamic paradigm shift:

The Emancipation Proclamation permanently transformed not only the character of the Civil War, but the problem of Reconstruction. For it suggested that even if, as Lincoln maintained, the rebelling Southern states remained theoretically a part
of the Union, they could not resume their erstwhile position without 
acknowledging the destruction of slavery—a requirement that implied far-
reaching changes in Southern society and politics. (35)

As Foner notes, changes would be sweeping: whereas blacks would focus on securing control 
over their own identity-formation, social inclusion, economic empowerment, and 
enfranchisement, white women would agitate for a similar social and political agenda—agency, 
empowerment, and enfranchisement. Despite the linkages between race and gender in how they 
were contained within the social structure, antagonism emerged between the groups when white 
women learned “it was the Negro’s hour” (Campbell 105) and that their citizenship was 
sacrificed for black inclusion into the sociopolitical geography.

The effects of choosing a racial viewpoint over a gender viewpoint politically divided 
black men and black women over suffrage. For instance, although Sojourner Truth was against 
the Fifteenth Amendment because she believed for black women “[. . .] it will be just as bad as it 
was before” (Truth qtd. in When and Where 65), other prominent black women like Wells and 
Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, were openly in favor of the Fifteenth Amendment despite both 
Willard’s and Susan B. Anthony’s public opposition. For black women, racial discourses were a 
major obstacle to social and political inclusion rather than gender discourses. Therefore, 
according to Paula Giddings, black women overwhelmingly supported dismantling the 
structuring ideologies of race to open a space for gender ideologies to collapse. Giddings writes: 

The support of the Fifteenth Amendment by Black women did not mean that they 
had less interest in their suffrage, economic independence, education, or any other 
issue that pertained to them. And their support certainly didn’t mean a collective 
willingness to be oppressed by men, Black or White. But Harper and others
understood that the rights of Black men had to be secured before Black women could assert theirs. If the race had no rights, the women’s struggle was meaningless. (68)

With black men moving closer to the center, black women hypothesized the character and representation of blackness would shed the trope of its scientific and historical representation—ideological instruments they argued reinforced stereotypes about blackness and black womanhood. In this reading, the master status of race is clearly a dominant force over the master-status of gender and absorbs the social power that white women have over black men. Indeed, by giving black men preferential treatment and access to citizenship over white women, patriarchy reifies its power with a new hegemony—racialized gender. This clearly demonstrates that race as a master status overwhelms gender as a rhetorical strategy and major trope for inclusion to the center, which during the nineteenth-century meant enfranchisement, a message Frederick Douglass articulated according to Kraditor. She writes,

The view of Frederick Douglass, Negro abolitionists who had from the inception of the suffrage movement been one of its most steadfast male champions, was short and full of meaning: To you, he told the women [the inference is white women, not black women], the vote is desirable; to us [the inference is black men] it is vital. Many women, however, declared that their rights deserved priority: first, because women were half the population whereas Negroes were only a small

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14I am referring to the signifying effect of race and gender as linking identities/characteristics and having more than one social meaning. Further the coupling of these two identities can be used as a source of oppression and alienation in the context of politics to integrate one marginalized group into the political geography, while legitimizing the separation of another marginalized group from center.
minority, and second, because in their opinion, after the Civil War the Negro man was in many ways better off than any woman, black or white. (167)

Despite Douglass’s feminist awareness, it is clear he endorsed in his consciousness many of the traditional relations between male and female in the nineteenth-century, which created inequities for women in both the private and public sphere. To reduce white women’s demand for suffrage as an attractive and privileged accoutrement, rather than their constitutional right as a citizen, and to declare that suffrage for black men as fundamental and critical speaks to his masculine ideology. Yet, black women remained fixed in the symbolism embodied within the woman’s role in both the private and public sphere. For instance, despite their support of the Fifteenth Amendment “as a prerequisite to achieving their own rights” (Giddings 71) black women were still disempowered within the domestic sphere—an inescapable space of struggle for power and agency in spite of their feminist ideals. As a result, the pursuit of racial equality for many black women subsumed to gender equity within feminist organizations like the WCTU, which offered them space to agitate, but on the periphery—a location they were all too familiar. Thus, from a nineteen-century black feminist perspective, their presence met hostility on both private and domestic fronts. From Sibley’s perspective, marginalized subjects are aware and frustrated by their framing within the context of social and cultural boundaries. In Sibley’s view:

For the individual or group socialized into believing that the separation of categories is necessary or desirable, the liminal zone is a source of anxiety. It is a zone of abjection, one which should be eliminated in order to reduce anxiety, but this is not always possible. Individuals lack the power to organize their world into crisp sets and so eliminate spaces of ambiguity. (33)

For instance, Wells hated teaching, but she realized it was a practical and honorable occupation,
which was neither especially liberating nor too demeaning for a black woman who did not want to perform domestic labor for a white family. In short, teaching for Wells was a space of inner-conflict and debate. Further, although her mother was a washerwoman, Wells characterizes being a washerwoman, a job that allowed many black women to lift themselves out of poverty as boring, tedious, and one she refused to perform possibly because the role suggests a sameness with the characteristics of being a slave—obedience and subservience (Crusade 31).

With their new status as freedwomen and men, blacks were increasingly becoming socially adjusted, which included more choices other than manual labor for employment. However, many other groups in the 1890s primarily from southern and eastern Europe, like Jews, Italians, and Irish immigrants\textsuperscript{15} suffered from similar sociopolitical disadvantages like blacks as non-native born Americans and thus were targets for discrimination. As Kraditor points out, the robust transformation of America during the Reconstruction Era was viewed by some as a downturn for America because it presented new political inroads like enfranchisement and civil rights to previously excluded groups like blacks. Now, the new immigrants also considered “different” were similarly restrained from access to political power because they threatened native-born dominance in the social order. It must be noted that blacks had very distinct African cultural and physical characteristics which marked and relegated them to the lower tier of the social hierarchy. Therefore, although there was fanatical resistance to these new European ethnicities, most of them were tolerated at a much higher rate than blacks one can argue because their physical characteristics was less distinct than blacks\textsuperscript{16}. However, it was the


extreme religious and cultural values of the new immigrants that presented threats to native-born Americans. Nevertheless, Kraditor argues, Southern Conservatives appeared to enjoy their Northern neighbors discomfort with the increasing influx of the new immigrants who were targets of nativist ideologies. Kraditor says,

[. . .] the events of Reconstruction had caused a reaction throughout the country against universal suffrage and democracy itself; that the North, experiencing an influx of “new immigrants,” could now understand what the white South have been saying for many years; and that the salvation of Anglo-Saxon civilization in the United States depended on the rule of the intelligent, which meant native-born whites. (169)

Although European ethnic whites also threatened native white dominance in the social order, according to Mattingly, “Willard again pointed specifically to black voters as the primary problem” (79) within the new construction of America. A bias, Mattingly argues that, “reveals[s] her white, middle-class assumptions” (79) on the social and cultural customs of blacks. Although this is an impossible theory to confirm, we must consider agents are not born in a social vacuum, that personal ideologies are shaped historically, geographically, and culturally by the events, people, and environment they live in. In this regard, Willard’s use of marginalizing rhetoric to articulate her consciousness speaks to the ways the self is significantly developed by the historical, geographical, and cultural narrative. Thus, it is not surprising that Willard’s rhetoric “constitutes an ambiguous zone” (Sibley 33) where subjects are developed and emerge from a diverse group of stimuli that formulates their perspective, which are sometimes at
odds with their overall political and social ethos. For instance, while Willard undermines the humanity of black men, she clearly demonstrates a recognition and kinship between the mutual marginality of both black and white women within the sociopolitical order.

According to social theorists, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, the agent’s identity is not immune from these linking social and cultural forces. That is, ideologies are the by-products of a particular and entrenched social, cultural, historical, geographical, and political context because they all inform and participate in framing the ideological apparatus of the subject and one can argue unconsciously. Therefore, to ignore the interplay between the socio-cultural history of the Reconstruction Era and the liberating voices of Willard and Wells separates them from the locations where they were both radically altered in their consciousness-raising rhetoric. After all, notes Berger and Luckmann, “[.] humanity and [.] sociality are inextricably intertwined” (51) despite the complex and conflicting ideologies they spawn in the rhetor’s representation of herself. Nevertheless, as orators for social justice, both Willard and Wells were visionary women who realized the polarizing black/white, male/female, and public/private spheres would not continue to exist as separate domains, but would come together framed within the new vision of America by breaking free of the traditional and historical confinements of gender and racial narratives to accommodate all the voices of American womanhood.

Conclusion

Although Willard’s and Well’s rhetorical slugfest reached its peak in 1893, it is clear that the roots of their argument were planted years earlier over their personal ideology which was shaped

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17 Wells made equally disparaging and racist statements against American-Indians. Although she did not have the robust criticism that Willard endured, one possible reason is American-Indians had no political voice in the nineteenth-century.
by the historic and cultural changes spawned by Reconstruction. The legacy of the
Reconstruction Era did more than change the nature of citizenship in America, it also
reconstructed the representations of two of the most vocal groups vying for suffrage—black
women and white women. However, for both black and white women, this may have
exacerbated the rhetorical distance between them when black men received franchise. Despite
their common goal for woman suffrage, the politics of Reconstruction may account for Willard
and Wells as rivals attempting to preserve her own portion of the periphery in the social order.

By 1895 the public vitriol in the rhetoric between Willard and Wells over the lynching
issue waned. Whether or not their challenges to and for the issue of lynching continued in the
WCTU’s movement culture is not known; however, there may have been some passive
references to the Willard-Wells rhetorical slugfest given Harpers’ pointed comments on black
women and their alienation and constrained roles as leaders within the WCTU’s hierarchy. With
this consideration, it is likely conflict fatigue, rather than ideological consensus gave closure to
the Willard-Wells conflict over lynching, although as Mattingly comments “the national union
went on record against lynching” (95). Given the response by the WCTU, deeply influenced by
the leadership of Willard, and the Wells’ demand for black political and legal recognition, we
should be so bold to presume that the ethical and moral issues surrounding lynching were taken
in full measure.

While feminist ideals should always play an important role in FSMs, the binding of
gender equality to race as its competing master status trope may enhance the understanding of
gender inequality more in the political culture given as race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual
orientation are all interlocking oppressions (Collins). Unfortunately, most FSMs during the
nineteenth-century were not progressive enough to recognize the unequal burden that black
women suffered in these representations along with their gender subordination. Therefore, it may be prudent to argue that FSMs cannot effectively advance the cause of women without interconnecting it to the effects of these other integral parts of women’s identities given the fundamental role they also play in exclusionary practices which constrain the spaces women can occupy. Members of oppressed groups within organizations that challenge patterns of discrimination within the larger culture will respond politically to racial stigmas even in a movement that professes to rebel against these beliefs and stereotypes. As Mattingly notes, “The controversy between Wells and Willard, while angering most members, nonetheless heightened racial insensitivity within an organization that had always professed to invite all members equally” (95). This consequently forced the WCTU to confront its own patterns of racial prejudice, discrimination, and segregation within the FSM.

This chapter has presented the important role that race and gender as master status determining traits played in the ideological struggle for dominance over lynching within the WCTU between its president and woman’s rights activist, Frances Willard and one of its most vocal black members, orator and anti-lynching crusader, Ida B. Wells. Further, this chapter has sought to stress the nature of identity politics as an intensive political factor during the Reconstruction Era as America began the shift from slavery to a post slavery society, and the challenge of white women and black women and men for citizenship and enfranchisement. In the next chapter, we will take a further look at the political distinction of race and gender during the Reconstruction Era, and how these social constructions and representations were legally embedded in the Reconstruction Amendments (13th, 14th, and 15th) by partisan framers of the Constitution.
The African American scholar and sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois characterized Reconstruction politics as an era in which America’s cultural, political, and social vision for blacks within the social structure was obscured and/or hindered by its myopic focus on race. Invoking eyesight as a metaphor for lack of foresight by the Reconstruction Amendment Framers in the execution of failed Reconstruction programs like the Freedmen’s Bureau, Du Bois believed race “[...] was the American Blindspot that made the experiment all the more difficult, and to the South incomprehensible” (370). Du Bois notes that whites believed blacks were “different from other human beings (370)” and should not participate in the sociopolitical order with the responsibility

18 Race is an unstable term. That is, it has no coherent, fixed, or apparent meaning or application since it goes through historical, cultural, and political cycles of construction. While completely aware that race holds no absolute connotation, its signification in the social order produces meaning which shapes its character and affects the agency of racialized subjects. Therefore, as a point of inquiry, it is useful to examine race as a rhetorical narrative expressed through identity.

19 The social meaning of gender is just as complex and incoherent as race. However, within both the private and public sphere the narratives of gender combined with race takes a different route when it comes to the distribution of rights and privileges within the social structure. For instance, black women in the nineteenth-century would struggle for racial equality more than gender equality. That is not to say that the oppression they experienced as women was invisible. In fact, race, along with social-status, was an interlocking influence in shaping the political management of the discourse on gender for black women in the nineteenth-century. The mythical, but traditional narrative of “True Womanhood” during the Victorian era was an essential aspect in structuring inequalities for both black and white women. However, since both race and gender often come into contact within the social order and influence one another it is no wonder their role and performance are frequently cast with similar narratives although both representations signify contrasting conceptions and ideologies.

20 Although universally regarded by historians as a political and social failure, the Freedmen’s Bureau established in 1865 was part of Reconstruction. Its purpose was to help with the assimilation of freed blacks in the new American culture while it shifted from slavery to a post slavery system. Despite its many disappointments, the establishment of schools and churches denied to blacks during slavery was its most recognized accomplishment.
and privileges of citizenship. The complex web of Darwinian ideology containing black people also confined white women within spatial, political, and economic spheres. Arguments for marginalizing these groups were incorporated in the rhetoric of legal narratives like the Reconstruction Amendments\textsuperscript{21}, which maintained and secured dominant sociopolitical ideology that characterized the nineteenth-century.

Like Du Bois, who questioned the racial agenda of the Reconstruction Amendment Framers\textsuperscript{22}, Robert A. Dahl, a contemporary political scholar, questions the ideology of the Constitutional Framers and their attempt to produce a society with philosophical agendas that have a white male political thrust. Dahl argues the Constitution developed and written by elitist Framers “contained at least seven important shortcomings” (15) including opinions on slavery and suffrage (15-20). Dahl posits,

Enlightened as the Framers’ constitution may have been by the standards of the eighteenth century, future generations with more democratic aspirations would find some of its undemocratic features objectionable—and even unacceptable.

The public expression of these growing democratic aspirations was not long in coming. (20)

Dahl’s inquiry, like Du Bois’s, critically reviews the ambiguity of race and gender as politicized identities. The robust cultural and historical transformation of postbellum America offered fertile ground for a discourse of race and gender. The Reconstruction Amendments serve as legal narratives to examine how politicized representations contributed to the identity formation,

\textsuperscript{21} Some scholars also refer to the Reconstruction Amendments (13th, 14th, and 15th) as the Civil War Amendments.

\textsuperscript{22} Although many political figures were associated with drafting the Reconstruction Amendments, Republican Congressman John Bingham (Ohio) was the chief architect of the controversial 14th Amendment that enfranchised black men over white women.
social activism, and rivalry between Willard and Wells over lynching. With the “historic consciousness of oppression” (Adam 35) of race in relation to slavery for black women, and gender in relation to the subjugation of white women within the domestic sphere, the political culture of the nineteenth-century provides an important rhetorical space to study the ideological presence of rhetoric contained in the Reconstruction Amendments. Constitutional law scholar, Paul Gewirtz, maintains, “treating law as narrative and rhetoric means looking at [. . .] the language used as much as the idea expressed” (3). By shifting our focus on the dialectic between narrative and rhetoric in law, Gewirtz contends the dynamic relation:

[. . .] emphasizes the ways legal processes involve speakers in exchange with audiences everywhere. It sees laws as artifacts that reveal a culture, not just policies that shape the culture. And because its focus is story as much as rule, it encourages awareness of the particular human lives that are the subjects or objects of the law, even when that particularity is subordinated to the generalizing impulses of legal regulation. (3)

This chapter examines the legal rhetoric of the Reconstruction Amendments to interpret race and gender as emancipatory claims for equality. Further, it examines black women’s citizenship and suffrage rivalry with white women—another nineteenth-century politicized identity group. It also proposes that the Reconstruction Amendments as legal artifacts were historically and culturally embedded with the symbolic systems and meanings of race and gender. The aim is to demonstrate, as Gewirtz argues, that legal narratives like the Reconstruction Amendments reveal ideologies that are historically and culturally contingent; further, they reflect and influence the social order, which includes a legal ambition to interpret race and gender according to the situatedness of the dominant group on the racial hierarchy. In the nineteenth-century, this was an
exclusively white male domain.

Legal scholar James Boyd White, in “Thinking about Our Language” proposes that the subject should participate in conversation rather than in conflict with the cultural sources from which rhetoric receives its power and authority. Boyd writes,

> We are always making ourselves, as individuals and communities, always making our language; yet we are always being made by our language, by our past, and by the actions of others, and the line between the making and the made is never clear. This means, among other things, that our own habits of mind, of perception, and of feeling are contingent and changeable; they are thus a central part of our proper subject, and this is true for us not only as citizens, or cultural actors more generally, but in our professional lives, as lawyers and teachers and writers. Our work cannot claim to be the kind of science that assumes a validity beyond culture, beyond language, but should hope to be a literary or rhetorical art, a way of working with and within our language. (1964)

Willard’s and Wells’s social justice movements did just this as they engaged in agonistic rhetorical struggle\(^\text{23}\) to debate the democratic values of America. They examined the historical and cultural codifying of their specific subjectivities, which includes their agitation for “gendered” social, political, geographical, and economic equity. Further, neither Willard nor Wells believed there was a specific rhetoric in America’s legal narratives that excluded them as gendered and racialized people from the privileges and rights that came with being full and enfranchised citizens. Both feminist agitators sought to displace the political management on race and gender in legal narratives by making a case for the moral tenor embedded in the rhetoric

of legal narratives like the Declaration of Independence, which they both valued and which heavily influenced their social reformist campaigns.

Finally, this chapter explores the emergence of both race and gender as master status discourses and analyzes their discursive, historical, and cultural point of convergence in Willard’s and Well’s social justice struggle. In this way, the impact of Willard’s and Wells’s political orations, richly informed by historical and cultural influences on gender and race, provides critical confirmation of the complex relations between race, gender, politics, and ethics within legal narratives. Indeed, as social activists, both Willard and Wells knew the immense power of rhetoric to destabilize the social order and to make meaning. Therefore, their interlocking “gendered interest” in legal discourse and its narrative role in the construction of women within the social order had a particular relevance to them. For Boyd, this means trying to work out a balance between the extremes involved in the construction and evaluation of language—a task that includes a methodology for analyzing the intersection of political and ethical rhetoric by both its consumers and framers. Boyd suggests:

Once one looks to the languages in which community and character are constituted, one suddenly sees that political and social analysis involves the understanding of a whole set of things not normally thought to belong to it: language, mind, and the reciprocal relation between them; the way language is made and changed, by individuals and by communities; and the way language resists change. (Boyd1964)

Boyd further proposes:

To think about language, especially about language change, is to require attention to the processes of speaking and reading more generally, to
composition and interpretation. This in turn brings into our field of concern the nature of the ethical and political relations that are appropriate to people who conceive of themselves as language-users and language-makers. (Boyd 1964)

By mapping racialized and gendered rhetoric in legal narratives like the Reconstruction Amendments, the symbolic representations of race and gender as “distinctive” political groupings emerge as a critical lens to view the historical and cultural dependency of these two politicized identities in the sociopolitical culture. How do legal narratives use rhetoric to articulate the nature of race and gender? What do the symbolic representations refer to within the law? How do the symbolic representations in the law reinforce constructions of race and gender in the social order? By answering these questions, new approaches in rhetorical historiography are expanded to examine legal narratives as discourses that reproduce politicized representations like race and gender. The narratives convey ideology—that is consciously or unconsciously—infused with power and authority from the historical and cultural moment. A final objective of this chapter is to increase the political consciousness of women by demonstrating that legal thought is a discursive process that reflects and conveys the ideology of the state. This ideology in the United States has historically disempowered women, and particularly women of color, in the political geography.

**The Problem of Race and Gender: Cultural Reflections**

In the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century, black and white women’s inferiority was viewed as a scientific fact. Not only was scientific knowledge used to narrate the lives of both groups, but it also repressed the spatial movement within the social order for women, both black and white. They also lacked appropriate avenues to protest their spatial confinement in the private and public sphere. For women, this lack of mobility within the social order not only reinforced social
and cultural traditions, but also strengthened religiously ordained discourses on their 
marginalization and disempowerment. For Robert Sack, “[t]erritorial rules about what is in or 
out of place pervade and structure lives” and, he continues, “provide specific examples of how 
space has power” (326). For example, while feminist organizations like the WCTU did not 
silence the liberating voices of white women, the status and role of black women within the 
WCTU were viewed and preserved with the same form of scientific reasoning that also limited 
their territoriality within the social order. Sack contends, “[t]erritorial and social rules are 
mutually constitutive” (327) and become complicit in the extent to which a subject is able to 
function within the social order. Thus, the oppositional identities of black women were under 
constant jurisdiction by authorial voices, which constrained their agency within and outside the 
WCTU.

Although the most distinguishing feature of Sack’s theory is the conflation of space and 
power, he is quick to note that “the specific place does not have power but rather [. . .] it resides 
in spatial relations, especially the distances” (327). Since black and white women were highly 
constrained in their social and cultural distance outside of the WCTU, as members within the 
FSM the complex sociopolitical racial issues in the larger polity inevitably appeared creating 
racial tension between the two groups. While Willard and WCTU were indeed progressive in 
their politics, their social justice principles were inadequate to meet the new representation of 
black womanhood. Without a doubt, black women believed they were not within the WCTU 
hierarchy of power where ideologies are conceptualized no more than they were in the larger 
political culture. Therefore, they tackled not only the problem of their marginal space within the 
WCTU head on; they also provoked the issue over their powerlessness or lack of voice within 
the FSM. However, their focus on economic and social rights for black women was especially
significant to white women’s focus on civil and political rights for white women because both were central to Willard’s overall theme for both black and white women—universal human rights.

Despite their exploitation and oppression within the WCTU’s feminine version of patriarchy, black women did have autonomy and vocalization of their situatedness in black-only chapters of the WCTU. In some white WCTU chapters, Mattingly notes, “black members did have the option of joining an existing white union or forming their own” (87). However, as in many areas of social and cultural transformations, the South struggled with the changes, and not surprisingly, Mattingly adds, “Black women in the South were seldom given that choice” (87) to participate in a white chapter of the WCTU. Within the overall leadership of the WCTU, black women, and most particularly Southern black women, were spatially limited and alienated from the center of power. Despite their limited role, black women were still able to use their restricted domain within the WCTU as another site for agonistic struggle. Within the overall leadership of the WCTU, black women, and most particularly Southern black women, were spatially limited and alienated from the center of power. Despite their limited role, black women were still able to use their restricted domain within the WCTU as another site for agonistic struggle. For example, black feminist orator, Frances Ellen Walker Harper in her essay “The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and the Colored Woman” writes candidly and forcefully about the contradiction in the WCTU’s “notion of equal membership for African Americans” (Well-Tempered 86-87). By making the marginal space and powerlessness of black women in the WCTU visible, Harper, friend to both Willard and Wells laid down the stakes of the division by arguing that the WCTU violated its own code on social gospel justice. However, while she continued as a vocal member in the WCTU despite her grievance on behalf of black women,
Harper was still asked by black members, “if black sheep must climb up some other way” to achieve equal membership status within the WCTU (*Well-Tempered* 87). Indeed, writes Sack, “places constrain and enable” the subject and present opportunities for personal sovereignty. In Sack’s understanding, “[n]ot only can place help mold or destroy the self, it can also liberate it” (329) from the spatial and cultural restrictions that view the agent’s existence within a social movement as decentering. For Sack, then, place has a vital and dual role in its interplay with the subject: it can both reify hegemonic power thereby forcing the subject to the margin and it can disarm traditional and institutional patriarchal hegemonic practices to liberate the subject from the margins. In short, Sack seems to argue, place can equally impose and neutralize dominance in the social order.

Guobin Yang extends Sack’s theory, arguing that social movements play an important role in the psychological development of the agent’s identity. For Yang, the subject can become so obscured in its role as a member of the social movement that their own identity is barely perceptible to them. This may create tensions and thrust them onto the liminal stage, another spatial location that limits, restricts, circumscribes, and confines the oppositional subject. In the words of Yang,

> The liminal stage involves one of all three kinds of separation: spatial, temporal, and social/moral. When ritual subjects are separated from the familiar space, the routine temporal order, or the structures of moral obligations and social ties, they enter a liminal time/space. (383)

Membership in a social movement may place the subject on such a sensory threshold; the subject may have problems coping with the expression of an identity circumscribed by their membership within the social movement because of the inhospitality of their relations within the organization.
Yet, similar to Sack, Yang posits the social distance that the subject experiences within the social movement is an ideal space for reflection, design, and balance. Yang writes:

> Theoretically, a social movement can be conceptualized as a liminal happening in general social processes. It separates its participants from existing social structures and locates them in a liminal situation. The characteristics of the liminal situation—freedom, egalitarianism, communion, and creativity—provide the conditions for personal change. (384)

It is clear that black women within the WCTU endured the spatial confinement of the feminist social movement, and white women were similarly stifled by historical social and cultural practices in the nineteenth century that restricted their movement within the public sphere. However, gender, and particularly white gendered conceptualizations of marginality, is viewed as a natural rather than political place of masculine hegemony. Thus, for critical race theorists, the marginality of white women’s agency does not emerge from a site of extreme social pathology in the same way as oppositional identities, but a site of white women’s relative privilege and complicity in their spatial assignment—the domestic sphere. For example, in her attempt to break free from the “territorial and social rules” that stifled her intellectual development, Willard became anguished and in conflict by her mother’s idealized version of her life after she graduated from college. While the application of the domestic sphere in the nineteenth century did define private boundaries for middle class black women, like Wells. However, the ideology behind the domestic sphere’s span of control and reification was particularly harsh in its enforcement and defining boundaries on white women’s agency\(^{24}\) even

\(^{24}\) In no way am I suggesting that black women’s spatial oppression was not harsh. My argument is there were already boundary restrictions on black women simply because of their race. However, progressive white women
from other women. In her journal entry dated February 14, 1859, Willard recounts her mother’s words regarding her future:

You are not strong and—you cannot protect and sustain yourself—you cannot battle with this great, cold world alone. [. . .] God has ordered it so. If you act in opposition to His decree you are out of the right path—you are in danger. At the close of the next term, you will have acquired a good education. [. . .] Another year of hard study will ‘tell’ upon your appearance and vitality. Another year of subjection to the routine of college duties and regulations will fade you, too. Graduate next July. Be relieved from college restrictions. [. . .] The world will like you better. You must take the world as it is, and not as it ought to be,—you must not war with your fate. You are in Rome;—you must do as Romans do. They that are not with us, are against us. It is for your best interest to please the world. (Writing Out My Heart 37-38)

Willard, simultaneously rejects the spatial and social representation of the feminine ideal while affirming her idealized self by dialectic. Within her journal, she proclaims, “These are Mother’s ideas”(38). Further, she asks in resistance “Am I to be chained down to the world?” “To do as the world thinks best, and wisest?” (38). By formulating an interpretation of her representation with an interpretive lens developed in the liberatory space of the liminal state, Willard exercises the power of self-identification which come from interpreting the self through one’s own voice by evaluating the soundness of her mother’s critique by questioning her own intentions.

Jacqueline Jones Royster’s essay, “When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own,” were contained with the traditional and legitimate hegemony of religion—a strategy that appeared neutral in its enforcement of their domestic assignment.
holds particularly true to the subject articulating their own interpretive lens. In her examination of self-representation by black women, Royster addresses the dialectic between the interpretation and expression of the subject within conversation with multiple discourses. Royster argues, “using subject position as a terministic screen in cross-boundary discourse permits analysis to operate kaleidoscopically, thereby permitting interpretation to be richly informed by the converging dialectical perspectives” (29). Royster points to subjectivity as a location for a deeper and richer context for reflections on the emergence of the agent without the limiting gaze of an essentialist view. In Royster’s understanding, “subjectivity as a defining value pays attention dynamically to context, ways of knowing, language abilities, and experience, and by doing so it has a consequent potential to deepen, broaden, and enrich our interpretive views in dynamic ways as well” (29). Royster claims that outsider views on the subject “embody ways of seeing, knowing, being, and acting that probably suggest as much about the speaker and the context as they do about the targeted subject matter” (31). Like Sack and Gang, Royster concurs that “amid the chaos of difference” (37) subjects do not have to dissolve within the liminal state, but can evolve by imagining their own representation and becoming what they imagine. For Willard, this meant rejecting the Victorian ideal of marriage and children for her personal ideal of being single and working as a social activist.

Although Sack’s, Gang’s, and Royster’s perspective on the oppression of the subject within a liminal state and within social movements is useful, many scholars are divided when the racialized and gendered subject encounters discourses and ideologies on the social and cultural role of the subject marked by these politicized identities. For sociologist Steve Fenton,

In the USA in particular we have to accept that we are dealing with a social order which has incorporated, in a pervasive and persistent way, the idea of ‘racial
difference’, and that this in many ways matches real divisions and inequalities in
the American social structure. This is precisely what is meant by ‘racialisation’—
that there is both a set of powerful ideas and beliefs about ‘race’ and also a
matching of this set of ideas with the differential social incorporation of groups
commonly perceived as ‘racially different.’ (4)

In relation to gender, Fenton believes, “The state-political and the economic tendencies which
have contributed to the formation of [. . .] racism are also implicated in the forming of gender
roles and ideologies” (53). That is, gender, also shaped and interpreted by the same
methodologies that separate the oppositional identities from the center of society, historically has
a particular emphasis to disempower not only women of color, but also all women from civil and
political rights. For men, by contrast, the focus was to exclude racialized men rather than all
men from civil and political rights.

Similar to Fenton, Michael Omi and Howard Winant view race as an ongoing historical
discourse grounded in scientific thought. In their theory about race, Omi and Winant argue that
“race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to
different types of human bodies”25 (55). Omi and Winant also speak to race and the systems that
shape and arrange it within the social order. They locate this pattern of racial configuring in the
context of racial formation, which has coherence despite its subjugating intentions on the
racialized and, by extension, gendered body. From Omi and Winant’s perspective, racial
formation is “the sociohistorical process, by which racial categories are created, inhabited,
transformed, and destroyed” (55) because they are deeply embedded within “both social
structure and cultural representation” (56). Thus, for Omi and Winant, race is both strategic and

25 The emphasis is Omi’s and Winant’s.
transformative. That is, it converts its structures to the epistemological context as it emerges within a particular historical moment. They argue that race does not remain in a concrete and visible state although the result is the same—subjugation of the racialized and gendered body. Omi and Winant buttress Fenton’s claim about the myriad ways that racial patterns change. The subject’s perception of race also changes with great effect. Fenton observes, “Since racial formation is always historically situated, our understanding of the significance of race, and the ways race structures society, has changed enormously over time” (61). However, as race cuts across historical, social, and cultural borders the mythology of its scientific rationality remains, according to Stuart Hall, in “relations of dominance and subordination” (44). These relations can be seen, in the rhetoric of legal narratives like the Reconstruction Amendments, which legitimize the social order’s ideologies on race and gender constructions. Ultimately, then, “race [and gender] is now a preeminently political phenomenon” (Omi and Winant 65). Both race and gender positions are traceable to the rhetoric in the Reconstruction Amendments, which act as narratives not only of the social and cultural relations of that era, but also of the framers’ role in replicating and conveying that historical moment when the imperialist power of the law made discrimination appear morally fair and neutral.

**Race and Gender: Definitions**

Despite their constitution of the racialized and gendered subject, race and gender are not negotiated terms—they are self-legitimizing. That is, they are submerged within systems, institutions, and arrangements. Race and gender—as recognized ideologies of historical, cultural, and social dominance—pose significant challenges for scholars who wish to interpret the structures of race and gender as politicized identities. However, given the rhetorical force of race and gender in the consciousness of the social, cultural, historical, and political orders, many
scholars still confront the legitimacy of their power over the race and gendered subject and offer critique to these contested terms as identity markers.

Sally Haslanger’s essay “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?” is a poignant example of the complexity that race and gender articulations pose for scholars. Even in the title, Haslanger addresses the question by demonstrating the struggle against the compelling force and influence of their rhetoric by their aesthetic encasing of the word what. While she contests race and gender as distinct reinforcing ideologies, Haslanger recognizes their power as collaborative systems of dominance rather than individual rhetorics that regulate racialized and gendered bodies. Haslanger argues that racialized and gendered subjects must resist the “prescriptive force” (48) of the terms race and gender. Haslanger also mentions that “working with a model that demonstrates some of the parallels between race and gender also help us locate important differences between them” (32). She claims that the contextualization of race and gender is central to any interpretation, but suggests that inquiry into the identity of race and gender begins in our “everyday vocabularies of race and gender” (34), which are central to the development of their ideological role in “the politics of the speech context” (35).

Like Haslanger, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., confronts the challenge of a specific interpretation of race by first reinforcing its interpretive complication. He encases the term within quotation marks in the title of his seminal collection, “Race,” Writing, and Difference. For Gates, race is a “dangerous trope” (5) with a lot of ideological currency to represent oppositional identities. In that regard, Gates observes, “the term ‘race’ has both described and inscribed differences of language, belief system, artistic tradition, and gene pool, as well as all sorts of supposedly natural attributes such as rhythm, athletic ability, celebration, usury, fidelity,
and so forth” (5). While acknowledging the rhetorical and ideological force of race, Gates argues against reproducing those rhetorical and ideological representations. Gates posits race as “the ultimate trope of difference because it is so very arbitrary in its application” (5) since it does not adhere to any explicit interpretive code. Gates also suggests that employing the rhetoric of race to “describe and inscribe” neutralizes the agent’s power to deauthorize agency over the racialized subject. For Gates, then, the public plays an active role in shaping racial discourse by validating its rhetoric in using racialized terms despite the important role race rhetoric holds in constructing racialized bodies. Gates maintains,

[. . .] we carelessly use language in such a way as to will this sense of  

natural difference into our formulations. To do so is to engage in a  

pernicious act of language, one which exacerbates the complex problem of  

cultural or ethnic difference, rather than to assuage or redress it. (5)

Willard’s utterances regarding the negative associations she applied to black men are a classic example of Gates’ claim. For example, although Wells reprimanded Willard for her slur against black manhood (See Chapter 1), it can be argued that Willard did not comprehend the vast trajectory and timing of her words. She did not appreciate the impact of her words in terms of slavery history and the current lynching crisis in America, particularly in the South. As Mattingly notes, “Willard had, Wells believed, supported the lynching of black men, because the rhetoric of Willard’s statement, even if not explicitly justifying lynching, did in fact support the assumptions on which lynchings was based” (80). Here is the juncture where rhetoric and politics are intrinsically intertwined with ideology by the master status of race and gender. As social actors in the nineteenth century, Willard’s status position as a white woman had a higher moral and material value than Wells’ status position as a black woman, which both were aware
of. However, the ideological representations of each master status position—gender and race—failed to see the sociohistorical change of both identities, which ironically where dependent upon one another for institutional change within the social order. Yet, despite the ideological change in postbellum America over gender and race, the new charting of race was moving on a faster train than the shaping of a new construction of ‘white’ womanhood.

Cinema and cultural studies theorist Richard Dyer, argues that although “racial judgments” may not always be the dominant factor when making assessments, “it is never not a factor, never not in play” given race stresses difference between subjects and establishes boundaries. Here again it is important to note that race and gender are “floating signifiers” with rhetorical features that are often obscured by a dominant signifying system that produces images based on the negative social attitudes projected through those representations. Dyer goes on to say “white people create the dominate images of the world and don’t quite see that they thus construct the world in their own image” (9). Because of Willard’s social prejudices towards black men, the limitations she established about them as a white woman were imposed with hostility in her preconceptions and definitions of all black people, a point that compelled Wells to challenge Willard on her constitution of blacks. For Dyer, “whiteness is only racial when it is 'marked' by the presence of the truly raced, that is, the non-white subject” (14), who become vulnerable to their own conceptions regarding the symbols they use to define, shape, and locate the racialized other. That is, the dominant view’s ideology is revealed as a false signifier when confronted by the resistant discourse of the marginalized. For example, according to Mattingly, the terms used by Willard in her 1894 WCTU Presidential Address to depict blackness were also

26 Claude Lévi-Strauss originally coined the term to illustrate how some words and phrases, have not stable contextualization and therefore elude interpretation. I am using the term here in the context of Stuart Hall, who argues that race and gender are productions of a particular historical moment and social structure. Hence the terms must be open to interpretation and transformative nature.
under heavy scrutiny at a meeting of the influential Tawawa Literary Society\textsuperscript{27} where Wells, as a speaker, “carefully avoided \textit{ad hominem} attacks” (80) against Willard. However, Mattingly writes, “The outrage expressed at those black women who honored Frances Willard is intensified by the specific use of the term “Afro-American” for black women generally, but of “colored” in reference to those felt to be complicit with denigration of the race” (81).

Liberal feminist theorist Judith Butler argues that the use of rhetoric is a complex threshold that is barely perceptible by the gendered speaking subject. Butler argues against a feminine identity, which imposes an undisputed conception of what is feminine. For Butler, gender is not a stable term. Rather, it shifts within cultural, political, and historical frames, thereby eluding and maintaining a fixed interpretation. For Butler, then, it is not biology that normalizes gender, but discourse. In that regard, Butler maintains that gender is performative and shaped in the ideology of rhetoric, which induces the subject to act within the mirror image ascribed by the particular sociopolitical culture that legitimizes its regulation. Thus, for Butler these

\[ \ldots \] acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are \textit{performative} in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are \textit{fabrications} manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. (173)

In this regard, Butler extends Dyer’s account by drawing on both gendered and rhetorical concepts, rather than a purely racial contextualization. Butler argues, “Language gains the power to create “the socially real” through the locutionary acts of speaking subjects” (146). Thus, for

\textsuperscript{27} The \textit{Tawawa Literary Society} (1874) was an exclusive class-based group in Cleveland, Ohio that promoted appreciation of the arts and Christian values among the growing black elite.
Butler, the speaking subject, and particularly the gendered speaking subject, is in liminal struggle, for women are simultaneously the oppressed and the oppressor in trying to construct an interpretation for their lived reality. Butler writes, “Discourse becomes oppressive when it requires that the speaking subject, in order to speak, participate in the very terms of that oppression—that is, take for granted the speaking subject’s own impossibility and unintelligibility” (147). For Butler then, “Domination occurs through a language which, in its plastic social action, creates a second-order,” that is she proclaims an “artificial ontology, an illusion of difference, disparity, and consequently, hierarchy that becomes social reality” (150).

However, like Sack, Gang, and Royster, Butler believes that the subject can overcome the tyranny of the liminal stage by resisting the confines of its geographical and political boundaries. Butler suggests that the speaking subject can produce radical, liberating, and inclusive oratory by confronting rhetorical restrictions that both are exploitative and exclusionary. Therefore, in Butler’s opinion, “Language has a dual possibility: It can be used to assert a true and inclusive universality of persons, or it can institute a hierarchy in which only some persons are eligible to speak and others, by virtue of their exclusion from the universal point of view, cannot “speak” without simultaneously deauthorizing that speech” (153). Indeed, rhetoric serves as a pretext for both inclusivity and rebelliousness. The two, demonstrate the sociopolitical fusion of movement protest.

Another consequence of Willard’s comments on black manhood was that they shifted the master narrative of gender within the WCTU to the master narrative of race within the progressive feminist organization. Mattingly notes that when Willard finally broke her polite silence after many calls for a rebuttal, an editorial in the *Cleveland Gazette* questioned the

28 Like *Free Speech*, the *Cleveland Gazette* was a black owned and politically conscious newspaper that was very...
sincerity of her comments, claiming that Willard, wait a long time and then “beat all about the bush” before going in on the lynch question. When she did go in (not far either), Miss Willard could not refrain from doing two things which neither add to her prestige nor accomplish what she desired. They were her covert attack upon Miss Ida B. Wells and the cause she represents at present, and the casting of a little “sop” to the south when she said in substance that she didn’t believe there were white women in the south who encouraged Afro-Americans there to make certain advances to them. (81)

It is at this point where the cultural and social distance between Willard and Wells is exposed. Further, the ideological divide between the two orators widened when Wells argued against the patriarchal status of Willard within the WCTU and demanded that Willard, as WCTU president and moral social reformer, unpack her suspiciously cryptic comments in the New York Voice that criminalized black manhood and justified their being lynched.

The Rhetorical Conceptualization of Race and Gender in Legal Narratives

In his essay “The Ideograph: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology,” Michael Calvin McGee argues that political rhetoric is more than simply a mish mash of densely populated narratives. Political rhetoric, he maintains, draws its rhetorical power from ideographs. That is, words, phrases, and symbols shape a particular ideological perspective. As ideographs, race and gender can transform the ideological nature of rhetoric by imposing and/or constraining any competing articulations on a signifying system. Further, both race and gender as ideographs provide contextual continuity between rhetoric and ideology for the subject although these representations are both governed by sociopolitical constructions. From McGee’s perspective, influential in topics that affected black empowerment in the nineteenth-century.
“[. . .] ideology in practice is a political language,” which is “preserved in rhetorical documents” and has “the capacity to dictate decision and control belief and behavior” (5). For McGee, ideology directs and shapes “freedom” and has “power on [the] consciousness” of the subject and “an influence on the belief and behavior” on both “the ruler [and] the ruled” (5). Structured around societal and political patterns, beliefs, and symbols, McGee goes on to say ideographs “signify and “contain” a unique ideological commitment” (7). Therefore, he argues, ideographs “exist in real discourse, functioning clearly and evidently as agents of political consciousness” (7) with a particular interpretive and conceptual ambition.

For McGee, ideographs do not mask their ideological and rhetorical nature in history—they are imbued with it. That is, the contemporary management of an ideograph is in a constant dialectic with its ideological and historical expression. McGee observes that, “when we engage ideological argument, when we cause ideographs to do work \(^{29}\) in explaining, justifying, or guiding policy in specific situations, the relationship of ideographs changes” (13). McGee argues that, although ideographs are historically bound, their symbolic meaning is carved from their historical situatedness, and their present development can be fully interpreted only in terms of reflection on their previous expression: “No present ideology can be divorced from past commitments if only because the very words used to express present dislocations have a history that establishes the category of their meaning” (14). In short, for McGee, history in relation to ideology and ideographs is never dead and gone; it is always alive and present.

Like McGee, legal scholars Anthony Amsterdam and Jerome Bruner, believe we must study history through legal narratives to know who we are. For Amsterdam and Bruner, legal narratives are not separate from a culture—they are embroidered within it. In Amsterdam and

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\(^{29}\) McGee’s emphasis.
Bruner’s reading, legal narratives reflect not only the legal and civil order, but also the cultural, social, and political way we think and communicate. In short, legal narratives like the Reconstruction Amendments frame a culture’s belief systems and values in the rhetoric of its law. This gives legal narratives special significance in characterizing the historical and ideological spheres of a society. Amsterdam and Bruner write:

Law is one of society’s means for maintaining continuity in value judgments across time and changing conditions. It does not encompass all value judgments but is centrally concerned with those that are seen as affecting the stability of a community—including the criteria for determining which ones these are. Such value judgments must evolve through a process of repeated applications in which they are simultaneously reaffirmed and tested, made to fit anew through mutation and thereby preserved. (140)

Amsterdam and Bruner also examine the role of race within the narrative of law, arguing that “issues of race are among the central problems that have preoccupied American society since colonial times” (246). Indeed, the explicit relation between race and the Reconstruction Amendments illustrates the integrated nature of culture, history, politics, and power. Power, that is, for Michel Foucault, “in its more ‘peripheral’ effects” which “also makes it possible to use its mechanisms as a grid of intelligibility of the social order” (93) by masking its ideological dominance and thwarting challenges from opposing forces who reject its claim as social and political reality. This, according to Foucault, serves to motivate such actions as “the right to kill those who represented a kind of biological danger to others” (139) either by lynching or by insulating them from the structure of society.

The objectives of the Reconstruction Amendments were clear—to declare America’s
decisive break from slavery to a post-slavery society within its legal culture. Although the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments all took root within the Constitution by 1870, they did not erase the exploitation and oppression many newly freed blacks experienced. The social and political situation was too broad and complex to be so simply repaired. However, deep questions developed from the amendments about the role of race, rights, and equality for blacks within post-slavery America. Questions regulating the social and political role of women became much more pronounced as well.

In her essay “Soul Murder and Slavery,” historian Nell Irvin Painter argues that slavery as an institution not only reiterated the complex nature of race and gender, but also created a discourse of its own that was boundless in its reach and scope. For Painter, the ideology of race and gender were not only culturally intertwined in the popular imagination of postbellum America, but they were also connected by the rhetoric of patriarchy in the private, which were consecrated in within the rhetoric of and ideology of slavery (23-24). Although Willard, as a white middle-class woman, enjoyed more social and political benefits than Wells, both women suffered from the same disempowering tyranny—the Constitution. Thus, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, which together constitute the Reconstruction Amendments, are to be regarded as ideographs. As McGee has pointed out, they “are bound within the [rhetorical and ideological] culture which they define” (9) as testimony to the abiding power of their historical and contemporary narrative in structuring the social order.

**The Reconstruction Amendments: Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth**

The Constitution of the United States is perhaps one of the most recognized documents in the world, with fundamental laws that both establish its system of government and chart the rights and civil liberties of its citizenry. Yet, because of cultural and political shifts, amendments are
added to the Constitution after being ratified to meet unpredictable challenges that come with inescapable waves of transformation and social revolution. However, like all ratified amendments to the Constitution, they are specific to the ideological dominance of a historical political culture and contained in a mixed rhetoric of morality and patriotism. Thus, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments\textsuperscript{30} to the United States Constitution are placed within a specific historical location, which many scholars argue reflects not only the aspirations of a new America, but also the shame of a moral system that constrained its overarching values and beliefs.

In her essay, “Outgrowing the Compact of the Fathers: Equal Rights, Woman Suffrage, and the United states Constitution, 1820-1878,” Ellen Carol DuBois argues that Reconstruction was not only a forceful political period for freed blacks, but it was also the historical stage where white women’s rights activism “strengthened the belief that the right to vote was a natural right”\textsuperscript{845}. This conviction, DuBois continues, “made the case for woman suffrage much stronger, more self-evident than it had ever been” \textsuperscript{845} and added to the overall reformist zeal for transformation in the nineteenth century after the Civil War, which would either change or crush the drive towards restructuring.

Section 1 of the Thirteenth Amendment\textsuperscript{31} to the Constitution, ratified on December 6, 1865 provides that

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United

\textsuperscript{30} To review all sections of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, go to the National Archives http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_amendments_11-27.html.

\textsuperscript{31} To review section 2 of the Thirteenth Amendment go to http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_amendments_11-27.html.
The Thirteenth Amendment is the rhetorical map that took action against America’s peculiar institution by abolishing slavery in the Union States. In addition, the word “slavery” was finally written in the Constitution, which legally signified an admission of “involuntary servitude.” It also, with presidential authority, ended legally sanctioned forced labor “except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.” While the Thirteenth Amendment speaks to a future of a slave free society it must be noted that the social revolution started by the Antislavery Movement, a point discussed in the next chapter, was a major force in advancing a new moral rhetoric and ideology to stop legalized slavery in America. Despite the removal of slavery from the social order, America, still functioned as an emerging world power and still ideologically supported conquest as form of expansion as indicated by the phrase “or any place subject to their jurisdiction” in the last part of section 1 of the Thirteenth Amendment.

The official end of slavery did not bring the social, economic, or political changes that newly freed blacks envisioned. Many whites were still ideologically committed to the inferiority of blacks based on Social Darwinism; therefore, they resisted attempts to broaden the presence of blacks in the larger sociopolitical order. However, the oppositional voices of white and black women were becoming more ethos-driven rather than pathos-driven. That is, they began to rely on their intellectualism and political/legal knowledge rather than a strictly moral rhetoric as an appeal to their struggle for suffrage. From DuBois’ perspective,

During Reconstruction the demand for woman suffrage flourished because it was the most forceful way of expressing—and the most powerful tool for achieving—women’s equality with men. At first, women’s rights advocates demanded political rights for all without regard to race or sex. Once the
Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments were ratified without woman suffrage, however, they began to argue for the equality not of individuals but of sexes. Thus began a long process by which ideas about the fundamental differences between women and men began to be subsumed within a women’s rights framework. (837)

In this regard, the dominant ideology and rhetoric imbued with racist and divisive overtones were losing their authoritarianism given that the empowering voices on the margins were becoming more persuasive and less tolerant of the racial and gendered ordering (King and Smith 75) that subordinated them. Still, racism towards blacks was a major factor in nineteenth-century American politics as anti-black racist forces did not oppose the widening social and cultural changes. Yet, despite all the moral conflict over the racial divide in America, white men were more comfortable with black men voting than white women—a distinction that would take many years to modify in another amendment to the Constitution \(^{32}\).

Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, ratified on July 9, 1868 provides that

All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the States wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, provides that

\(^{32}\) The Nineteenth Amendment, ratified on August 18, 1920, secured the vote for women by overturning the gender-based ordering in the Fourteenth Amendment by inserting the word “male” as a condition for voting.
Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.

The rhetoric of the Fourteenth Amendment (Sections 1 and 2) was distinct on two fronts, its definition of citizenship was broad and inclusive enough to include former slaves, and the term “male” was included in the United States Constitution for the first time. The conspicuous relation of the words “citizens” and “voters” to the gendered male was problematic for women’s rights activist like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony because it suggested that women were neither citizens nor voters.

Less controversial, but no less significant for blacks, were the citizenship and civil rights clauses inscribed in the rhetoric of the legal narrative. From a legal perspective, these clauses

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34 The main articles in the Fourteenth Amendment (Citizenship Clause, Privileges or Immunities Clause, Due Process, Equal Protection Clause) are also known as the Citizenship and Civil Rights Clauses.
were a new mode of constitutional protection and reaction against the Black codes\textsuperscript{35} enacted by the Southern states to control the economic advances of freed blacks and to restrict their rights and privileges. Like their Northern liberators, many freed blacks argued that the black codes reinstated slavery and served as a legal supplement to protect and keep a slave-free labor system under the control of white Southern Conservative landowners. Unfortunately, although theoretically the rhetoric in the citizenship and civil rights clauses prohibited the black codes, little was done to protect blacks from the violation of their constitutional rights by the Southern plantation owners. For many women’s rights activists, using exclusionary rhetoric to sanction and refer the concept of citizenship to the gendered male construction in the rhetoric of the Fourteenth Amendment both secured legal inequities between women and men and reinforced social and political disparities.

According to feminist legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon, the distinction with regard to rights/privileges also motivated questions regarding the nature of gender and its relation to the rhetoric of legal narratives. For MacKinnon, “[g]ender [. . .] is lived as ontology, not epistemology” (237) and the interrelationship between law and ideology is incongruent and male-gendered; it shapes women’s representation within the culture rather than reflecting how women are shaped within the culture. MacKinnon criticizes the orthodoxy of law, arguing that its authority “reenters life marked by power” (237). In this regard, for MacKinnon, “law becomes legitimate, and social dominance becomes invisible” as a normalizing discourse “both invisible and legitimate” to justify the considerable bias toward males “by adopting the male point of view in law at the same time as it enforces that view on society” (237).

\textsuperscript{35} The Black Codes was adopted by the Confederate states (former) to deny particular civil rights to the freed blacks. See Barnes, Donna A. and Catherine Connolly. “Repression, the Judicial System, and Political Opportunities for Civil Rights Advocacy during Reconstruction Author.” \textit{The Sociological Quarterly} 40 (1999): 327-345
James Boyd White concludes in *The Legal Imagination* that rhetoric plays a critical interpretive role in legal narratives. In particular, White argues that law is more than just judicial opinions and constitutional analysis; it converts the human experience into legal foundations through discourse: “I think that the law is not merely a system of rules (or rules and principles), or reducible to policy choices or class interests, but that it is rather what I call a language, by which I do not mean just a set of terms and locutions, but habits of mind and expectations—what might also be called a culture” (xiii). Boyd rejects the orthodox perception that law is indiscernible because it is locked in the prison-house of language. Rather, he proclaims, “[law] is an enormously rich and complex system of thought and expression, of social definitions and practices, which can be learned and mastered, modified or preserved, by the individual mind” (xiii). For Boyd, then, law has the effect of being both a cultural and interpretive broker. That is, law not only translates the symbols, beliefs, and values of a culture—its ideology—but for Boyd “law makes a world” (xiii) by illuminating the historical struggle over a culture’s ideology and securing it as the legal consciousness and discourse of that culture.

MacKinnon’s invokes a Burkean “perspective by incongruity”\(^{36}\) to display law’s contrasting angles, and also to dispel the legal orthodoxy claim that law is blind to gender and race representations, a premise addressed later in this chapter. For MacKinnon, the liberal force of this myth underwrites and confirms its invisible power:

> Through legal mediation, male dominance is made to seem a feature of life, not a one-sided construct imposed by force for the advantage of a dominant group. To the degree it succeeds ontologically, male dominance does not look epistemological: control over being produces control over consciousness, fusing

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MacKinnon argues that law is a male-dominated discourse. She claims that women are left out of legislating law because they lack historical legal, civil, political, and social status.

MacKinnon writes,

_Those with power in civil society, not women, design its norms and institutions, which become the status quo. Those with power, not usually women, write constitutions, which become law’s highest standards. Those with power in political systems that women did not design and from which women have been excluded write legislation, which sets ruling values._ (238)

Although the Fourteenth Amendment did not make it illegal to deny blacks franchise based on their race, four years later the Fifteenth Amendment did. More importantly, for a second time, legislation was silent about the vote based on gender, and as Ellen DuBois notes, “language was introduced that insulated the subordinate’s group’s status from constitutional interference” (848). Women’s political exclusion gained its authority from a legal history that subordinated them with the same application of Social Darwinism that viewed blacks as biologically inferior. In the same way, women were viewed as biologically inferior to men. Therefore, women should be subordinate to men in both the private and particularly the public sphere given their limited skills at logical and analytical thinking. Because of this ideology, during the Victorian era men enjoyed
a favorable constitutional advantage over women (Farnsworth) that was supported by the amendments, which was authorized by Darwinian philosophy.\textsuperscript{37}

Section 1 of the Fifteenth Amendment\textsuperscript{38} to the Constitution, ratified on February 3, 1868, provides that

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Because women were not mentioned, both the Fourteenth Amendment and Fifteenth Amendments encountered resistance from white women’s rights activists. They rebelled not only against their lack of political power, but also against their spatial confinement within the social order. To DuBois, for feminists, “The Fifteenth Amendment represented a more powerful defense of the freedmen’s political rights, but that only underlined the Republicans’ refusal to include discrimination by sex with that by race, color, and previous condition of servitude in the constitutional guarantee of political rights” (848).

Despite their increased political and civil rights, black men were just as subordinated in their race as white women were subordinated in their gender. However, black women struggled to rise above the ideological representation of both identities. Yet, as DuBois comments, “One strength of the Reconstruction-era approach was that it focused more attention on black women than ever before—or after—in the long drive for woman suffrage” (846). Despite the barriers

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that black women were breaking, scientific racism used to reaffirming white racial dominance was the model ideology for interpreting gender subjugation. That is, it advocated that white men were superior by nature; therefore, they were justified in dominating and suppressing peoples and groups they considered inferior. In this regard, as women’s rights activist awareness better understood that this conceptual mechanism—male innate superiority—was a foundational rhetoric in legal narratives, revolt and dissent over suffrage for women was unavoidable. As DuBois has pointed out,

The new suffrage arguments also contained a strong theme of race antagonism, a reaction to the strategic antagonism between black suffrage and woman suffrage. Whereas the advocates of universal suffrage had claimed comradeship between men of the disfranchised and despised classes and all women, woman suffrage advocates now claimed that the enfranchisement of black men created “an aristocracy of sex” because it elevated all men over all women. (850)

Women’s rights activists were forced to revise their vision of how they would edit and reshape the ‘True Womanhood’ ideal and usher in a new image, which included women as full and active enfranchised members of the political culture. Consequently, the already inflamed rhetoric over race and gender within the Reconstruction culture became even more volatile, as both black and white women’s rights activists stepped up their oratory and collectively confronted the patriarchal establishment that limited their entrance into socio-political domains of power.

**Political + Legal Reform = Space & Time**

Although a political and legal utopia was not the objective of women’s rights activists, they knew they had been, and would continue to be, shaped by their racial and gender classifications
within the social sphere. However, by situating their argument for suffrage within the political and legal sphere, they relied on the rhetoric of legal narratives as a counterargument to the Social Darwin claims that narrowly defined them as less than male and white. Katharine T. Bartlett’s essay “Feminist Legal Methods” claims that asking the “woman question” is vital to women’s reauthorizing dominant narratives and ideologies about women. Bartlett suggests addressing the performance of woman within the social and political culture in order to examine the nature of patriarchy and the construction of women within a masculine hegemony. Bartlett contends that asking the woman question reveals the ways in which political choice and institutional arrangement contribute to women’s subordination. Without the woman question, differences associated with women are taken for granted and, unexamined, may serve as a justification for laws that disadvantage women. The woman question reveals how the position of women reflects the organization of society rather than the inherent characteristics of women. (843).

Bartlett contests the long-established view that women are by nature different. Instead she claims, “social structures embody norms that implicitly render women different and thereby subordinate” (843) them by reinforcing conventional ideologies to legitimate the spatial location of women within both the private and public sphere. However, for David Harvey, in “Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination,” moments of historical social and political transformation are the perfect prescription for peoples and groups disenchanted with their social and political location and the manner in which these locations contribute to their representations. For Harvey, “Ideological struggles over the meaning and manner of such representations of place and identity abound” (419). These ideological struggles over identity representation and space ascribe a particular discourse on the marginalized agent, which is
established as rationale to impose boundaries. That is, ideological hegemony not only creates
invisible sociopolitical geographies of space, this belief system also is complicit in constructing
the character of the agent that inhabits this spatial location. Sociopolitical geographies of space
are invisible merely because there are no concrete boundaries visible to the naked eye. However,
their unmarked spatial arrangement is recognized more by its social ordering rather than an
aesthetic point of reference. However, as Harvey argues, the agent at some point will resist the
rhetorical representation and the dominant power’s rhetoric to locate them because of the agent’s
yearning for power and self-representation. Harvey writes, “But over and beyond the mere act of
identification, the assignment of place within a socio-spatial structure indicates distinctive roles,
capacities for action, and access to power within the social order” (419), which are endowed with
the vision, observation, and relevance in a particular time and place. Further, Harvey believes
that “the [race], class, gender, cultural, religious and political differentiation in conceptions of
time and space frequently become arenas of social conflict” (420), which are unavoidable
moments in social protest rhetoric to disarm social control by the dominant group.

As DuBois has noted, the Reconstruction Era was a defining space and time for the ideals
of freedom where conventional representations of blacks and women were shedding their long-
established trope of scientific epistemology. For white women, freedom meant equality, justice,
and liberty with regard to gender. For black women, freedom meant equality, justice, and liberty
with regard to race. In many regards, the rhetorical arguments based on their denial and right to
freedom for white and black women were both paradoxically different—and the same. For
instance, both white and black women identified their freedom within their master status
classification. Where they diverged in their own representation was within the social and
political sphere, given that white women identified themselves more closely with their gender
and black women were identified more closely with their race. Where they intersect is in the construction of both these identities within the larger cultural imagination, which was reinforced by their spatial location within the ideology of the “cult of domesticity.” However, both classifications—woman and black—struggled against a label of scientific inferiority.

According to feminist legal scholar Reva B. Siegel, the structuring of race and gender are not separate spheres of identity, but interrelated within the complex tapestry of history. According to Siegel, “A look at history discloses that the network of institutions, practices, and meanings that support social stratification varies by group, and within groups as well. There are a variety of institutions [. . .] practices [. . .] and reasons employed to enforce the different social status of groups” (83). For Siegel, agents are not located in one unifying identity or representation. In fact, she argues, an agent’s identity is a matter of perspective based on a particular role that the social and cultural practice provides upon contact with the agent. For Siegel then, agents possess multiple subjectivities, which determine a judgment and evaluation by those in power. Siegel argues that since “persons are members of multiple status groups, there may well be considerable variation in the institutions, practices, and meanings that regulate the social position of different members of one group” (83). For Siegel, “the American legal system has played an increasingly self-conscious role in regulating the distributive regimes that sustain group stratification” (83), and law has a conflicting duality to both “disestablish and to legitimate the distributive regimes that sustain group stratification” (83) while invoking a “blindness trope” (84), which is rooted in difference but claims it does not reflect bias or contradiction within its legal rhetoric. Such a standpoint Siegel argues deepens questions on anti-discrimination laws rather than eliminates them. She writes,

When we say we are distributing goods and opportunities in a race- and gender-
blind fashion, we recognize group identity but ignore the ordinary status consequences of group identity for purposes of the relevant social transaction. Differently put, blindness tropes are concerned with counteracting the normal status-linked benefits and detriments of group membership. (84)

In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Iris Marion Young argues that certain identity groups experience discrimination veiled within liberal rhetoric impartial or blind to the identity of the agent. Young’s expansive inquiry into preferential access to valuable goods examines its relation to representation, law, and sociopolitical transformation. In Young’s perspective, justice should not nurture the historical agency of the legal system to restrict peoples or groups from receiving the distribution of its valuable good. For Young, “Justice should refer not only to distribution, but also to the institutional conditions necessary for the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and cooperation” (39). Young claims that “all oppressed people face a common condition” (40) independent of their social and political status. However, she argues, there are five functions which best illustrate the common boundaries that oppressed people encounter. For Young, “exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence” (40) enforce the span of control by institutions to reify their power with a strategy that appears impartial, conventional, and with pretentions of a color- and gender-blind rhetoric. For Young, then, oppression is part of “the normal processes of everyday life”39 (41), which are nothing more than ideological instruments of patriarchal domination. Further, Young proclaims, oppression targets specific social groups

Critical legal studies theorist Neil Gotanda agrees with Young that oppression singles out particular social groups or peoples by limiting their access to the distribution of valuable resources in the social order. However, like Siegel, Gotanda’s broader argument is that the color- and gender-blind trope as a metaphor in legal narratives is false; in fact, it authorizes the very ideology it claims to suppress. Gotanda feels that, “the United States Supreme Court’s use of color-blind constitutionalism—a collection of legal themes functioning as a racial ideology—fosters racial domination” (2). He argues that while “aspects of the color-blind constitutionalism can be traced to pre-Civil war debates,” its “modern concept developed after the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments” (2). A further claim of Gotanda’s is that “legal ideology legitimates racial inequality and domination” (3) in the same way MacKinnon argues that law validates gender inequality and domination within the legal culture. However, for Gotanda, the term “race” has gone through constitutional iterations “to cover four distinct ideas: status-race, formal-race, historical-race, and culture-race” (4). This echoes Haslanger’s, Gates’, and Dyer’s, argument that the term “race” is complex and defies precise and universal rhetorical containers for the social order to discriminate and locate certain peoples and groups within a rigid spatial geography.

Gotanda uses race as an example to demonstrate how identity can be codified within a legal narrative with legitimizing rhetorical and legal force to impose and deny voice in the sociopolitical order. Restrictions on gender, like race, are imposed with the same structuring ideologies given that the women’s right to vote needed a constitutional amendment to guarantee this right. Within legal narratives gender operates dynamically with another sovereign authority—religion. Together, both law and religion are evolutionary in character. That is, they
are connected to the cultural and historical temperament just like other ideologies.

Like law, religion has a particular advantage over the construction of race and gender representation—an exalted voice. However, in response to the changing needs of the citizenry, even exalted voices like the rhetoric in law and religion are subverted and develop into foundations for social movements with the aim to achieve universal human rights. For Willard and Wells this seems especially poignant given they both drew upon the discourse of law and religion as a part of their nineteenth-century modernized rhetoric for gender and racial equity. In his essay, “Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758-1834,” Charles Tilly suggests that social movements employ different “repertoires” in their “contentious” emancipatory politics to affect sociopolitical change. For Tilly, “repertoires of contention” shift their protest methods according to the historical and cultural moment to denounce any political system if that violates the human condition. Tilly defines his repertoires of contention theory in this way:

The word repertoire identifies a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice. Repertoires are learned cultural creations, but they do not descend from abstract philosophy or take shape as a result of political propaganda; they emerge from struggle. People learn to break windows in protest, attack pilloried prisoners, tear down dishonored houses, stage public marches, petition, hold formal meetings, organize special-interest associations. At any particular point in history, however, they learn only a rather small number of alternative ways to act collectively. (264)

In their roles as agitators, individually in their particular social activism and collectively in the WCTU, Willard and Wells drew upon the discursive and rhetorical repertoires of law and religion to consider the individual questions in their struggles. However, collectively, they did
not modify their concepts very much given that they were founded on the same ideals of Methodism. Yet, from their lively rhetorical argument developed a space for moral revelation and a blueprint for self-discovery when they both were, in a sense, the mirror image of each other to varying degrees.

Conclusion

Since legal narratives are interrelated with historical and cultural changes, their rhetoric is useful in the study of “repertoires of contention” that were expressed in the social protests of the nineteenth-century over gender and racial equity. Next chapter will consider the contradictions in religious rhetoric and discover how Willard and Wells utilized these incongruities in the Bible to challenge patriarchy and racism. The chapter will also consider the theological similarities and differences between Willard and Wells and demonstrate how they gendered and racialized their evangelical rhetoric by revising the jeremiad as a liberatory trope.
In addition, Gideon said unto God, if thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.  
-Gideon, Judges 6:36, KJV

Religious scholar, Stephen Prothero, sees religion as a major organizing ideology to the social and political reality of the nineteenth-century. For Prothero, there is a close and intimate ideological relation between theological beliefs and a culture; therefore, they are not separable from characterizing the religious mood of the nineteenth-century. Prothero argues that many Americans were, “inspired by [the] republican rhetoric of liberty and equality, and by a popular revolt against deference and hierarchy” (47). This liberalizing spirit applied to the religious, political, and domestic spheres inspired women to protest against the narrow role to which they had been consigned by the existing hierarchy. The well-defined strictures of religion, like the law, were structured in dominance; black women encountered its hegemony in both their gendered and racial construction and white women principally by their gender.

However, both groups consciously reshaped the organizing framework of religion to diminish its ordering of their lives within the public and private sphere. Prothero posits that while “The Bible remained authoritative [. . .] Americans insisted on interpreting it for themselves” (47), especially women who lived under its patriarchal construction. “In that effort,” Prothero continues “they were assisted by a new culture hero: the populist preacher, who combined evangelicalism and egalitarianism in daring new ways” (47). Prothero maintains that it was “the rise of pulpit storytelling” (51) that allowed such reimagining of religious ideology. Prothero goes on to argue that the “story sermon” (51) as a rhetorical style “did not catch on as
fast in New England as it did in the South and the West (51),” a point that can explain the revolutionary tone of feminist orators in those regions of America during the nineteenth-century.

An examination of Willard and Wells’ theological rhetoric illustrates its intersubjectivity with the narratives of law. Further, it demonstrates that religion, as an ideology, is simultaneously faith-based and political. The intersection of the pulpit and the court violated the separate spheres ideology that confined white and black women to a rigid spatial ordering based on gender and race in both the public and private sphere. However, with the rise of evangelical religion during the Second Awakening the unification of these two domains—the pulpit and the court—strengthened.

By rejecting the “predictable eighteenth-century style of chapter-and-verse preaching,” Willard and Wells, as feminist orators, opened a wider space for the “feminization of American religion” (56-58), which broadened and changed views on the nature of race and gender in the social order. Prothero locates this feminization of religion in the context of a feminized Jesus, arguing that women “made him [Jesus] over in the light of Victorian ideals of the feminine” (59). This not only demonstrated the strength in those feminine characteristics, but also stressed the radical nature of Jesus’ rhetoric, which feminist orators like Willard and Wells believed advocated equality. Moreover, although the social gospel movement emerged in the early twentieth century as an institutionalized form of Christian socialism, it can be argued that its radical social Christian roots materialized in the nineteenth-century in the rhetoric of feminist women like Willard and Wells. By putting aside the historical and traditional interpretation of Christianity to mine it for its social reformist crusades on race, gender, and universal suffrage, both Willard and Wells took a critical step in (re)presenting the signs of their otherness preserved

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in the canonical rhetoric of theology.

For Augustine in *On Christian Doctrine*, the rhetoric in Biblical scripture has an enormous symbolic dimension. However, Augustine argues that a languages’ relation is not easily transparent for the interpreter without distortions if the interpreter does not know the origins of the language that the sign it embodies (34-53). Yet, this is the very type of representation that Willard and Wells reject in authoritarian texts as a woman and as a black—rhetoric that is indescribable and misunderstood because it avoids acknowledgement of their gendered and racial subjectivity. By reauthoring the interpretation of biblical scripture and its canonical voice on their subjectivity, both rhetors awaken a new rhetoric within the text by worrying the line⁴¹ to transform the separate spheres ideology into a exploitative narrative that would lose its power to shape and diminish their agency. In this way, Willard and Wells become simultaneously storyteller and audience, for they are situated between the social realities of both discourses. Further, by invoking a feminine interpretation of Biblical scripture and recasting its historical and canonical nature from a prescriptive text to a descriptive text, Willard and Wells reauthorize its ideology. They reject its rhetoric of exclusion as they emphasize the historical and canonical inarticulateness of their individual subjectivities.

In this chapter, the jeremiad as a rhetorical trope is explored by appraising how it was rhetorically encased within Willard and Well’s Methodist ideology. The chapter analyzes how Willard and Wells subverted theological rhetoric for their own oratorical style by feminizing civil and political rights with the moral clarity embedded in religious rhetoric. Additionally, this chapter marks how Willard and Wells reimagined the rhetoric of theology in their oratory to stress its endorsement of gender and racial equality in the political culture. The chapter also

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⁴¹This is in reference to a blues method technique used to place emphasis on a particular moment in a song by blurring traditional boundaries in lyrical sexuality.
demonstrates that by counteracting the patriarchal rhetoric of the bible—ideologically heavy with the language of subjugation used in slavery and the home (submission, obedience, devoutness, confession)—both Willard and Wells free their own liberatory voices. This strategic refocus of biblical scripture to gender and racial equity allowed them rhetorical space within institutionalized Christianity to experience transcendence by drawing from the very ideology in their Methodist social gospel rhetoric that contained and governed their lives in the public and private lives.

**Who . . . By Fire? The Social Gospel of Willard and Wells**

Roxanne Mountford argues that “rhetorical spaces carry the residue of history within them” and they inescapably evoke “a physical representation of relationships and ideas” (17) with masculine power as the prevailing ideology in the pulpit. Mountford is particularly critical of the discontinuity that patriarchy induces in Christian discourses and specifically Protestant rhetoric. Although the social reformist roots of Methodism gave Willard and Wells more rhetorical space to voice their ideological conflict over the patriarchal history in theological prose, they did not have authority to make institutional changes. Both Willard and Wells had to radicalize their social gospel rhetoric to gain gender and racial equity in what Mountford calls the sacred space of the pulpit (17-39). By reimagining the rhetorical space from an exclusively masculine domain to include the political presence of women and blacks, Willard’s and Wells’ brand of liberation theology bridged two binaries from the pulpit to gain rhetorical space in the public sphere: spiritual and civil rights. According to Mountford, the rhetorical space of the pulpit is where “hierarchies of gender and status are worked out in the sacred geographies of

42 I would like to expand the territory of the pulpit as any space within the private or public where discourse occurs. Therefore, the pulpit can be a street corner, a parlor, a porch stoop, or the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.
Christian churches” (17). By disarming the considerable and canonical power of sacred patriarchal scripture, Willard and Wells claimed their own rhetorical space.

In Willard’s diary entry on November 28, 1859, she offers a poignant glimpse of her difficulty in adhering to her personal manifesto. There is a direct relation between the rhetoric of her confession and the way in which white upper-class women performed their gender—even in the private discursive space of their journals. Similarly, the power relations in the private spiritual domain are allied in their subjugating patriarchal tone to public legal narratives in their function to subjugate women’s desire to speak in their own voice. By occupying all the spheres of women’s ideology, theological and legal narratives have similar aims that are based in power and dominance to achieve the same results—complicity in a gendered performance sanctioned by the revered rhetoric of Christianity and the law. Willard notes,

…Every morning I make these four resolves:--

1. To keep my Temper.

2. To avoid “back-biting.”

3. To converse as well as I know how.

4. To “think over” every night, the deeds, thoughts, & acquirements of the day.

I regret to say that every day I don’t keep, inviolably, any one of these resolutions! . . . (Gifford 51)

It is noteworthy that Willard was not known to have a bad temper. In her much publicized response to Wells’s accusation on lynching, Willard’s tone was decidedly calm and reflected no anger despite her journal’s claim that it was an effort to keep her capital “T” temper in control.
Most remarkable is that Willard’s alleged temper has never been mentioned in any discourse on
her although Well’s anger and bad nature is legendary. Could Wells’s race have anything to do
with her being labeled as irritable? Although both Willard and Wells write about their
disposition, why is Willard’s never a point of interest? Further, why did Willard perform her
gender more consistently than Wells performed hers? For Mountford, personal temperaments are
interpreted through the conundrum of race and gender. This argument reflects back to Social
Darwinism, which argues that behavior is genetic rather than personal. Mountford writes,

> The bodies and behavior of human beings are interpreted through
> historical, ideological processes that divide out experiences along racial
> and gender lines. Because we are immersed in these ideologies, they often
> seem inevitable and immutable. (40)

Willard’s second, third, and fourth resolutions reflect a rigorous constraining of the self and may
reflect societal pressure on women to behave in a certain way. This behavior again is ratified in
the ‘Cult of True Womanhood’ social contract that is imbued with moral and political
amendments to outlaw personal ideology. By performing the social representation of her gender,
Willard appears not to disturb theological views of the feminine. However, by reducing her
representation to the ‘feminine feminine’ Willard creates a rhetorical space for another
interpretation by encompassing the precise gendered representation she rejects. For Mountford,
“[d]iscourses of suspicion and images of restraint of women’s bodily presence serve to reinforce
their exclusions from the public sphere” (68). I argue that exclusion based on bodily features is a
point of ideological departure where historical and canonical tropes on gender (and race) can be

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43 Willard was often referred to as the feminine feminine because of her dress and noncoercive rhetoric, which
appeared overeager to present the image of the True Womanhood ideal.
provoked and challenged for (re)interpretation. For this reason, nineteenth-century women and blacks who were inculcated in the prescriptive tropes of Biblical scripture to restrain their speech—that is their tongue—abrogated this theological dogma by re/storying the Biblical text for inclusion into the political culture. For instance, one of the most theologically justifying Biblical scriptures that encounters the body (tongue) with the mind (consciousness) argues, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (James 1:26). This is quite evident in Willard’s encapsulation of her personal manifesto that is powerfully opposed to the established authority that she feels daily: “I regret to say that every day I don’t keep, inviolably, any one of these resolutions!” Her obsessive desire to make her body (her tongue) perform, is repressed by her mind (her consciousness), which rejects the legislation of her body.

The process of interpretation by the body involves translating what the mind as a symbol of meaning is signifying to it. If there is any rupture in translation—and I do not argue that a break is never attempted—the body/mind configuration does not reflect or carry the identity the subject chooses, but an identity that the social order has prescribed for it. Willard’s opposition to established authority, that is her Methodism, led her to deny or reject the identity that was imposed on her spiritually and morally as a Christian and as leader of the WCTU. Indeed, Willard’s statement “I regret to say” is more a reflection of the important force of her Christianity as an institutionalized power over her ideology than of her helplessness as woman who cannot adhere to her belief system.

The Cartesian separation of the body/mind symbol system argues that meaning is interpreted by the intersubjective performance of the two, rather than the performance of

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44 Emphasis not mine.
contrasting body/mind belief systems. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the body is not an object void of discourse; it is a sign with meaning(s) attached to it, that is “a grouping of lived-through meanings which moves towards its equilibrium” (177). Indeed, the body’s kinship with the mind is not one of competition and struggle, but of coexistence. Moreover, for Merleau-Ponty “bodily existence is never self-sufficient”(191) but exists in symbolic partnership with the body.

Therefore, the connection between the body/mind is ideologically determined and expressed through the body/mind engagement. Willard quite candidly confesses that she is repentant “every day” that “I don’t keep [. . .] any one of these resolutions.” Despite her intense daily absorption in the written religious code, that is Biblical scripture, Willard could not escape the relation between the body and the mind, and she struggled with the separation of the two in her own life. Her attempt to diminish the body/mind tie demonstrates the significance of theological systems within the social order as a rule of conduct prescribed by a divine authority to keep its subjects, especially women, situated within a spiritually binding rhetorical space.

For black women, the emphasis on race in sociopolitical arrangements created an even more challenging argument for their rhetorical space. Moreover, the source of the authority, which structured middle-class white women’s domains, also doubly deprived black women of sociopolitical rights and privileges. By subverting the social arrangements on race, Wells revealed the similarities and disparities between gender and race. Although race and gender are secured by the same subjugating tropes used in slavery (see chapter 2), race for black women created separate and distinct discourses on their subjectivity, although no less traumatizing than the dehumanizing gender discourse nineteenth century white women endured. For instance, Wells was quite aware of the normative gaze on her dual identities, which shaped her delivery. Mountford notes, “delivery involves, first and foremost, the presentation of the self in a form that
will be acceptable to the audience” (69), which for Wells *at times* was overwhelmingly white and male. It was, after all, white males who had the social status and legal authority to create or at least influence political action against the tyranny of lynching.

In 1892 at New York’s Lyric Hall Wells delivered her testimonial “of that horrible lynching affair” (79) to a crowd of two hundred and fifty influential black women from New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Wells was living in New York City because her life was threatened if she were to return to Memphis with her anti-lynching rhetoric. While sitting on stage waiting to speak, Wells was overwhelmed by the support of accomplished black women who were doctors, writers, newspaper editors, and social activists, who, she writes, were “a solid array behind a lonely, homesick girl who was an exile because she had tried to defend the manhood of her race” (79). Although by that time Wells had a reputation for being authoritative, hard-nosed, and difficult to get along with as an activist. While reciting details of the lynching of Moss, McDowell, and Stewart, the traumatic event affected her much more deeply than she had anticipated, and she cried in front of her audience. Wells feared her sophisticated audience would interpret her tears as a masquerade for sympathy and perhaps even money when she only wanted to raise the consciousness of the New Yorkers who “had the name of being cold-blooded and selfish” (78) to events outside their social world. Although they were privileged, surely they were aware that the black body—especially the black female body—remained a target for both sexual and violent assault.

By shaping language to appeal to her audience, Wells foregrounds the visibility of race in her discourse and, thus, claims her rhetorical space as the bodied other—black and woman. In this way, Wells transforms her individual experience into a collective experience for her audience to participate in by noting the split between the two worlds that they all lived in—
privileged and elite—but still, black and woman. The sharp contrast of this binary between progress and relapse denied Wells’ audience any room to assume that they were safe from lynching because of their social status and education. Further, Mountford theorizes, “in any treatment of rhetorical performance, rhetoricians must explore the ways that particular bodies are marked by public assumptions of character” (69). Indeed, while Wells could not change the political impact of her bodily color, she could transcend it by espousing its spiritual and theological value. Moreover, by binding the image of the politicized black body within the empowering rhetoric of the testimonial, Wells converts her political performance into a religious call for justice. W.E. B. Du Bois speaks to the fusion of the spiritual with the call for justice in reference to the protest rhetoric in the sorrow songs:

Through all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs there breathes a hope—a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence. Sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear: that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins. Is such a hope justified? (186)

Although Wells’ audience was comprised of middle-class black women, described as “race women [who came out] for one of their number” (78) and who, like Wells, lived under the same rigid sociopolitical strictures despite their social status, Wells’ tears during her first testimonial did not lessen the structure and power of her delivery because many of the black women in the audience knew someone who had been lynched. Further, as black women, there was a strong cultural bond present which united their activism over their legal, social, political, and religious
subjection. In fact, Wells’ performance, based on her description in Crusade, appears to reflect a precise management of the body/mind dynamic, which is crucial to the oral tradition of storytelling in black culture. Wells notes while she only wanted to “deliver an honest-to-goodness address,” the memory of the Lynching at the Curve began to surface: “my mind went back to the scenes of the struggle,” and, she continues, “I felt the tears coming” (79).

Wells’s tears are significant because they do not only speak to the intersubjective nature of the body/mind. In addition to conveying her current emotional state, Wells’ tears—although unintentional—are also symbolic representations and form part of the delivery and performance that will be interpreted by the audience. As a lyceum trained orator, Wells is aware of this body/mind complicity and its signifying effect on the audience. She writes, “a panic seized me” as the memory of the Moss, McDowell, and Clark lynchings heightened, and she struggles to put on her social mask as a means to erase what she does not want to reveal—the emotional composition of her gender. “I was afraid I was going to make a scene” (79), as she continued to recite her story. Then she says regarding her internal psychological dialogue, “I kept saying to myself that whatever happened I must not break down “(79). By attributing her unintended tears to an “exhibition of woman’s weakness” (80), that is her gender rather than a personal character feature, Wells dislocates the connotation of the tears from the memory that it is associated with. For Wells, emotional arousal on the part of the woman rhetor can only be interpreted as a form of weakness rather than rhetorical strategy. Further, the symbolism associated with tears is culturally acceptable in some groups, like African-American culture where it is interpreted not as a sign of weakness, but as a source of strength, power, and dignity in the face of crisis. Yet, Wells believes her tears were not effective, and she reflects, “Whatever my feelings, I am not given to public demonstrations” (80). However, Wells’ conflict over her tears was bound in her
own beliefs regarding the public performance of the woman orator rather than the effectiveness of her testimonial on her audience. In fact, years later and still conflicted over her tears rather than the tremendous impact they made on her audience she writes, “only once before in my life had I given way to woman’s weakness in public” (80). Wells ironically never reveals that moment in her autobiography for her audience to scrutinize. Despite the success of her tears in her first testimonial and the positive connotation in black cultural and religious expression, Wells warred over this aspect of her feminine subjectivity throughout her life. However, although women like Willard and Wells made a discernable rhetorical break with the language used to critically interpret them as women, the authorial construction of them by the sacred text of Biblical scripture was not as flexible to reinterpretation, because it played both a cultural and religious role in capturing and placing particular attributes on them as women.

The Sacred Act of Revisioning

In their chapter from Introduction to the Study of Religion, entitled “Scriptures, Canons, and Creeds” Nancy Ring et. al have pointed out that “Each religious tradition has a collection of stories, prayers, songs, curses and blessings, lists, incantations, and laws that it considers powerful and authoritative” (178) to the members of the religious group. As evangelical rhetors, Willard and Wells were provoked by the social engineering of their gender and race to displace the interpretation of Biblical scripture on their identity. Moreover, from Ring et. al’s perspective, “These collections shape the lives of its members in many ways” (178) although with political meaning from the public sphere that is interpreted and fixed to the private sphere. By expanding the rhetorical space of the pulpit to include the public sphere, where they spoke on political matters for women and blacks, Willard and Wells recapitulated the interpretation of Biblical scripture. Although “the process through which religious texts become scripture and
scripture becomes canon is complicated” (184) the theological authority imposed on the
gendered and racialized body in the nineteenth century suggests biblical scripture marked being a
woman and black as inherently different from being male, which was considered natural and
normal. By dispelling the myth that divine thoughts were supernatural concepts to be followed
and not understood, Willard and Wells crafted an absorbing portrait of women and blacks that
located them within the larger human community rather than the limited social construction of
their gender and race. They argued that it is not Jesus—God in a bodily form—who endorsed
the noncitizenship of women and blacks; it was patriarchy. Thus, the news was good. Ring et. al
argue,

Gospels are stories of victory, “good news,” presented to the believing
community. Neither biography nor history, they are interpretations [my
emphasis] of the life and ministry, the death and resurrection of Jesus from
particular points of view; written for believers, they elaborate and
strengthen the faith already present in the community. (186)

Indeed, the reinvention of Jesus as a political advocate for women and blacks shifted the
meaning of their subjectivities, which had been anchored in a traditional canonical reading of
biblical scripture. In “When Outsiders Encounter Insiders in Speaking: Oppressed Collectives on
the Defensive,” for example, Detine L. Bowers argues that historically authoritarian hierarchies
have established rhetorical conventions to subvert marginalized voices. Bowers continues:

The dominant power structure sets not only the language rules but the
ground rules for which the language functions. It uses a creative range of
strategies to stifle voices of the oppressed. (493)
In (re)interpreting the identification of Jesus outside the tradition of biblical scripture, Willard and Wells were not only able to render a new vision of Jesus, but also reveal a fresh (re)presentation of their subjectivity, which was motivated by the conflation of woman and woman and black to less than.

In “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision,” Adrienne Rich offers a direct connection to (re)presentation of the feminine (and racial), which she argues is tantamount to continued existence. For Rich, replacing the aura of a text with its lived experience is liberation. She notes that this act of disavowal is vital for women to turn the dangerously traditional and canonical texts into a (re)presentation that reflects their subject position, rather than deflects from their subject position. Rich writes:

Re-vision-the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction-is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for woman, is more than a search for identity: it is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. (18)

Even as Rich argues for women to ‘re-vision’ the text, she cautions that this counter-move does not come without risks and is “difficult and dangerous” (19). Further, she writes, the political act of re-visioning is new to women, and “as we try to find language and images for a consciousness we are just coming into, and with little in the past to support us” (19), the task may appear opaque and pointless. However, muses Rich, the old tropes are quite “divisive and [. . .] ultimately destructive,” and to believe in the “myth of the special woman,” is to be a “token woman,” (21)
which at its core cannot articulate the multiple subjectivities that constitute the feminine. In short, Rich argues, “writing is renaming” (23) and self-authenticating, which was an empowering trope that both Willard and Wells embedded in their rhetorical strategy to disrupt the sociopolitical balance that privileged man over woman and white over black.

**The American Jeremiad: From Concept to Connections**

Sacvan Bercovitch suggests in *The American Jeremiad* that the European Puritans mapped the rhetorical structure for the jeremiad. While this form of “political sermon” (4) inspired their moral action as the divinely chosen to spread the good news gospel in America, the most prominent feature of the European Puritan jeremiad was “its unshakable optimism” (7). Further, writes Bercovitch, the rhetoric in the Puritan’s jeremiad was redeveloped over time and served as a model for the current conception of the American jeremiad. However, like Willard and Wells, the Puritans believed they were specifically selected by the divine for a particular message and thus revisioned Biblical scripture for their specific crusades. Moreover, writes Bercovitch, the rhetoric of the Puritans was noticeably different and he posits:

[. . .] from the start they sounded a different note. Theirs was a peculiar mission, they explained, for they were a “peculiar people,” a company of Christians not only called but chosen, and chosen not only for heaven but as instruments of a sacred historical design. [. . .]. To this end, they revised the message of the jeremiad. Not that they minimized the threat of divine retribution; but on the contrary, they asserted it with a ferocity unparalleled in the European pulpit. But they qualified it in a way that turned threat into celebration. In their case, they believed, God’s punishments were *corrective*, not destructive. (7-8)
By making the distinction in concept from a European jeremiad to an American jeremiad, the Puritans were able to recognize the different cultural, social, and political patterns of America. As a mode of rhetorical expression, the American jeremiad offered an adaptable form of creativeness that the European model resisted. Thus, in its new conception the American jeremiad “posits a movement from promise to experience—from the ideal of community to the shortcomings of community life—and thence forward, with prophetic assurance, toward the resolution that incorporates (as it transforms) both the promise and the condemnation” (16). According to Bercovitch, “the American Puritan jeremiad was the ritual of a culture on an errand” (23) to inculcate its ideology to an America still viewed as morally wild and untamed and thus “a culture based on a faith in process” (23). Therefore, the new version of the jeremiad established in America had to redefine its character if it wanted to become part of the cultural and theological identity of America. In doing so, the “function was to create a climate of anxiety that helped release the restless ‘progressivist’ energies required for the success of the venture” (23). As Methodist women, both Willard and Wells joined the social and the political within the American jeremiad and expressed the shared social and moral rules, values, and beliefs. Not only did the jeremiad provide the raw material for their suffrage and anti-lynching campaigns, the jeremiad as a fusion of the social and the political provided a theological model for their political rhetoric. That is, both rhetors “absorbed the personal into the social errand” (25) since they had a lived perspective to their social and political reform movements, which they assessed by a gendered and racial perspective.

If It Be Your Will: The Jeremiad as a Gendered and Racial Trope for Liberation

Although the 1908 Social Creed was written several years after Willard’s death (1898) and beyond the most active period of Wells’ anti-lynching crusade, it seemed to address all the social
anxieties of the nineteenth century within its theological manifesto. However, while the 1908 Social Creed was essential to Methodism’s analysis of worker abuses in factories, it can be argued that the rhetorical space which allowed voice into this political sphere were rooted in the gendered and racialized rhetoric of Willard and Wells and its appeal to justice and morality. For instance, while the 1908 Social Creed maintains its Methodist commitment to social and civic justice, it avoids any mention of gender and race in its focus on abusive capitalist institutions such as the textile factory mills\(^45\) in the northeast, which operated on the abuse of young immigrant girls and women\(^46\). Ironically, the abuses that occurred in the mills simulated the very gendered, racial, and class abuses that Willard and Wells addressed—feminine subjugation, racial targeting, and class stratification. The 1908 Social Creed states,

The Methodist Episcopal Church stands:

For equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life.

For the principles of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions.

For the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational diseases, injuries and mortality.

For the abolition of child labor.

For such regulation of the conditions of labor for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community.\(^47\)

For the suppression of the "sweating system."

For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the

\(^{45}\) See [http://faculty.uml.edu/sgallagher/Mill_girls.htm](http://faculty.uml.edu/sgallagher/Mill_girls.htm) for information on the Lowell Mill Girls and factory abuses.

\(^{46}\) Although the female laborers were overwhelmingly Irish, there were many other ethnic groups targeted because of their Eastern European ethnicity.

\(^{47}\) I am inferring that the word is community.
lowest practical point, with work for all; and for that degree of leisure for all which is the condition of the highest human life.

For a release for [from] employment one day in seven.

For a living wage in every industry.

For the highest wage that each industry can afford, and for the most equitable division of the products of industry that can ultimately be devised.

For the recognition of the Golden Rule and the mind of Christ as the supreme law of society and the sure remedy for all social ills.

While the Methodist social creed bridges the social and political mechanisms through which gendered, racial, and class abuses occur, the manifesto’s conspicuous omission of gender and race—groups most affected by exploitation—is reminiscent of the Fourteenth Amendment, which legally defined citizenship as male. Although social and political restrictions based on gender, race, and class created boundaries, the evangelical rhetoric of Willard and Wells disarmed the embodied rhetoric of institutionalized power in the public sphere to gain equity in the private sphere before the textual condemnation in the 1908 Social Creed.

In “Stepping outside the ‘Ladies’ Department’: Women’s Expanding Rhetorical Boundaries,” Lisa Shaver strengthens the argument that the revolutionary claims of Methodism valued theory over practice. That is, while Methodism set the tone for opening rhetorical spaces for women in the pulpit and their discursive practices in the “Ladies Department” pieces”(54), a column of the Christian Advocate written by and for women in the Methodist newspaper, Methodist gestures were mediated by a traditional and canonical adherence to Biblical scripture. Shaver writes,

Within these textual communities, women were cast into new roles that were
institutionally sanctioned and widely disseminated. As a result, women were converted into *rhetorical agents* [my emphasis] for the church—extending their influence to audiences beyond their local congregations and communities (54).

While Methodism influenced the concept of blending social gospel with social activism in the public sphere, it also paradoxically “helped confirm the canon of domesticity” (55). Further according to Shaver, “At the same that the church was elevating women as models of piety, it reinforced prescribed roles for them in the domestic sphere, attempting to contain them within a patriarchal structure” (55). As rhetorical agents for Methodist social gospel Willard and Wells no doubt were aware of Methodism’s evangelical façade, which lacked clarity in its camouflaging of patriarchal legacies while at the same time incorporating progressive social ideals on gender and racial equity. Shaver criticizes this theological ambiguity arguing,

> In essence, the “Ladies Department” column acted as an ideological apparatus for the church, encouraging a woman’s spirituality while reinscribing her “proper” place. Women’s containment in the domestic sphere was intended to preserve evangelical ministers’ perception of proper social structure [. . . ]. By encouraging women as purveyors of piety, ministers were strengthening the resolve and commitment of their most fervent followers, and, by keeping women in subordinate positions in the kitchen, parlor, and pews, ministers were also protecting their authority over them. (55)

Although Methodism seemed to endorse the inequalities of the sociopolitical sphere by its embodiment of social and cultural norms in its manifesto, Willard and Wells disclaimed the theological and political tropes by turning to their gendered and racial cultures for liberation. By disassembling biblical scripture as a traditional and canonical sacred law from its previous
patriarchal inscription, Willard and Wells invoked the Jeremiad as a co-operative rhetoric. At the same time, they used the art of rhetoric to free the observation of biblical scripture from its marginalizing analysis of their subjectivities by invoking their gendered and racial subjectivities to generate a reaction against their representations as human subjects.

In *The Afro-American Jeremiad: Appeals for Justice in America*, David Howard-Pitney maps the political and cultural geography of the jeremiad, or lament over oppression, which has its biblical scriptural storytelling roots in the Judaic Diaspora. According to Howard-Pitney, “the American jeremiad originated among seventh-century New England Puritans as a vital expression of their self-identity as a chosen people” (7), to speak to the social and political structures which were implicit in the moral crisis of their new home. Yet, “despite its dark tones, the American jeremiad was filled with underlying optimism about America’s fate and mission” (7) which in the nineteenth century strained to factor in the sociopolitical function of women and blacks. For Howard-Pitney, while blacks have consistently reflected on the Messianic themes of the jeremiad, it “addresses two American chosen peoples—black and white—whose millennial destinies, while distinct, are also inextricably entwined” (15). Howard-Pitney argues that despite this conjoined future between blacks and whites, blacks significantly related to the built-in rhetoric of salvation and ruin within the oratorical structure of the jeremiad, and thus appropriated cultural themes to claim it (13-16).

However, given its liberating tone and biblical endorsement for justice, the jeremiad does not encase only one subjectivity perspective. In fact, while many blacks like Wells racialized the jeremiad, similarly many white Methodist women like Willard genderized the jeremiad to raise

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the level of awareness of women’s lack of agency. This social gospel mission also had a forceful presence in raising issues of black disempowerment. Yet, within the WCTU, the cultural force of transformation fueled the identity tension between these two ideological approaches, which surfaced over lynching between Willard and Wells. Conversely, the interlocking theme between Willard’s and Well’s emancipatory social gospel is the jeremiad—an important rhetorical methodology since both orator’s believed they were divinely inspired like the biblical character Moses to liberate their people—women and blacks—from a similar bondage of oppression.

**Take this Longing**

In an August 13, 1861, journal entry, Willard recounts her desire for release from a middle-class cocoon to a change that will validate or perhaps transform her vision, which at that point, had no distinctive ideological contours. Willard, in a self-flagellating rage, argues with God for a climactic experience in her life to validate the internal theological conflict that consumed her, which she was unclear about, although the tension clearly elevated her social consciousness to a new frame of reference. Willard writes,

> Make me suffer—send troubles thick as the locusts of Egypt⁴⁹, if need be, but bring me out right; refine me in the fire, but oh! Infinite, Loving Father do not leave me in the dark!” (Gifford 132)

Although Willard demonstrates a predilection for dramatic gestures, she projects a stern and aggressive ethos, which later as president of the WCTU she subdued as the “feminine feminine.” Her narrative also reveals spontaneity and ideological distance from orthodox self-control. However, this forceful characteristic is perhaps connected to the “Temper” she wanted to

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⁴⁹ Willard uses same Biblical reference in her New York *Voice* interview.
restrain, but could not, in her daily personal resolution. Moreover, Willard appears all too willing to submit to any distribution of darkness for the light that truth will bring, which is encapsulated in a good/evil moral binary she subtly underscores. Willard’s awareness of her changing consciousness based on the social transformation in the nineteenth century perhaps contributed to her ideological abandonment of the Victorian pattern of sameness prescribed for middle-class white women. One wonders if reconstructed consciousness has anything to do with acknowledgement of her lesbianism through her alleged Boston marriage to her assistant Anna Gordon (Capitani). Still, her angst over her impending conversion would not immediately reveal its purpose for her until fourteen years later in 1875, when her divinely-inspired revelation grew more pronounced in its detail. It was then, while at a WCTU-related meeting where her destiny lost its incoherent veneer and her appeal for a revelation came into complete focus. She writes in her autobiography, *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, of the revelatory and psychological emancipating moment:

[. . .] while in Columbus for a Sunday engagement, [I] remained at home in the morning for Bible study and prayer. Upon my knees alone, in the room of my hostess, who was a veteran Crusader, there was borne in upon my mind, as I believe, from loftier regions, the declaration, “You are to speak for woman’s ballot as a weapon of protection to her home and tempted loved ones from the tyranny of drink,” and then for the first and only time in my life, there flashed through my brain a complete line of argument and illustration—the same that I used a few months later before Woman’s Congress, in St. George’s Hall, Philadelphia, when I first publicly avowed my faith in the enfranchisement of women. I at once wrote Mrs. Wittenmeyer, with whom I had always been in
perfect accord, telling her I wished to speak on “The Home Protection Ballot” at the international Temperance Convention of Women, then being planned by us as a Centennial feature of the movement. She replied mildly, but firmly, declining to permit the subject to be brought forward. (351)

While Willard’s earlier revelations were cryptic and vague, this one appears quite lucid and specific saying “You are to speak for woman’s ballot as a weapon of protection to her home and tempted loved ones from the tyranny of drink.” In her journal reflection Willard writes that this kind of detailed revelation occurred “for the first and only time in my life.” However, the most interesting feature of Willard’s religious experience is how it outlines quite suddenly, as though she had better grab it now or lose it, a complete rhetorical script for her to follow. Willard writes, “there flashed through my brain a complete line of argument and illustration.” Willard writes that she then “publicly avowed my faith in the enfranchisement of women.” Annie Wittenmeyer, then president of the WCTU and with whom Willard says she “had always been in perfect accord,” offered a stern and terse rejection of Willard’s divine authority and responded “mildly, but firmly, declining to permit the subject to be brought forward.”

Even though Wittenmeyer did not grant Willard permission to speak on suffrage—a year later, in 1876, Willard ignored Wittenmeyer’s authority over her divine sanction and spoke without permission before a large audience while Wittenmeyer was present. This was a bold theoretical and rhetorical risk for Willard because she had neither a conceptual articulation of the Woman Question nor any rhetorical structure to her ideology other than what she gained through her spiritual enlightenment. Vicki Tolar Collins argues that “Methodist women believed God was their ultimate source of rhetorical power and authority and would guide the very organization and content of their speech” (340). Willard’s compelling need to perform illustrates
not only the temperament she could not bridle, but also reveals the *political* alteration of her theological consciousness, which was the principal dialectic of her social gospel crusade. She writes,

[. . .] disregarding the earnest, almost tearful pleading of my friends, I repeated my “suffrage speech” with added emphasis. [. . .] I then gave the people my argument, and though I could feel the strong conservatism of an audience of Christian women, in New Jersey in 1876, I felt far more strongly the undergirdings of the Spirit. At the close I was applauded beyond my hopes. The dignified chairman [I understand this to be Wittenmeyer] came forward saying, “I wish it clearly understood that the speaker represents herself and not the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, for we do not propose to trail our skirts through the mire of politics.” These words were received in silence, and I knew then that the hearts of the women were with the forward movement. As we left the hall my honored chief [again, Wittenmeyer] whispered regretfully, “You might have been a leader, but now you’ll be only a scout.” (351-52)

Although Willard “could feel [and visually see] the strong conservatism of an audience of Christian women,” she continued to chip away at the foundation of women’s social position—patriarchal hegemony. Although her performance sounds carefully paced despite the glaring resistance by conservative opponents she writes, “I felt far more strongly the undergirdings of the Spirit.” Her beliefs gave her compelling force of will and divine authority to sustain her performance to the end where she reflects “I was applauded beyond my hopes.” After Wittenmeyer stands up before the same crowd to renounce Willard’s progressive position on women’s suffrage, Willard appears characteristically smug and overly ambitious—a charge
Wells would also accuse her of during their lynching controversy. While Wittenmeyer castigates her before the audience, Willard appears to sit stoically, but triumphantly, because, as she recounts, “I knew then that the hearts of the women were with the forward movement” on women’s suffrage. Her triumph became clear three years later, in 1879, when Willard unseated Wittenmeyer as the president of the WCTU—a position Willard would claim until her death in 1898.

It is clear that the conceptual aim of Willard’s ideology restricted and suppressed the overwhelming social and political marginality of women. It appears her brilliant performance gave a fresh new argument for defining womanhood, given the robust response and her election to presidency three years later. However, her political justifications for women’s rights did not destigmatize the traditional and canonical representation of women, which was central to the political right of citizenship.

Theological Politics of Universal Suffrage

Although authoritarian patriarchal policies were preserved in evangelical rhetoric, the nineteenth century feminist ideology nonetheless advocated change. For instance,

Nineteenth-century American feminism was deeply rooted in evangelical revivalism. Its theology and practice motivated and equipped women and men to adopt a feminist ideology, to reject stereotyped sex roles, and to work for positive changes in marriage, church, society, and politics. Most women’s rights leaders—whether in the church, education, reform organizations, or the media—were products of evangelical backgrounds or were deeply influenced by evangelical culture, whether or not they acknowledged that debt or maintained any allegiance to it later in life. (Hardesty qtd. Bizzell 379)
While both white and black argued from a religious perspective, the self-justifying rage of black women was also unveiled in the jeremiad, a lament that stressed the weight of racial oppression. In Wells’s view, her subjectivity was reducible to race whereas Willard’s subjectivity was reducible to gender. Both subjectivities have deep cultural and political importance. In each case, structural barriers, like slavery and the cult of domesticity, shaped their marginality as women and they were bound even tighter by theological idealism (McCurry). Clearly, though, the weight of those gendered and racial influences on their consciousness has as much to do with Willard and Wells’ perceptions of their subjectivities as with the structural impediments themselves.

In a riskier move, since she lived under the threat of lynching (see Chapter 1), Wells converts her private anguish into her public performance by invoking the universal experience of sociopolitical alienation and oppression—two potent themes of the jeremiad that were etched in white women’s and black women’s imaginary. Moreover, while Willard’s radical revision reflected a gendered expressivity, Wells’ rhetorical style is an acknowledgement of Black expressivity, which forsook the flamboyant imagery of Willard’s for a deep analysis of the challenges that came with the politics of her slave ancestry. Its stylistic roots are in the African American jeremiad, but it also reflects the social class influences post-bellum blacks picked up in the places where they lived after they migrated from the South in record numbers.

Like Willard, Wells’ (re)representation of her subjectivity was embodied with religious thought. Her subjectivity as a black, where she ideologically gazed into her otherness with a myopic and temperamental focus, ironically created the very condition she fought against— isolation. Moreover, like Willard, Wells gained liberatory knowledge she believed was also divinely inspired. When she refused to join the Slayton Lyceum Bureau because she was told by
Mr. Slayton\textsuperscript{50} (226) that she could not speak about lynching, Wells argues that it was her divine conversion and not her own will that required her to join the anti-lynching crusade. She writes,

\begin{quote}
I told him that there was no other excuse for my being before the public except to tell about the outrages upon my people; that I regarded myself an instrument that had been chosen to do this and that I could not accept his offer. […] I felt that having been dedicated to the cause it would be sacrilegious to turn aside in a money-making effort for myself. Not only that, in the first eagerness of my endeavor with a crusade, I felt that my people would rally to my support and hold up my hands in the fight I was making for them. (226-227)
\end{quote}

Unlike Willard, who readily performs her role as an privileged spokesperson for the divine, Wells’ assumes a marginal and outsider status. In fact, she portrays herself as “an instrument,” rather than a skilled orator. While this may not have been a cognizant move on Wells’ part, it illustrates the patriarchal ordering of institutional religion in the black woman’s consciousness. Although implicit, it demonstrates through Wells’ expressivity her outsider-status within both the political and religious domain. While the gendered white female body was suppressed, the black body, both male and female, was policed. Wells, unlike Willard, could not ignore or erase the Cartesian relation to the body and its sociopolitical narrative at a time when blacks where being lynched. Therefore, Wells argued she “was chosen” and being so was “dedicated to the cause” of racial liberation. Wells also sternly rejected any material capital gain from her spiritual command because she considered taking money for this “sacrilegious” and because she did not want her vision quest to “turn aside in a money-making effort for myself” that would deflect

\textsuperscript{50} Head of the influential and progressive Slayton Lyceum Bureau.
from her spiritually ordained social gospel of *racial* liberation. For Wells, there is no distinction between her theological and political representation—they coexist within her subject status as a black and as a woman where both subjectivities are symbolic systems in meaning-making.

Wells illustrates the tight construction of her theological and political ideology in her progressive position on Frederick Douglass’ white widow, Helen Pitts Douglass, who was shunned by both blacks and whites when her husband died. However, Wells seems particularly critical of whites who recoiled from Helen Pitts Douglass, rather than blacks. This suggests that Wells’ political modes of thought were constituted in her cultural expressivity as a black, rather than her gendered expressivity as a woman. She writes,

> Because white people forget Christianity and good breeding when dealing with those who belong to the darker races is no justification for this dark race to do the same. I cannot see it any other way than that the truly Christian, well-bred person is always so, no matter with whom they come in contact.  

(*Crusade* 75)

While Wells’ criticism of white Christianity is cogent and well-taken, it is interesting that she uses it as a moral background for how blacks should *not* behave. In this regard, Wells critically approaches the black consciousness from a site of expressive imperfection by the illumination of white moral violation.

**Testimony and the Blues**

Like the American jeremiad, the blues as testimony is a conflation of the social with the political. While there are some poignant spiritual overtones in blues music, as a form of testimony in black cultural expression it resists a static conception. However, the abstractness of this genre does not mean it lacks a vigorous and dynamic ideology like the American jeremiad. In fact, a chosen
speaker ground the roots of blues testimony in the sacred call in moments of crisis to deliver a message. Moreover, while the American jeremiad has a national representation, testimony in the blues is derived from the cultural tradition of storytelling. Like the American jeremiad, testimony through the lens of the blues involves countering the political and the social by the divinely inspired. Moreover, unlike the American jeremiad that speaks to conflict between the subject and institutional hierarchies of power and dominance, testimony in the blues speaks to the agonistic struggle over rights and privileges between blacks and whites.

In *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature*, Houston A. Baker, Jr. contends that there are no methodological conflicts in black cultural expression. He contests that the blues contains a multifaceted cultural mechanism designed to sustain the varied aspects of “Afro-American culture” which he argues “is a complex, reflexive enterprise which finds its proper figuration in blues conceived as a matrix” (3). For Baker, although “The matrix is a point of ceaseless input and output, a web of intersecting, crisscrossing impulses always in productive transit” (3), it signifies a uniform aesthetic. Therefore, he posits, “the blues are a synthesis” (5) of literary, cultural, and political forms to signify an ideological rhetorical space directed at the institutional forces of power, though through the oral tradition of storytelling. As a visceral cultural response inextricably linked to the diasporic struggle of blacks in America, Baker writes that by,

Combining work songs, group seculars, field hollers, sacred harmonies, proverbial wisdom, folk philosophy, political commentary, ribald humor, elegiac lament, and much more they [blues] constitute an amalgam that seems always to have been in motion in America—always becoming.
shaping, transforming, displacing the peculiar experiences of Africans in
the New World. (5)

Moreover, argues Baker, the blues matrix is a form of black cultural expression which “avoids
simple dualities” (9) by rejecting a fixed stylistic domain given the multivocality of various
cultural perspectives that shapes it. Therefore, Baker envisages “the blues matrix [as] a “cultural
invention”: a “negative symbol” that generates (or obliges one to invent) its own referents” (9),
which is a crucial part of black expressionism though it discards a distinct form of delivery.

Although Wells associated blues music to the immoral behavior in a Chicago “good time
house” (Crusade 330), the blues influenced her oratorical delivery, which in essence was
storytelling. In spite of her poignant presentation before her black middle-class woman
audience, Wells discusses the limitation of her emotive response to a political topic, which
unquestionably formed the ideological content of her rhetoric. For example, in Crusade, Wells
evaluates the symbolic representation of her tears and the rhetorical style that her audience
interpreted as effective:

But the women didn’t feel that I had spoiled things by my breakdown.

They seemed to think that it had made an impression on the audience
favorable to the cause and to me. (Crusade 80)

Wells also recounts one of the few men in the Lyric Hall audience reaction. While Frederick
Douglass’ great granddaughter’s husband interpreted her tears’ impact on an audience of self-
absorbed New Yorkers, who were guided more by logical reasoning than emotional signals of
internal struggle. She contextualizes his and her comments saying:

it [her tears] did more to convince cynical and selfish New York of the
seriousness of the lynching situation than anything else could have done. He
said that if I had deliberately sought a way to arrest their attention I could not have done anything more effective. I had no knowledge of stage business, but I was relieved and happy to know that they did not consider that I had spoiled things on my first appearance before a New York audience. (Crusade 80)

It is clear that Wells’s tears opens up questions about the aesthetics of her delivery since it reflects the thematic patterns in blues testimony of extreme loss and uncertainty that is balanced by both spiritual renewal and hope. While Fredrick Douglass’ great granddaughter’s husband’s and other members of the audience recognized the effective interplay of Wells’ tears with her message. Further, her audience was sophisticated enough to comprehend that even if her tears were a performance Wells “could not have done anything more effective” to emphasize the close and emotional connection to lynching. Wells on the other hand viewed her tears not only as marginal, that is feminine, but more importantly as showmanship. She proclaims, “I had no knowledge of stage business,” which for Wells was a structural defect in sociopolitical matters. Therefore, for Wells, her audience interpreted her tears as a theatrical background to defraud for a personal advantage—a trick Wells accused Willard of during her visit to the South in 1890. In addition, Wells views her feminized form of expression as having “the same effect as that of acting” (Rhetoric 1404A), which clarifies the point about the body/mind dynamic made earlier.

Wells’ tears were more than just an example of the body/mind discourse—they are an illustration of two distinct black cultural expressions within the context of the jeremiad—testimony and the blues. As a rhetorical strategy, the blues as an expressionistic method of delivery clearly contributes to the sociopolitical in black orators and as a form of cultural expression although its method—testimony—may appear unfocused and unpersuasive. Although embedding sociopolitical discourse within a cultural form of expression not only
jeopardizes the credibility of the politic, but it also illustrates the challenges of preserving cultural legacies under the watchful eye of a rigid historical and canonical critical lens.

**Delivery in Black and White**

In *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors,* Lindal Buchanan argues that “Delivery involves far more than a speaker’s use of voice, gesture, and expression on a public platform.” Given delivery’s symbolic representation, she argues that delivery “involves complex interplay among a speaker, an audience, and a plethora of social and ideological factors” (3) which cannot remain securely within the rhetor’s domain of control—if such a phenomenon exists. However, as Buchanan argues, any representation, for instance “a variable like gender (or sexuality, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, age, class, disability, and so on), affects rhetoric” (4) because it extends the rhetorical space of the orator by displacing old rhetorical geographies while at the same time creating new rhetorical geographies. This new rhetorical territory allow rhetors, especially marginalized rhetors like Willard and Wells, to go beyond the traditional and canonical rhetorical domains of control which assert their sovereignty by condemning the gendered and racialized rhetor’s voice as insurgent.

Ironically, though, these radical voices are often unaware of their own revolutionary voices much less their opening up new rhetorical territories because they are accustomed to neither hearing nor articulating their own voices within a sphere that welcomes their gendered and racialized perspective. For example, aware of her new visibility following her emotional display during her testimony, Wells like her audience is consciously altered by the fresh awareness on lynching that she expresses. Although the destructive impact and full implications of the decentered state of gendered and racialized rhetors can never be known, Wells’ sudden lucidness in her own message is an example of the rhetorical effect of the rhetor’s voice on their
personal consciousness. She recounts in *Crusade*, “So many things came out of that wonderful testimonial” (80), which no doubt ignited the ideological content of her anti-lynching crusade. Specifically, two material forms of social gospel rhetoric were spawned:

First, it was the real beginning of the club movement among the colored women in this country.

Second, that testimonial was the beginning of public speaking for me.

(80-81)

Like Willard, Wells is also unacquainted with the symbiotic relation between her theological and political ideologies. Further, both feminist rhetors are uninformed about the symbolic cues like their gender and race, thus cultural behaviors, which orient the style and delivery of their rhetoric. Although in the nineteenth century, there was a strict relation between the rhetorical binaries of feminine/masculine and black/white it is clear that Methodism did not substantiate these rhetorical boundaries as rigidly as some religious bodies because they encouraged the blending of the political and theological with social activism. Buchanan argues that “feminine (and racial) delivery enabled women rhetors not only to defy dominant gender norms dictating their public silence but also to maintain the appearance of femininity even as they moved and spoke in domains coded as masculine” (80). Moreover, one can argue that Methodism, the religious orientation of Willard and Wells, opened the rhetorical space for the receptivity of their gendered and racialized rhetorical delivery.

**Conclusion**

Without question, the social gospel rhetoric of Methodist activism played a crucial role in the oratory of Willard and Wells because if anything it opened up a rhetorical space for them. While Willard genderized her social gospel for temperance and suffrage, Wells racialized her social
gospel to speak out against lynching and to promote black women’s enfranchisement. Both feminist orators also invoked their unique cultural aesthetics, including (although perhaps unknowingly) to the jeremiad, which shaped and gave more emphasis to their crusades for white women’s and black women’s rights. Further, like most dynamic orators, Willard and Wells surrendered to the impulse of the religious call, though at times, in contentious dialectic with the body/mind dynamic. However, this binary, once reconciled, was a motivating and dynamic force in their rhetorical presence for their audience and, most surprisingly, for themselves. Moreover, the amplification of the feminist rhetor’s voice in her own consciousness not only makes her more aware of her ideological position, but it also unites her in a profound way to her audience.
CHAPTER 4
The Rhetoric of ‘True Womanhood’ – A New Discourse for Rebellion

We’ve pretty much come to the end of a time when you can have a space that is “yours only”—just for the people you want to be there. Even when we have our “women-only” festivals, there is no such thing. The fault is not necessarily with the organizers of the gathering. To a large extent it’s because we have just finished with that kind of isolating. There is no hiding place. There is nowhere you can go and only be with people who are like you. It’s over. Give it up.

- Bernice Johnson Reagon,
“Coalition Politics: Turning the Century.”

Even before the Civil War, which offered many doors for women to articulate their political, social, and feminist consciousness, Victorian society argued about the woman question: What is the meaning of womanhood? How is being a woman different from being a man? What is woman’s suffrage going to accomplish? While the “woman question” during the Victorian era was generally about the sociopolitical role of white women in the polity, as anti-slavery rhetoric began to reach a critical velocity, the woman question and slavery—that is, black women and slavery—came to the forefront as well. As the political consciousness of both white and black women increased and as their conformity to the “Cult of True Womanhood” ideology decreased, they became even more aware of their spatial limitations as subjects within the sociopolitical spheres. White women recognized their marginal status as being equal to black women when the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment (see chapter 2) provided suffrage to black men over white women who also had lobbied aggressively for enfranchisement.

However, uniting white and black womanhood to seek universal suffrage was a

51 The Victorian Era (1837-1901) is characterized by the ornate style, rigid morality, and social class distinction during the reign of Queen Victoria of England. However, in America the behavior, customs, and traditions were also adopted including the emphasis on religion and spirituality.
dangerous first in examining the nature of womanhood because the supposed unification of the
two groups chose white womanhood as the symbolic frame to depict womanhood—theory that
black women argued against and rejected. Paradoxically though, both black and white women
used a similar discourse, the jeremiad, in their evangelical rhetoric to disarm and reconstruct
notions of womanhood outside the traditional and canonical scripture in the Bible. As
Methodists, both Willard and Wells argued that sociopolitical problems were curable with the
moral tone of Christian thought. In short, Willard and Wells employed evangelical rhetoric as a
driving ideological force when speaking to their audiences so that a modern version of
womanhood might emerge. In this way, their political-evangelical fusing created a paradox for
their critics. By blending the sociopolitical to their theological narratives, Willard and Wells
illuminated and projected the feminine voice for social reform. It is important to understand the
role of womanhood in the lives of Willard and Wells during the nineteenth century since their
choices and the consequences of those choices were based on their social construction and
representation as women. These choices and consequences in a sense led to the inclusion of both
black and white women into the political sphere, which embodied a distinct woman’s
consciousness within the rhetoric of Willard and Wells.

This chapter begins with an examination of the nature of “‘True Womanhood.’” Second,
the investigation of the jeremiad as a gender and racial rhetorical trope in Willard’s and Well’s
rhetoric continue to demonstrate its cultural and political force to both obscure and make women
visible. Additionally, this chapter provides an analysis of both the intertextuality and
intersectionality of Willard’s woman suffrage campaign and Wells’ anti-lynching crusade to
demonstrate that the rise of these two movements were generated during the same kairotic
moment.
Nineteenth Century Black and White Women: A Beneficial Partnership?

Social and political transformation in the nineteenth century promised new possibilities for inclusion into the political culture for both white and black women. With the rigid strictures of the separate-spheres ideology losing its power to constrain women within the limited spatial confines of the home, these first-wave feminists generally agreed that they needed congruity in the rhetoric for women’s suffrage because it was still a fragile political objective. However, one of the main threads that prevented a collective women’s rhetoric from subverting the prescriptive and normative discourse of womanhood was the master status of white women over black women. The question of what constitutes woman quickly turned from its epistemological character to an ontological nature given its complication by the humanity of black women, which was still under debate by Southern Conservatives who were still resistant to the new articulation of blackness in America.

The subtle exclusion and sometimes outright rejection of racial issues within the larger public sphere created an atmosphere of alienation and forced assimilation for black women who found it difficult, if not impossible, to share the same vision of womanhood as their white WCTU sisters. Black women again emerged as marginalized subjects with no agency. Although the tolerance for black women within the WCTU was offensive, black women would not concede to the dominant white images of womanhood that Willard and the WCTU projected as the future of image of all womanhood. While white women’s subjectivity was grounded in a reflection of lived white marginality, black women’s subjectivity was based on a lived reality of both marginality and alienation. Therefore, the vision of an alternate America that included women from all racial categories was intrinsically intertwined with the political image of black womanhood, which was not only a reminder of the slave past, but also the most promising
example of the transformation that a post slavery America presented. According to black journalist and clubwoman Victoria Earle Matthews, the sociopolitical fates of black and white women were especially interconnected. Although there was an ambiguous and tenuous relation between black and white women regarding the recharacterization of womanhood, Matthews argued the disagreement could not overshadow the realization that:

We need them. We have always needed them . . . in the work of religion, of education, of temperance, of morality, of industrialism; and above all we need their assistance in combating the public opinion and laws that degrade our womanhood because it is black and not white; for of a truth, and as a universal law, an injury to one woman, is an injury to all women. (qtd. in Carby 118)

Despite black women’s skepticism of white women, activist black women like Wells would remain undisturbed by their overall objective of self-mastery; that is, an inner freedom that was based on an ideology of independence and resistance to their expected conformity of white womanhood. Black women provided a powerful political aesthetic for the WCTU to look more progressive, more inclusive, and more tolerant of the changing social and political geography of inclusiveness that the Reconstruction Era ushered in. By including black women as members, Willard visually characterized the WCTU as a united feminist social movement that blended race and class and superimposed the ideal of a mythic America with the manipulation of true womanhood ideology. By criticizing the ethos of Willard on lynching, Wells jeopardized the credibility of Willard’s visual representation of universal womanhood in the WCTU; when Willard invited black women to become members, Wells knew this created a symbolic rhetoric of inclusion rather than a genuine one. However, both black and white women were structured within the same masculine hegemony framework that denied them the democratic freedom of
political and civil liberties, which in their view was the same equal citizenship right of men. Used as a strategic politic to collapse structural inequalities for women, but most profoundly for white women within the political culture, Willard’s vision of freedom for white women once in focus, differed from Well’s vision of freedom for black women. Indeed, for black women, freedom was mental independence and disengagement from a slave past where their bodies were at the discretion of the white male master for sex and the female mistress for domestic labor. For white women, freedom was also mental autonomy; but in addition, white women believed freedom was tantamount to civil liberty—a political desire they recognized as critical to the principle of citizenship affirmed in the Declaration of Independence. However, both conceptions of freedom were contained within the same complex sociopolitical mechanism of patriarchy that gave them no authority either as white women or as black women within any political debate, which affected their lives as women.

Although the changing images of America’s citizenry and their subjectivity have deeply influenced the conceptualization of freedom, the fundamental principle of freedom is never concentrated within a particular and stable ideological space. While all notions of freedom must be regarded within the threshold of history from which it is carved, freedom, as a political discourse, is determined rather than reflects the subject’s situatedness given articulations of freedom are construed and constructed by the political power of dominant groups. In this approach, freedom, then, is an ideological map best articulated by the subjects’ identity within a particular social/historical moment. Eric Foner notes that freedom also experiences radical transformation that stirs debate from different theoretical, political attempts to locate and define a fluid meaning. Therefore, Foner is quick to note that:

It is pointless to attempt to identify a single “real” meaning against which others
are to be judged. Rather than seeing freedom as a fixed category or predetermined concept, I view it as an “essentially contested concept,” one that by its very nature is the subject of disagreement. Use of such a concept automatically presupposes an ongoing dialogue with other, competing meanings. (xiv)

With this understanding, there is no authentic version of freedom because “at different periods of American history different ideas of freedom have been conceived and implemented” (Foner xv) to evoke the a sense of justice for subjects outside and below the institutions that embody and distribute social, political, civil, and economic rights and privileges. The design of freedom is ideological in its nature and thus is associated with the continued transformation of American democracy. Foner argues that is why “the clash between dominant and dissenting views has constantly reshaped the idea’s meaning” (xv). If the subject’s identity within the sociopolitical order is tied to the conception of freedom, it is no wonder that its meaning is bound in historical struggle. Further, as a concept, freedom plays a defining role in the sociopolitical characterization of the subject since the current historical discourse of freedom will shape and exercise how particular subjects are viewed and ordered within the polity. Moreover, efforts to give a static meaning to freedom is fraught with paradoxes because the nature of freedom is a highly politicized and ideological conception produced in the imagination by struggle with new versions of its ambiguous character always under construction. With this perspective, Foner goes on to say:

Since freedom embodies not a single idea but a complex of values, the struggle to define its meaning is simultaneously an intellectual, social, economic, and political contest. A morally charged idea, freedom has
been used to convey and claim legitimacy for all kinds of grievances and hopes, fears about the present and visions of the future. (xv-xvi)

The significance of articulating a new conception of freedom in the rhetoric of ‘true womanhood’ involves re/storying\(^2\). That is, to select from one’s own cultural practices the symbols that signify and constitute the multivocality of the subject’s life experiences. In doing so, the subject’s re/storying not only overturns the historical and canonical representation of them, it also reverses their totalizing and prescriptive claims on the subject’s agency. Therefore, the subjects’ subjectivity is interpreted by their own vibrant cultural symbols of identity rather than the sovereignty of master narratives. Moreover, morality must also play a key and considerable role in the conceptualization of freedom since its nature is characterized principally by its transformation, which is bridged between the articulation of the subject and the historical moment that ushers in a new rhetorical declaration of freedom. In this way, the symbolic meaning of freedom is not trapped within the cultural roots of any particular group in power. Rather, its symbolic manifestation can both persevere and develop across cultural boundaries.

For nineteenth century white women, and particularly for black women, the act of re/storying meant removing the Darwinian account of their subjectivity that was a major trope in defining them as noncitizens. Thus, by reordering the authority of a god-ordained system that was socio-politically hostile to both black and white women, Willard and Wells rejected Darwinian ideology by modernizing Biblical scripture to fit the philosophies that appealed to woman’s and racial emancipatory rhetoric. In doing this, the “woman question” forced a

\(^2\) Although the term “restory” is used largely by creative writers, social scientists, and psychotherapists, I am using it as a political term by the subject to reinterpret their subjectivity with their own cultural knowledge rather than the “stock story” of the master narrative based on their race, gender, ethnicity or any representation that stereotypes the subject.
profound shift in thinking about the rights and status of womanhood and civil liberties but there was one key ideological difference to include in the rhetorical deliberation on universal woman—black womanhood. The rhetorical neutralization of historical and canonical images, language, and representation as opposition to the dominant imagery of womanhood no doubt signaled an ideological turn towards mental freedom by both black and white women. By constructing their representations of womanhood absent of the rhetorical casing of “True Womanhood” ideology, a rhetorical agenda was inevitably intertwined with a political agenda. While it may be argued that the issue is merely semantic, some feminist theorists have suggested that feminists are justified in revisiting dominant language expressions because they have played a leading role in directing the social formation of what constitutes womanhood. For example Mary E. Hawkesworth explains,

[. . .] feminists have long recognized the centrality of the politics of language to their multifaceted undertakings. Despite important differences concerning conceptions of equality and justice, and marked divergence in their choice of issues and strategies, feminists have agreed that the realization of their goals requires an assault on language in language. Thus feminist rhetorics have consciously attempted to reveal mystifications and legitimations embedded in dominant discourses. (444)

Empowering rhetoric used to articulate a coherent and comprehensive narrative representation of women ignores the many threads of womanhood, which contribute to the multivocality of womanhood. The narratives that drive the representation of womanhood in the sociopolitical order are not hidden and lacking rhetorical authority. Rather, they become part of the entrenched

53 The emphasis is mine.
regulatory system with already existing spatial lines of exclusion to direct the rhetorical space of women. Different articulations of new womanhood opens new insights to define, expand, and refresh the meaning of womanhood rather than keeping the term preserved within a particular social/historical moment. For Hawkesworth, “As discursive constructions, feminist rhetorics call worlds into being, inscribe new orders of possibility,” and “validate frames of reference and forms of explanation, and reconstitute histories serviceable for present and future projects” (444-45). In this model, then, while revised dominant narratives appear impartial and articulate and promote a clever ideology, the most successful triumph of patriarchy is its use of hegemony and exploitation as a means to legitimize its authority by confirming the subject’s complicity in their social and political condition. From this perspective,

an autonomous women’s voice has played no role in these determinations. Yet to create a façade of consent, women’s desire itself had become the locus of artful manipulation. To secure women’s collusion in their own subordination, patriarchy has devised a sophisticated ideology to mystify women’s minds and to constrain their hopes and expectations. Variously coded as philosophy, science, religion, law, this ideological edifice has so distorted woman’s perspective that it is impossible to think in terms other than those of the oppressor. (Hawkesworth 445-46)

In order to have a deepening understanding of how to rewrite, revision, and re/story their social, cultural, political, and legal exclusion, nineteenth century women simultaneously conceded to the traditional and canonical rules of culture and biblical scripture while at the same time engaged in agonistic behavior to combat their separation from the sociopolitical order. In effect, this is
measured appeasement and agitation as rhetorical strategy to gain access to a valuable resource—full and unencumbered inclusion within the political culture irrespective of gender or race—in short, suffrage and the rights and privileges that came with citizenship. To illuminate the social and political in their voices, Gerda Lerner concludes in her historical study of feminism that women should expand the notion of a feminist consciousness to include multiple conceptions and articulations of womanhood, rather than keeping the term locked within a narrow homogeneous comprehension that isolates and overpowers less conservative perspectives. Lerner identifies her vision of feminist consciousness as, “(1) the awareness of women that they belong to a subordinate group and that, as members of such a group, they have suffered wrongs; (2) the recognition that their condition of subordination is not natural, but socially determined; (3) the development of a sense of sisterhood; (4) the autonomous definition by women of their goals and strategies for changing their condition; and (5) the development of an alternate vision of the future” (274). While this critical re/storying of women’s particular belief system is vital to reversing and reshaping the master narratives on women’s representation, within a feminist social movement like the WCTU it can directly affect the ethos of the organization. For instance, if one group of women maintains a dominant status over the other women within a FSM, cooperative relations among the groups will suffer. Further, not only does agonistic behavior risk replicating what Lerner describes as the “patriarchal state” (276) or dominant hierarchies in the larger sociopolitical order, it also creates a monopoly on the ideological packaging of the FSM by marginalizing the voices of women who encounter similar hostilities within the sociopolitical culture they are confronting.

Postbellum Black Women: Renaming a Troubled Representation

Activist black women confronted the major ideologies of womanhood established by the
dominate white power structure which included both white men and women by renaming and redefining womanhood with their history of struggle and resistance in mind. Although their renaming womanhood contrasted starkly with the universal image of a shared commonality that activist white women preferred, black women recognized the importance of their political relations with white women and according to historian Hazel Carby:

[. . .] knew that in order to transform the social and political condition of black women alliances with white women were important, if not crucial. But the recognition of the need for allies was not the signal for compromise; an alliance would work only if white women’s organizations made the black woman’s cause their own. (118)

Despite their uneasy relations with white women, black women would not waver in constituting a black woman identity separate from a white woman identity. While this may have created tension to the sisterhood narrative that progressive white women adopted to demonstrate solitary between the races, black women were aware of, and could not dismiss, the social marking and representation of their body. That is, postbellum black women were a political, aesthetic, and sexual compression of America’s slave past—a past that the nation was on an immense sociopolitical journey to get beyond. Therefore, with the branding of their bodies as a chronicle of American slavery, activist black women realized the critical need to translate their subjectivity from the pathology of slavery in order to participate in the political geography. For Carby, white women were both allies and antagonists of black women and the political relations between the two groups were often a mixture of collaboration, ambiguity, and conflict.

Black women intellectuals were advocates of a transformed women’s movement and an alliance with white women, but at the same time they knew they had to
forge a culture of black womanhood out of a history in which sisterhood had only rarely existed and most white women had betrayed, abandoned, or excluded most black women from their lives. As an elite, black women intellectuals could only maintain a representative black female voice if they weighed the advantages of forming an alliance against the knowledge that for the mass of black women white women were not potential allies but formidable antagonists. (118)

In trying to convert their representation so that it might have valuable symbolic meaning in post-slavery America, black women became ideological threats to white women’s articulation of womanhood. Considering the master status of their race and the privileges that came with whiteness, no doubt white women felt inherently superior and qualified to edit and shape the innovation of all womanhood. However, black women not only protested the imagery that white women were designing for womanhood, they also were enraged by white women subtly invoking the master-status of whiteness as the symbolic foundation and reinforcement of womanhood. Therefore, the normative framework of womanhood situated in whiteness was the tinderbox that sparked the agonistic rhetoric over the imagery and representation of universal womanhood between black and white women54. Indeed, while America was struggling to create and grasp its new ideal by the sweeping industrial changes of the nineteenth century, the only unambiguous and identifiable representation of its former self was the coherence of white womanhood. In the words of Barbara Welter, “It was a fearful obligation, a solemn responsibility, which the nineteenth-century American woman had—to uphold the pillars of the temple with her frail white hand” (152), which ironically was the very monument that was critical in redefining the

54 While the ‘cult of womanhood’ was indeed a dominant ideology, this is not to suggest that all white women identified with its social, political, and religious arrangement of their lives. However, it is important to note the magnitude in which this popular representation was used to define the status and rights of women.
new America.

Ellen Carol Du Bois posits that black women were nothing more than setting on the elaborate stage of the universal suffrage campaign, and their presence “was more rhetorical than real” (69) to the progress towards transformation. The theatrical role that activist black women had in shaping a universal image of womanhood gave them moral conviction to part ideologically with activist white women. Black women made a decisive sociopolitical move to situate themselves in a previously excluded space. However, when black women’s symbolic imagery was caught between a political struggle that lost its fluency and political power to influence woman’s suffrage, black women’s representation as a contribution to the ‘woman question’ was irrelevant. Du Bois writes:

These first years of the Equal Rights Association were the one period in which woman suffragists gave consistent attention to black women. As the possibilities for a joint struggle for black and woman suffrage evaporated, and as the woman suffrage forces became increasingly independent of abolitionism, the image of the black woman—for she had never been much more than an image—receded into the background. (71)

Like many activist black women, Wells was suspicious of white women and their liberal voices in the racial uplift campaign. She considered white women’s contribution as charitable work and was doubtful and guarded when activist white women participated in generating ideas for blacks, and especially for black women’s inclusion into the polity. For Wells, only black women could credibly define and articulate black women’s subjectivity. Further, Wells was also dubious of any real understanding that white women could have of black women since she believed white women had an inherent social and cultural ethos that black women would never experience.
For example, Wells was particularly apprehensive about the intentions of wealthy white socialites like Mary White Ovington who were very vocal in the production and dissemination of the imagery and representation of the postbellum black despite their master-status of being white and female over being black and female. Wells supposed that privileged white women like Ovington had a peripheral engagement with only elite and educated blacks, rather than the poor and uneducated working-class black, and that, therefore, Ovington could not possibly comprehend the vile ideology behind black exploitation, marginality, and outsider status. Speaking about Ovington, who was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and a lifelong advocate for black empowerment, Wells muses:

“It is impossible for her to visualize the situation in its entirety and to have the executive ability to seize any of the given situations which have occurred in a truly big way. She has basked in the sunlight of the adoration of the few college-bred Negroes who have surrounded her, but has made little effort to know the soul of the black woman; and to that extent she has fallen far short of helping a race which has suffered as no white woman has ever been called upon to suffer or to understand.” (Crusade 327-28)

In Wells’ mind, the imagery of the white woman—liberal, elite, oblivious—emerges as a striking contrast to the portrait of black women—disadvantaged, soulful, socially conscious. From this delineation of Ovington, Wells marks out a totalizing description of white womanhood that undoubtedly played a profound role in her argument over lynching with Willard. Surely, she projected her depiction of white women on Willard’s character who did very little, or could do very little, to counter Wells’ view of her. Wells’ myopic gaze of Willard, and perhaps all white
women, may have been developed in part by her theory around the sexual politics involved with the lynching of black men. From Wells’ perspective, in order to mask their sexual desire for black men white women plotted the rape/victim narrative to conceal their sexual relations.

Wells’ strict adherence to her distrust/suspicion of white women was the motivating force behind her encounters with most white women. She surmised that the sharpest division between black and white women was “[. . .] our white women friends were not willing to treat us on a plane of equality with themselves” (283), which in Wells’ perspective, was grounded in white women’s master-status over black women.

White Women’s Representation: Discovery and Claiming

While the master/slave dynamic and sexual exploitation contributed to the negative imagery of the nineteenth century postbellum black woman as noted in chapter one, the subjugation of white women emerged from the same master/slave apparatus. Although the political message of white women’s subjugation was also disguised in theological tropes, white women’s peripheral rhetorical space in the nineteenth century cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing the essential hopelessness of their subjectivity—without suffrage, white women were efficiently and effectively locked out of civil discourse. That is, given the excessive force (efficient) of the legal argument that prevented them from owning property, and the (effective) authority of religion to generate a divinely inspired structure to their subjugation, white women were impossibly subdued to propose and voice any rigorous resistance to their social condition.

While white women could discuss their fate in civil society with their husbands, they could not participate in any active mode on those perspectives. As agents of private/public ideologies, religion and politics reinforced the perennial passing over of white women’s argument for enfranchisement. However, the historical joining of religion and politics as a
powerful dialectic against woman’s suffrage—ironically and paradoxically—constructed the rhetorical space for women to enter into the public pulpit to reculture the patriarchal state on the “woman question.” Willard’s rhetorical argument for revolt against the politicized and iconic imagery of white women in the nineteenth century is perhaps the most overt resistance to the split between the domestic sphere and the public sphere for women.

For Suzanne M. Marilley, for example, the social mechanisms that enabled a system which favored women’s subjugating role was perhaps a less daunting task to reform than the ideological bonding women had to their social role. Marilley hypothesizes that reformist activists like Willard had to help women understand and overcome their panic that they were not only making moral adjustments to their daily living conditions, but ideological reform to their characterization of themselves, which was learned and not innate. Marilley writes that:

The first task women reform leaders faced was overcoming their members’ fears of change; the second task was transforming political resistance, especially on the part of men, to the idea of full citizenship for women. The suffragists both recruited followers and tried to persuade men to enfranchise women by demonstrating the incompatibility of the concept of equal rights with the political exclusion of women. (125)

Unlike other suffragists who promoted the home as a refuge for women and children and no doubt from a religious perspective, Willard spoke against the home in a lesser vision. While “other notable women used motherhood to develop ideologies,” writes Marilley, “Willard is the only one who used it to mobilize mass numbers of women to undermine male domination” (Marilley 126). For Willard then, women and children needed a sanctuary from the home since it was so closely identified with the abuses that came with extreme alcohol consumption by the
protectors of the home—men. Willard’s argument, according to Marilley, was novel because Willard repackaged the commonplace ideology that home was safe from vile and violent outside forces when in fact the home was the space where survivorship was uncertain when men became drunk and disorderly. Starting with this unequal distribution of power in the home, Marilley argues,” Willard’s penetrating critique of the assumption that males protect females, her contention that motherhood should be the model for political leadership, and her urgent appeals to women to protect themselves through collective political participation make her a contributor to the feminism of fear” (126). Yet, despite Willard’s altruistic goal to increase the awareness of white women’s limited rhetorical space in the private and public sphere, “Willard’s success as a political mobilizer has not overshadowed the ethnocentrism and racism embedded in her ideology” (Marilley 126), since it limited the rhetorical growth of black women’s voices in the WCTU. Therefore, Willard’s condemnation of overall masculine immorality reinforces the Darwinian view of male superiority, which included the black male’s pathological and deviant sexual and overpowering coveting of white women’s bodies. With this equation, Marilley writes:

Feminists of fear make a similar sort of conflation in the assertion that most behaviors oppressive to women derive from inherent evils in men. This sort of cruelty crept into Willard’s feminism of fear. She berates men for their lack of conscience, inability to resist drinking in groups, and toleration of political corruption—all behaviors that she considered to result from men’s primary motivation, the primal instinct of self-preservation. (127)

While most subjects are not isolated from the elements of their sociopolitical environments, the power exercised over them is often invisibly internalized by the subject though their
ideologically position is not explicitly apparent in their political rhetoric. Therefore, Willard was “unable to escape her time,” and as “a leader who wanted to engender and sustain middle-class white women’s political participation” Willard “appealed to the symbols, ideas, and goals of her audience” (Marilley 127), that narrowed the conceptualization of womanhood to white womanhood, which excluded black womanhood. Similarly, to postbellum black activist women, Willard had to disarm the theological control over women’s agency that was deeply embedded in their daily pressure to conform to a representation quickly dissolving into history.

Willard activated women’s political participation by coupling temperance goals to woman suffrage and authorizing both goals with innovative interpretations of biblical mandates that called women to exercise public roles as moral authorities. These new interpretations challenged those who invoked the Bible to justify women’s political exclusion, especially to deny women the vote. (Marilley128)

As an astute rhetor with an understanding of the significance and cultural force of the transforming sociopolitical structure, Willard did not back away from the uncertainty of the complex post-slavery society like so many of her feminist contemporaries. For instance, “After she captured her audience, Willard shifted away from temperance and instead linked symbols of republican motherhood to voting and lobbying” (Marilley 131). For Willard to create this new rheorical space that promoted political activism to improve social conditions was significant because it involved disarming theologically prescribed behavior adopted, though perhaps not wholly embraced, by intelligent and progressive nineteenth-century white women. Willard gave voice to women to speak out against this subjugating rhetoric and, according to Marilley, “Willard’s basic method for generating support for political participation, particularly the vote, was to convince women in her audience that their God-given motherly duties required political
action” (131). While she encountered cultural and political resistance to her feminism of fear, Willard did not promote a less oppressive vision of the home since her close ties to the temperance movement gave her knowledge and facts about the home conditions of women and children regarding the effects of alcohol abuse by men. Thus, “Willard chose to strengthen women’s identities and preserve women’s roles as moral authorities by fusing these identities and deeds to the human mission ordained in the Bible and using modernized images to overcome fears of change” (Marilley 139). Although Willard’s missionizing efforts did not avoid the conflicting ideologies of black women as members in the WCTU on the imagery of womanhood, her important refiguring of white womanhood with its overarching aim of reclaiming white womanhood imagery from its hegemonic representation presented a rebellious framework to contrast the imagery of the “cult of true womanhood” ideology. Throughout the nineteenth century, the struggle for women’s suffrage from black and white women established challenges that invoked resistance to a socially prescribed attachment to their construction.

Resistance to the Pillars that hold the Temple of Womanhood

Resistance starts with the social (re)presentation of gendered language by looking at the ideological packaging of historical texts and politics, for indeed rhetoric and the scope of its power is what connects language to action—they are never disconnected. It is in history and its artifacts where the representations of society and the subject overlap thereby proving crucial insights into the codifying of knowledge. In her important examination of the intersubjectivity of gender and politics, historian Joan Wallach Scott argues that while “knowledge is not absolute or true,” it is “always relative” (2) since it determines the way social relations occur. Scott also suggests that knowledge consists of more than just abstract facts, that it is comprised of different social, institutional, and structural elements. Therefore, Scott explains, “Knowledge refers not
only to ideas but to institutions and structures, everyday practices as well as specialized rituals, all of which constitute social relationships” (2). With this in mind, the historical representations of gender are also shaped by the morphology of knowledge, which dictates the social direction of the meaning attached to physical differences. In short, these meanings add order to the social system that are adopted and therefore:

It follows then that gender is the social organization of sexual difference.

But this does not mean that gender reflects or implements fixed and natural physical differences between men and women; rather gender is the knowledge that establishes meanings for bodily differences. These meanings vary across cultures, social groups, and time since nothing about the body, including women’s reproductive organs, determines univocally how social divisions will be shaped. (Scott 2)

In this reading, it is not sexual difference that requires interpretation, but social information; that is, knowledge that legitimates the representation of and cleavage to the conceptualization of sexual difference within the society. Therefore, to understand sexual difference it is important to consider the patterns of the development that make the key features of gender emerge and socially recognized as male and female. From that vantage point:

We cannot see sexual difference except as a function of our knowledge about the body and that knowledge is not “pure,” cannot be isolated from its implication in a broad range of discursive contexts. Sexual difference is not, then, the originary cause from which social organization ultimately can be derived. It is instead a variable social organization that itself must be explained. (Scott 2)

While it is important to trace the morphological stages of sexual difference in its rhetorical
practices, “history figures [. . .] crucially as a participant in the production of knowledge about sexual difference” (Scott 2). Further, because “history’s representations of the past help construct gender for the present” (Scott 2) it is difficult to characterize the attributes involved in the production processes of sexual difference since they become part of our everyday discourse and practices. With this perspective, developing new ideological frames for women’s representation is next to impossible because “those operations are difficult to implement, especially if one lacks an analysis of how gender hierarchies are constructed, legitimated, challenged, and maintained” (Scott 3). With the seamless embodiment of historical and rhetorical packaging of women, their signifying practices animate rather than distinguish the incongruities in the knowledge that legitimizes the social attachment of women’s representation in the sociopolitical culture. The hegemonic imprint of patriarchy in the nineteenth century was clearly embedded in the lives of all black women and restricted their spatial movement; in contrast, while some white women adopted the prescriptive organizing of their lives, a subculture of progressive and activist white women like Willard were breaking down the ideological canons encased in rhetoric and validated by history. By devaluing patriarchal hegemony that relied on women’s favorable reception to keep them subjugated, the sociopolitical character of nineteenth century gender differences, which favored male over female, was losing its influence. In providing alternative interpretations of the nineteenth century woman, the subcultural rhetoric of Willard not only highlighted the uneven structure and dynamics in the spatial relations between men and women, but it also provided rhetorical space for new narratives to emerge.

Like Scott, Paula A. Baker notes there was no political coexistence between the genders in the nineteenth century since all spatial activity was organized around difference. “Throughout the nineteenth century,” she writes “gender was an important division in American politics” (622).
For Baker, the segregation between men and women was not only spatial, each group had “distinct political subcultures, “ and functioned autonomously “with its own bases of power, modes of participation, and goals” (622). However, with this division, the identities of white women to disarm the hierarchical and assymmetrical structure of patriarchy came into focus. Most notably, according to Baker, the sociopolitical struggle of the domestic sphere was now being reshaped to define not only its significance in the daily lives of nineteenth century white women, but its spatial ordering in the larger political culture as well. Baker goes on to say:

Ideas about womanhood and separate spheres, as well as forces as diverse as urbanization and the resurgence of revival religion, gave women’s political activity a new prominence. But that female sphere had now grown. Men and women would probably have agreed that the “home’ in a balanced social order was the place for women and children. But this definition became an expansive doctrine: home was anywhere women and children were. (631)

Baker continues by emphasizing the intricate interplay of the word “woman” that assumed an all encompassing ideology and crossed boundaries:

We should recognize, too, that the vision of the home as embracing all women and children had an important corollary: “woman” was a universal category in the minds of organized women, as it was for others who held the doctrine of separate spheres. Because all women shared certain qualities, and many the experience of motherhood, what helped one group of women benefitted all. “Motherhood” and “womanhood” were powerful integrating forces that allowed women to cross class, and perhaps even racial lines. They also carried moral and political clout. (633)
In reformulating the narratives about white women, the question of suffrage in the nineteenth century could not be avoided. By devaluing the power of enfranchisement to nineteenth century white women and its connection to the home as a poetic politic only dismisses the severe social, cultural, and political domination they lived under. Not only would enfranchisement collapse the spatial division of the genders, it would also shape a new and more symmetrical relation between men and women with regard to rights and privileges within the polity. However, like all new political discourses, enfranchisement would displace the rhetorical and historical traditions, beliefs, and practices that had articulated the subjectivity of both genders. For Baker, suffrage was more than just granting white women the right to vote, suffrage would also bring about a cultural phenomenon and open the door for more significant transformations to occur not just in the domestic sphere but also within the larger political culture for other marginalized groups.

From Baker’s perspective:

Suffrage represented the antithesis of the glorification of separate spheres that lay behind the political activities of the early organizations. For these women and many men, suffrage was indeed a radical demand. By involving women in the male political arena, women’s right to vote threatened to end political separation. It implied—and suffragists argued—that men and women should be treated as individuals, equal in abilities and talents, and that neither men nor women were blessed with a special nature. Women’s suffrage threatened the fraternal, ritualistic character of male politics, just as it promised to undercut female political culture. (634)

In order to correct the balance of the white male/female dynamic, the constrained racial ordering of black women would also have to play an important role in the suffrage victory. With black
men having gained the right to vote, though denied the opportunity to vote in most Southern cities, white women’s enfranchisement ambition would hang in the balance since the historical argument still favored men—although black men—over white women in the political culture. By importing the theological argument into the suffrage argument with Biblical scripture, the ideological rhetoric behind denying women’s enfranchisement and lynching black men pioneered the rhetorical moment for black and white women to gain entrance into the political geography. Yet, activist women, both black and white, as dislocated members of the political culture developed a tenuous bond in subcultural feminist social movements like the WCTU to replace historical and canonical narratives of women’s construction by changing sociopolitical representations that culturally educated both genders to participate in prescriptive behavior. Although the reimagining of woman met with resistance from male and female members from both groups, Willard and Wells consistently structured their emancipatory rhetoric by distinguishing it from merely a woman’s cause. Rather, they informed their audiences with factual and discriminating information and statistics to exemplify their resistance to domesticity and lynching. With the complex relations between black and white women and the cultural and social distance between Willard and Wells, the political content of both rhetor’s discourse was sharpened and intensified by their membership in the WCTU since their movement issues—woman’s suffrage and anti-lynching—were inextricably intertwined within the WCTUs, which gave rise to their rhetorical campaigns for reform.

Nineteenth-Century Womanhood: The Challenges of Negotiating a Symbol

The intertextuality and intersectionality of the woman’s suffrage and the anti-lynching movements came from their challenges to the master narratives on the representation of gender and race that both Willard and Wells were trying to reverse. Although both black and white
women seemed to agree in theory to universal suffrage for all women, with the rise of lynchings and the threat that black women endured because of their racial category, the politics over lynching may have distracted attention away from woman’s suffrage. However, this did not stop neither Willard nor Wells from engaging in a spirited and spiritual struggle for their own respective ideological positions. In this sense, prophecy as a political rhetoric was used by them and accepted as a legitimate form of discourse in the nineteenth century because of the close relation to the moral argument with the sociopolitical argument. Faced with the task of revisoning the archetype of the black and white woman from the domiant sexual and domestic imagery in the cultural imagination, the task for Willard and Wells, one can argue, was impossibly high. However, with their strong religious observance to their Methodist faith, Willard and Wells revolutionized their reform movements and invoked prophecy described as:

[. . .] a social practice of many cultures, in forms that modern commentary links to shamanism, ecstatic vision, charismatic authority, founder myths, and social criticism. It thus names the public role of those who address a community by mediating its relationship to the larger realities conditioning its existence and choices. As a social practice, prophecy is open to revision and intense conflict, for people argue about the definition of the role and about whose words to recognize as having authority. (Shulman 2)

While both Willard and Wells appealed to their own notion of prophecy in their social movement campaigns that was deeply rooted in the jeremiad (see chapter 3), the discourse cultivated a moral play between the two groups over voting rights for black women. For instance, one of the major divisions between black and white women within the WCTU and perhaps other progressive feminist organizations was black women’s support of black male suffrage over white
women’s suffrage. However, if white women were approved the right to vote, it can be argued that it would have been difficult for constitutional framers to deny all women the right to vote. Therefore, no group would have been more profoundly affected by the privileges of enfranchisement than the nineteenth century black woman would since they were considered to have striking and abject differences in their femininity, morality, sexuality, and intelligence than white women. No doubt, the decision weighed heavily on black women who were exposed to more challenges in their subjectivity as blacks rather than sexist challenges in their representation as a woman. Yet, their political determination to support black men rather than white women in enfranchisement goals opened them up for some of the most severe criticism from their white women allies. Contemporary black cultural critic and theorist bell hooks assesses the political dynamic between women and men of color and concludes:

Their life experiences have shown them that they have more in common with men of their race and/or class group than with bourgeois white women. They know the sufferings and hardships women face in their communities; they also know the sufferings and hardships men face, and they have compassion for them. They have had the experience of struggling with them for a better life. This has been especially true for black women. Throughout our history in the United States, black women have shared equal responsibility in all struggles to resist racist oppression. Despite sexism, black women have continually contributed equally to anti-racist struggle [. . .]. (70)

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55 Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were the most prominent and vocal critics of black women who aligned themselves with black men over enfranchisement rather than women.
Despite their support of black manhood, black women were still subjected to the destructive “cult of true womanhood” ideology that black men and the larger social order placed on their subjectivity. Like white women, “true womanhood” ideology transmitted the same familiar strategies for ordering the lives of black womanhood in the domestic sphere. While black men were not against the enfranchisement of black women, as men, they felt entitled to the right to vote first. This argument not only exposed the self-justification of male hegemony among black men, it also illustrated the unprotected status and marginality of black women within their own culture. Further, the claim of black manhood over black womanhood also demonstrated the echoing of not a racialized hegemony, but a masculine hegemony that spoke more to a gender divide than a racial divide. The rhetoric of male hegemony not only reinforced separate spheres ideology, it also exemplified the two discourses of power that black women were subjected to since black men reflected the dominant masculine and condescending view of women, rather than a cultural view of their women, which was one of a shared struggle and fight for equality.

Kathleen Ann Clark, argues that white male ideology was reproduced with Christian orthodoxy by black men “to reemphasize the fact that the church’s real mission was to make men”\(^{56}\) and further that “true [black] womanhood would come about only as a product of real [black] manhood” (74). By reconstructing the structure and social arrangements of the male/female dynamic, black women became “willing subordinates to strong and capable men” (75) despite their conflicts regarding the spatial relations they acquiesced to within the political culture. However, black women took understated but transforming steps to remove themselves from the shadows of white men, white women, and black men. By constructing their own self-definition of womanhood, black women clearly disturbed the theological and political order in

\(^{56}\) Emphasis is Clark’s.
religious organizations like the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and risked cultural fallout from black men in the AME church. From Clark’s view black men primarily,

[...] were concerned with asserting the rights of men—and the concomitant subordination of women—because AME women continued to challenge male prerogatives within the church. Like earlier generations of women who disputed men’s control of the pulpit, female members during the postwar years acted to broaden their role and subtly expanded the boundaries of men’s definitions of liberty. (77)

The rhetorical space that black women were creating for themselves in the pulpit and beyond was both a moral and political argument regarding their geographical space. Not only did they provoke the dispute behind the ethics of black manhood over black womanhood regarding enfranchisement, they also complicated the ideology behind their spatial limitation within the public sphere. For instance, although black women visibly participated in public events that celebrated black empowerment and freedom during the post bellum years, they were still typecast within the sexualized imagery of slave women by whites.

Southern white observers also took note of [black] women energetically partaking in late-night dances, barbecues, and other festivities associated with commemorative and patriotic occasions. Denying the possibility of freedwomen’s civic and political interests, many whites interpreted their presence at public ceremonies as a sign of illicit sexual activity. (Clark 82)

While black women’s radical approach to have a significant presence in the public may have been considered “unwomanly,” Clark tacitly implies it may not have been accidental:
[. . .] freedwomen’s self-assertion clearly extended into the public sphere. Freedwomen acted both individually and collectively, to influence civic and political affairs in their communities. Freedwomen attended—and voted—at mass meetings held by freedpeople to debate pressing political issues and forcefully voiced their opinions at Republican Party conventions. Moreover, freedwomen tended to view suffrage not as a separate gain for black men but as an important step forward for all African Americans. After black men were enfranchised, women continued to engage in electoral politics by organizing political societies, helping to get out the vote, and even standing guard to protect male voters at the polls. (83)

Although the private and public institutions of power were dependent on spatial ordering to keep black women within a limited geography, Clark argues that “African American women asserted their own notions of history, citizenship, and freedom” (83) by withdrawing from a gender identity counterfeit to their subjectivity. By rejecting the dominant cultural model of white womanhood, black women reinforced the political nature of their identity by essentially disrupting the force of white womanhood over them. In broadening their rhetorical space within the domestic and public sphere, black women disposed of the appearance that they were trying to emulate white womanhood.

This shift in black women’s public ideological opposition to white womanhood speaks to their yearning, struggle for self-definition, and agency despite the stigmatization of being judged sexually loose and unwomanly by whites. Yet, even in open and friendly relationships between black and white women, the possibility of offending one another was always present since both groups were privately mapping their own rhetorical space with regard to their race and gender.
However, by focusing their constructions of womanhood based on race and gender, rather than the exclusionary politics of patriarchy, black and white women were building barriers to negotiating an all-encompassing symbol for womanhood, which would argue for universal civil and political rights.

For instance, despite Wells’ difficult relations with Willard’s ethics on lynching and with her position as a privileged white woman, Wells had great admiration for and fostered a friendship with suffragist Susan B. Anthony, one of the most vocal opponents to black male enfranchisement. In *Crusade*, Wells’ autobiography, she reflects on her intense disagreement with Anthony over woman’s suffrage, men, and their theories of political change and development if woman’s suffrage were won. As Wells writes:

> [Whenever] the question [came] up for discussion as to wrongs, injustice, inequality, maladministration of the law, Miss Anthony would always say, “Well, now when women get the ballot all that will be changed.” So I asked her one day, “Miss Anthony, do you really believe that the millennium is going to come when women get the ballot? Knowing women as I do, and their petty outlook on life, although I believe that it is right that they should have the vote, I do not believe that the exercise of the vote is going to change women’s nature nor the political situation.” Miss Anthony seemed a little bit startled, but she did not make any contention on that point. (230)

As an anti-lynching orator and activist-journalist, it is no surprise that Wells’ rhetoric describes the law as “wrongs, injustice, inequality, [and] maladministration” since laws are a legal inscription of the culture that they reflect and represent (see chapter 2). Wells’ response also is a reaction to the silent inaction of the legal system to the lynching of black men. Although Wells
expresses her politics within her racial subjectivity, Anthony’s politics is articulated strictly within a feminist discourse to address her gendered subjectivity. Wells also responds to the socially visible distinctions between race and gender in the nineteenth century as well by asking Anthony, “do you really believe that the millennium is going to come when women get the ballot?” For Wells, the structures, systems, arrangements, and institutions of inequality were not going to magically collapse to allow women, and especially black women, into their power center when they were so efficient and effective in keeping them spatially dislocated.

Perhaps one of the most striking observances of Wells’ rhetoric is her biting statement about women’s “petty outlook on life” which further illustrates her disconnection to her gender rather than her race. For instance, while it is likely that she is speaking directly about both black and white women’s trivial perspectives on their subjectivity, since she had combative relations with women from both racial groups, it is more likely that Wells is speaking exclusively about white women—and particularly privileged white women like Willard. Therefore, Wells had neither tolerance nor patience for women, particularly not for privilege white women like Willard, whose lives she believed were absent of real struggle and survival.

While Wells concedes to Anthony enfranchisement that “is right” for women, she reiterates her early statement that voting would not “change women’s nature or the political situation.” In Wells’ vision, voting would have symbolic importance for status-sensitive white women, like Willard, but would not provide genuine civil and legal rights for black women. Wells also repeats her patriarchal argument against woman’s suffrage noting that it would not “change women’s nature” which mirrors the disturbing ideology of Darwinism. Further, after Wells objectifies women in front of perhaps the most popular feminist of that time, and with the domesticating and dehumanizing philosophy of Darwinism, Wells becomes silent and waits for a
rebuttal from Anthony. Moreover, Wells appears bemused that Anthony “seemed a little bit startled” and “did not make any contention” regarding her contradiction between Darwinian ideals in relation to women, and her theories on politics and their capacity to change the sociopolitical order. Yet, perhaps Anthony was taken aback not by Wells’ portrayal of the facts, but by how considerable the ideological space of Well’s position on woman’s suffrage was from hers and other white women’s. Surely, Anthony had to walk away with the belief that if her friend Ida\textsuperscript{57}, who had such voice, status, and knowledge on civil and political rights could take this position, then why not other similarly progressive black women?

At first blush, it may appear that Wells’ attitude towards white womanhood is justified until one realizes that the foundations of social protest rhetoric by black and white women have always been on twin paths to civil and political inclusion within the polity. In fact, it is difficult to separate the historical and political struggle for agency between black and white women in America since both groups’ marginalization were rooted in scientific theory, patriarchy, slavery, and religious ideology. Therefore, the framework of their social protest rhetoric intersected on the same historical threshold in opening a space for cultural, political, and social transformation. Moreover, it is no wonder that spirited and divisive rhetorical encounters between black and white women activists over the construction of a universal womanhood occurred seeing as they replicated similar rhetorical patterns of resistance in their discourse.

During the American Revolution, white and free black women activists joined political forces and invoked civic rhetoric as a crucial emancipatory step to resist their marginal status during the colonial era. In their social protest rhetoric, Revolutionary war woman activists emphasized the \textit{discontinuity} in their lives as noncitizens by comparing it to the \textit{continuity} they

\textsuperscript{57} I use the word Ida instead of Wells to replicate the feminine intimacy, I believe, Wells and Anthony shared.
believed independence would bring to their lives as citizens if they were enfranchised. The strong *discontinuity/continuity* metaphor argued by Revolutionary war feminists no doubt resonated because the colonies were on a similar path to self-governing that England was denying them. From Janet Carey Eldred’s and Peter Mortensen’s perspective, Revolutionary war feminists rejected the cultural and political construction of their lives, and like black and white activist women during the Civil War (see Chapter 1), used the space of war to participate civically as a segue to enfranchisement. Eldred and Mortensen observe, “in the years surrounding the American Revolution, rhetoric [...] drew heavily on images of tyranny and liberation, anarchy and restraint, lawlessness and justice” (174) to illustrate the incongruities among the meaning of liberty in a country that was at war because it was not politically acceptable to be under anyone’s rule. Eldred and Mortensen express their understanding of civic rhetoric as “the kind of political discourse common to speeches, printed addresses, essays, and tracts—a discourse concerned with government and governance” (174). That is, political speech that leads to action for civil and political change by influencing policy-making. In relation to the linkage of civic rhetoric and women’s issues during the Revolutionary era, Eldred and Mortensen are quick to note that women “theorized the politics of language” (180) as a way to isolate and examine the ideological and historical aspects of civic rhetoric and its kinship to women’s issues during the Revolutionary Era. Angela G. Ray argues a similar line of reasoning in how women used emancipatory rhetoric to define their status and rights. For Ray, activist women during the Reconstruction Era invoked civic rhetoric as a rhetorical tool in a distinctly political way to criticize their space in the social order. Ray asserts, “the Reconstruction Amendments provided fruitful rhetorical ground for the development of a variety of legal arguments to support women’s voting” (4) and to assist them in shaping the rhetoric in their politics. Yet, instead of invoking
the main argument of women and patriarchy within their social reform campaigns, Ray contends “debates were framed as race versus sex,” and she concludes, “activist African American women faced painful, impossible choices (5) regarding that critical question which white women were neither confronted with nor had to address.

While Eldred and Mortensen, and Ray examine the strengths and weaknesses in social protest rhetoric by black and white women and their feminization of liberty (McGee 42-43), Susan Zaeske analyzes the rhetorical dimensions of petitioning by the two groups. Zaeske points out that both free black women and bourgeois white women worked as collaborators to help include the ‘woman question ‘within policy-making decisions. Zaeske argues “[. . .] the antislavery petition campaign marked one of the first instances in which large numbers of white and free black American women engaged in collective petitioning of Congress in an attempt to reshape public opinion and influence national policy” (1), in the consolidated effort of women’s liberation to denounce and collapse patriarchal ideology. With this effort, white and free black women integrated their political argument by creating an alliance and collaborating on the common theme of women’s rights within antislavery movements (Hoganson 561-74). While this unification may have thrust forward the ‘woman question’ it may have also reinforced and confirmed the patriarchal belief that women should remain in the domestic sphere since the contentious rhetoric of these early collaborative efforts by white and free black women for political empowerment was situated in nothing less than enfranchisement. Further, the shift in their rhetoric from a moral authority to a constitutional right to enhance their sociopolitical power may have contributed to the contentious image of women as political activists. Moreover, the share of power and the unification over the woman question significantly mobilized white and free black women into emerging political activists to watch.
This change in the rhetoric of female antislavery petitions and appeals, from a tone of humility to a tone of insistence, reflected an ongoing transformation of the political identity of signers from that of subjects to that of citizens. Having encouraged women’s involvement in national politics, women’s antislavery petitioning created an appetite for further political participation and more rights. After female abolitionists established the right of women to petition Congress collectively on political issues, countless women employed that right to lobby their representatives and agitate public opinion to promote causes such as temperance, antilynching, and ultimately, woman suffrage. (Zaeske 2)

While petitioning may have created a new desire for political activism in white and free black women, petitioning may have also ignited the contentious image over the nature of womanhood as well between white and free black women. For instance, Zaeske also explores the rhetorical foundations of a petition and says, “At its core a petition is a request for redress of grievances sent from a subordinate (whether an individual or a group) to a superior (whether a ruler or representative)” (3). Without question, Zaeske’s subordinate/superior model is similar to the master/slave dynamic—a system that subordinated free black women as former slaves and black women who were still slaves. Therefore, it is not surprising that the dissension between black and white women during the Reconstruction Era over the construction of a universal womanhood occurred since the relations between black and white women became fragmented by the elevation of race within the ‘womanhood question.’ Still, Willard’s gender harmony campaign within the WCTU, although politically motivated did not diminish white women’s master-status over black women in either the WCTU or the larger political culture. In fact, the political relations between black and white women within the WCTU was the most vexing dilemma for
Willard who became a public target for moral/ethical hypocrisy in her failure, as president, to treat both groups, and particularly black women equally. At the same time, white women’s misunderstanding, and their undermining of black women’s subjectivity frustrated black women. Yet, despite black and white women’s different ideologies on the ‘woman question’, the political culture of the nineteenth century was largely not open to endorsing any widespread feminist ideals sensitive to either group’s subjectivity. Indeed, the ideological commitment to increasing women’s civil and political rights would not reveal its greatest moment until decades later with the passage of the nineteenth amendment in 1920, which prohibited the denial of voting based on gender.

Conclusion
While their public pronouncement of collaborating on the nature of a universal representation of womanhood may have been true, the master-status of white women over black women within the sociopolitical order and in feminist organizations like the WCTU disrupted any black/white womanhood dynamic. Thus, black and white women were framing their identity within rhetoric to address the realities that their particular representation signified in the sociopolitical order, rather than in terms of how they were defined as women with reference to the patriarchal hierarchies that made both black and white women invisible. The incongruity of their rhetoric over their race and gender subjectivity is that while the status of white women was better than the status of black women, it was not considerably better. The social and political consciousness of black and white women were different, and, therefore, while both groups wanted to replace the traditional and canonical mapping of their lives, their reasons for the change were not the same. While a coherent interpretation of womanhood did not emerge in their rhetoric, Willard and Wells recognized the need for freedom that included both blacks and women—though
neither rhetor could tell when that might be achieved. Moreover, both Willard and Wells recognized that the social, legal, and economic implications for one group of women in America would have great importance to the situatedness of all women in America.
CHAPTER 5
Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century:
The Persistence of Gender and Race in Rhetorical Slugfests

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”

“The question is, said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all.”

-Lewis Carroll
Through the Looking Glass

The rhetorical battle between Frances Willard and Ida B. Wells over the question of lynching reached, to some extent, a resolution. Four years after her controversial and divisive statements in the New York Voice (see chapter 1), Willard took the remarkable step of publicly denouncing the lynching of black men in her annual address at the 1894 WCTU’s national meeting. Her rhetoric was measured and carefully scripted:

Resolved that we are opposed to lynching as a method of punishment, no matter what the crime, and irrespective of the race by which the crime is committed, believing that every human being is entitled to be tried by a jury of his peers.

(Erbach)

Although Willard’s speech may have been composed in legal overtones rather than moral suasion, and although it may have been inspired more to revive her image than by a genuine moral stance against lynching, it served to end the public slugfest between the two orators. While there is no evidence that Wells ever reconciled with Willard after her open censure of lynching, or that Willard, in her capacity as president of the WCTU, privately offered an olive
branch to Wells to end the public conflict, their rhetorical battle over lynching was laid to rest, and both women continued to emerge as powerful feminist voices during the nineteenth-century. Despite Willard’s public change in policy, the WCTU still struggled with the issue of race; however, they did increase the visible presence of black women within the feminist social movement to stress the importance of a shared vision of womanhood (Mattingly 95). Willard also increasingly asserted a woman’s suffrage agenda over temperance (Bordin 175-189), while Wells’ conception of her political-ethical philosophy progressed into civic and civil rights rather than just her antilynching crusade (Schechter 182-212). With this shift in their rhetoric from a narrow definition of rights based on race and gender to an expansive woman’s political consciousness, Willard and Wells broke with the strict orthodoxy of their Methodist orientation for a more secular course. In this way, both orators created rhetorical spaces that continue to be a distinctive feature of secular contemporary feminist social movements where all women can collectively engage in sociopolitical discourse by reformulating the interpretation in the traditional practices of rhetoric to include a feminist argument (Ede, Glenn, and Lundsford 418-20) based on their particular subjectivity.

The social protest rhetoric of Willard and Wells was indeed radical because to embrace the canonical structure of rhetoric was also an act of rejection of its patriarchal ideology since the ancient roots of the canons (invention arrangement, style, memory, and delivery) established by Aristotle were not all-inclusive to women, slaves, or people of color. Therefore, Willard’s and Wells’ comfort with rhetoric was not with what it espoused in its Aristotelian traditions, but with what it opposed—civic and civil liberties based on race and gender. Moreover, by subverting Aristotelian rhetoric’s conservative stance on marginalized groups, Willard and Wells were able to use the foundation of rhetoric as an effective instrument with regard to their social protest
rhetoric to collapse the political limitations based on race and gender in the nineteenth century. Yet, the master-status of race and gender as ideological tropes were present once again in 2008 when the Democratic National Party was seeking a presidential candidate and the election process provided new and rigorous debate on these contested subjectivities. It also demonstrated how gender and race discourses frame the subject in creating meaning by its symbolic representation when they are juxtaposed. The conflict between Willard and Wells raised the important issue of identity based on the master status of race and gender because these subjectivities served as the core for their social protest rhetoric. For Willard, gender was the important issue and the basis for her association with the WCTU. For Wells, however, the race-based issue of lynching loomed large and interfered with her ability to wholly espouse the tenets of the WCTU. Painstaking deliberation on the contested subjectivities of race and gender and how their discourses frame the subject continues into the twenty-first century and gives cause for contemporary feminist social movements (FSM) to learn lessons taught by the early rhetors of the WCTUs movement on temperance and woman’s suffrage.

While Willard’s and Wells’ views on gender and race cannot be contained within the nineteenth-century and comprehended without raising the question of their ideology and the complex functioning of gender and race within a society, their meaning and practice are still poignant political issues and a mirror to how the subject is constituted and represented in the twenty-first century social order. Therefore, the master status of gender and race continue to function as a dominant symbolic representation for the sociopolitical actor within moments of considerable political transformation with the signifying effect often being invisible to the subject. The issue of master status of race and gender during the 2008 Democratic National

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58 Class was also significant in boundary crossing for women and blacks in the nineteenth-century; however, because of their gender and race, most women and blacks were disproportionally located in a lower class-status.
Convention (DNC) Presidential Nomination between Senator Barack Obama from Illinois and Senator Hillary Clinton from New York, were thrust once again on the political stage (Pinderhughes 47-48), and with considerable conflict and confrontation, just as it was in the nineteenth-century between Willard and Wells over lynching. During the Obama and Clinton slugfest, all Americans, but women in particular, had to revisit gender and race as social, political, and symbolic markers of identity. Activist black and white women of the DNC had to decide between casting a vote for the person who could potentially become the first woman President of the US and the person who might become the first African-American President. With the election of Senator Obama, the national election results validated the notion that in moments of political crisis, subjects remain tightly bound to their social representation that isolates them the most. For black women it is race, and for white women it is gender; however, once again, black women were caught between the boundary of their race and gender—either choice estranged them from their other “otherness” since neither representation is without meaning.

Although there have been definitions of race such as “a concept that signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies” (Winant 172) it is clear that race, like the representation of womanhood, remains a vague and often rhetorically frustrating discourse given the utopian and historical desire of both these tropes to define subjects exclusively under their gender or racial construction. A further relevant problem in establishing and describing womanhood is its historic failure to recognize the social, political, and symbolic meaning that comes with the different articulations of womanhood. This special attachment to the subject’s racial category is equally problematizing since race is an

59All Emphasis Winant’s.
ascribed status and subjects connect themselves to groups that reflect their racial category. Yet, veiling the master tropes of race and gender reinforces their legacy as inherently divisive social and political forces, a view of which Willard’s and Wells’ conflict over lynching provided perhaps the clearest illumination.

This final chapter examines the continuing ideological conflicts between the master status of gender and race. It proposes that twenty-first century feminist social movements must understand the rhetoric in political history that is actively working against them in recognizing and accommodating an expanded articulation of womanhood. It also suggests that activist women must acknowledge that confrontational rhetoric is not divisive, but desirable (see chapter 1) since it can serve as the foundation for active political engagement, although within the context of struggle. It contends while gender and race signify difference, and are often confrontational, gender and race difference can function to disarm hierarchical structures that oppress and subjugate. Finally, this chapter argues that the rhetoric of FSMs must continually “negotiate womanhood” from many gendered and racial perspectives since their articulation resists neat and discreet symbolic representation within the sociopolitical order.

**Gender versus Race: Persistence of an Ideological Conflict**

The coalition troubles of nineteenth and twentieth-century feminist movements were rooted in the belief that agonistic struggle was disastrous although according to some political scientists long and complicated discourse is the mark of successful political initiatives. In addition, the

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failure of past feminist movements to bring solidarity among racial, ethnic, class, and sexuality boundaries has added to their irrelevance in the contemporary political culture. Commenting on the inhospitality grounded in racism to women of color within the 70s women’s movement, Angela Davis observes that “Such racist influences, as long as they pervade the women’s movement, will continue to obstruct the building of multiracial organizations and coalitions” (33) and women’s political status. While the rhetoric of a feminist social protest group is never ideologically pure, Davis also mentions that the movement’s discourse is crucial “in bringing about radical changes in the socioeconomic structures of this country” (33) but only with the integrated voices of women from diverse classes, races, and sexualities.

Perhaps significantly for the understanding of Davis’ position, Iris Marion Young observes “[f]eminist discourse and practice should become and remain open, its totality permanently deferred, accepting and affirming the flows and shifts in the contingent relations of social practices and institutions” (716) to engage contemporary debates over the contextualization of feminism. That is, such discourse must serve as an intervention to the changing attitudes, beliefs, and values rather than remaining faithful to a synthetic discourse of history, which neither signifies the rhetorical development of the contemporary moment nor the subject’s situatedness to its historical ideology. Young notes that historically FSMs were imbued with patriarchal rhetoric and that “essentializing assumptions and the point of view of privileged women dominate[d] much feminist discourse” (716). These assumptions, ironically, isolated and had a destructive impact on the marginalized voices they wanted to integrate within the movement. Young’s view not only confirms the significance of a movement’s ideology, it also

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clarifies the point that the rhetoric of a movement’s ruling ideology can be interpreted as hostility by new movement members from different classes, races, ethnicities, etc. despite the feminist movements attempt “to avoid such hegemonic moves” (716-17). By re/conceptualizing their ideology, FSMs can consciously analyze the implicit and explicit theoretical underpinnings in their rhetoric since FSMs will be cast in an image that they cannot easily withdraw from if the ideology is separatist. In this way, abstractions that can play a hidden role in narrative and breed tensions within the movement are avoided. However, this is not to say that an ideology should be absent of what sociopolitical forces it stands against outside the FSM. In fact, ideologies are the rhetorical architecture of a movement since they circumscribe the representational features of the movement’s ethos. Further, ideology establishes an epistemological agenda to neutralize, disarm, or disable oppositional and repressive forces that are harmful to its members, and perhaps the larger polity. In the words of Teun A. van Dijk,

> ideologies are representations of who we are, what we stand for, what our values are, and what our relationships are with other groups, in particular our enemies or opponents, that is, those who oppose what we stand for, threaten our interests and prevent us from equal access to social resources and human rights [. . .]. In other words, an ideology is a self-serving schema for the representation of Us and Them as social groups. (69)

Even as an ideology states the fundamental values of a movement, it also represents what a movement advocates against and guides its discourse. Yet, in focusing on its core beliefs, the movement should not replicate hierarchies in its rhetoric or movement structure that contribute to the social distance that alternative voices experience in the social order. Rather, the movement’s ideology should motivate loyalty and a sense of shared meaning through the strategic
employment of its rhetoric. However, the movement must not become so rigid in its ideological goals that it is not open to negotiation in its representation. Rather, by framing a rhetoric of negotiation within its ideology, the nature of the movement expands its representation beyond a limited group of subjects. Accordingly, the consciousness of the movement remains in a transforming state of renewal and revival and “the development of consciousness [becomes] an ongoing process in which groups reevaluate themselves, their subjective experiences, their opportunities, and their shared interests” (Taylor and Whittier 114). By remaining dynamic, a movement’s social protest rhetoric acknowledges that the subjects do not live in isolation of their lived experiences nor are they de/contextualized of discourses that have a central role in the treatment and representation of the subject within the polity.

A vivid example of the subject’s ideology composed and related by their lived experience and the denial of that experience is Wells’ reaction to Willard’s perception that white women could not willfully engage in a sexual relation with a black man. Further, Willard, in Wells’ view “had gone out of her way to antagonize the cause [antilynching] so dear to our hearts by [. . .] a studied, unjust, and wholly unwarranted attack upon our work” (60). From Wells’ standpoint, there is a distinction between appearance and reality—a distinction that Willard made, she believes, not in isolation of her ideology, but with an unrestrained and perhaps racist reflection of it. Wells’ argument against Willard’s point of view was that it represented the white gendered and privilege perspective that denied and doubted the credibility of black men’s innocence. Nevertheless, more importantly for Wells, Willard’s speech signified what Willard tried to conceal—her consciousness. Willard’s words are:

The zeal for her race of Miss Ida B. Wells, a bright young colored woman, has, as

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63 The speech in question is Willard’s Annual Address to the WCTU’s Convention in Cleveland, Ohio in 1894.
it seems to me, clouded her perception as to who were her friends and well-wishers in all high-minded and legitimate efforts to banish the abomination of lynching and torture from the land of the free and the home of the brave. It is my firm belief that in the statements made by Miss Wells concerning white women having taken the initiative in nameless acts between the races she has put an imputation upon half the white race in this country that is unjust, and, save in the rarerest exceptional instances, wholly without foundation. This is the unanimous opinion of the most disinterested and observant leaders of opinion whom I have consulted on the subject, and I do not fear to say that the laudable efforts she is making are greatly handicapped by statements of this kind, nor to urge her as a friend and well-wisher to banish from her vocabulary all such illusions as a source of weakness to the cause she has at heart. (Willard qtd. in Wells 60)

In reaction to Willard’s comments, Wells writes:

This paragraph, brief as it is, contains two statements which have not the slightest foundation in fact. At no time, nor in any place, have I made statements “concerning white women having taken the initiative in nameless acts between the races.” Further, at no time, or place nor under any circumstance, have I directly or inferentially “put an imputation upon half the white race in this country” and I challenge this “friend and well-wisher” to give proof of the truth of her charge. Miss Willard protests against lynching in one paragraph and then, in the next, deliberately misrepresents my position in order that she may criticize a movement, whose only purpose is to protect our oppressed race from vindictive slander and Lynch Law. (On Lynchings 60-61)
It is clear that Willard and Wells remained locked in the master-status positions of gender and race despite their similar religious and social action sensibilities. As Taylor and Whittier have noted, cleavage to identities and their representation shapes the consciousness within the subject that is not easily nullified by the mutual act of coming together in a FSM. Thus, it is important, as Taylor and Whittier have hypothesized, that a rhetorical space or voice in FSMs is created for all subjects to uncover the characterizations of their identity-formed consciousness so that they may cross ideological borders on unrelated issues for social action on related issues. However, in order for the subject’s consciousness to be shared within the FSM, the reception of the subject’s ideology must not remain in the sphere of difference/other as it is represented in the sociopolitical order.

For example, throughout Willard’s speech, she adopts an uncharacteristically racial tone and juxtaposes race against gender to objectify Wells’ racial representation. Further, Willard’s feminine representation is pathos driven: she appeals to the emotional and moral sensibilities of her privileged white audience who no doubt share her social and sexual spatial mapping of white women and black men. In fact, Willard also implicitly calls on Wells to choose her loyalty between her gender and race: “it seems to me, clouded her perception as to who were her friends and well-wishers in all high-minded and legitimate efforts to banish the abomination of lynching and torture from the land of the free and the home of the brave.” Willard also appears to take offense at a suggestion that white women were taking ownership of their sexuality with black men by arguing against Wells’ alleged assertion that “white women [were taking] the initiative in nameless acts between the races.” She also claims that Wells has spoiled the entire representation of white womanhood by her “imputation upon half the white race.” Willard also sharply rebukes Wells to refrain from creating an image of white woman/black man sexuality
since it may dilute Wells’ antilynching support from the WCTU, and goes on the say that the “laudable efforts she is making are greatly handicapped by statements of this kind.” Willard’s speech also paints the nineteenth-century ideological stance that any sexual relation between white women and black men is abject and demands that Wells “banish from her vocabulary all such illusions” of this debased and pornographic visual sexual image.

Wells’ counter to Willard’s speech not only iterates her personal feelings on the topic of the lynching of McDowell, Stewart, and Moss (see chapter 1), it also demonstrates the analytical skills Wells acquired as a journalist. In this regard, Wells’ takes a decidedly masculine stance with her logos-motivated confrontation of Willard’s pathos-rich speech, saying there are “two statements which have not the slightest foundation in fact.” This simple statement illustrates the restricted agency Wells acquired as a journalist, but did not gain as a black woman journalist, which illustrates the cultural, social, and political context and dynamics of Wells’ gender and racial objectification during the nineteenth century. Although Wells was a respected journalist and spoke before black and white groups, she was first recognized as a black and then as a woman. Indeed, her profession as a journalist may have allowed her some rhetorical voice within the sociopolitical order, but Wells was firmly located by her race and gender within a limited sphere. Another example of Wells’ skill as a fact-checking journalist is the way in which she employs Willard’s text from her speech to overlap and form her argument against Willard. Further, Wells refutes all of Willard’s accusations “directly or inferentially” and invokes legal discourse in her “challenge” to Willard “to give proof of the truth of her charge” that was a direct offense to Willard’s ethos as moral leader of the WCTU. Finally, one of the most critical elements in Wells’ counter reaction is the manner in which she mocks the supposed sisterhood between her and Willard, but also the shared sisterhood within the larger context of black and
white women within the WCTU. By strategically encasing Willard’s phrase “friend and well-wisher” within quotation marks, Wells’ tactical rhetorical move is also a subtle reframing of Willard’s notion of sisterhood and a tacit question mark next to Willard’s morality. Wells’ rhetorical enclosing of “friend and well-wisher” no doubt signified to her middle-class black audience that Willard was white—different—Other. With this reframed view of Willard, Wells inhibits Willard’s rhetorical framework of sisterhood—implicit and explicitly—from achieving its collective identity of universal and shared sisterhood. Furthermore, Wells suggests to her audience that Willard “deliberately misrepresents my position” to undermine the antilynching “movement” which Wells concluded to her middle-class black audience that her sole purpose “is to protect our oppressed race from vindictive slander” that Willard was engaged in against blacks.

The knowledge that Willard gained through her gender and Wells through her race and gender were both spatially and bodily determined. That is, neither woman could defer the meaning they would gain as a woman and as a woman and a black. In short, both Willard’s and Wells’ epistemologies were constructed by the confinement of nineteenth century restrictive sociopolitical norms based on their gendered and racialized bodies. Donna Haraway supports the idea that knowledge is situated. She posits that knowledge evolves from a complex chain of events in the gendered woman’s life and not from a single source. She argues for “a feminist writing of the body that metaphorically emphasizes vision again” as a method for feminist women “to reclaim that sense to find our way through all the visualizing tricks and powers of modern sciences and technologies that have transformed the objectivity debates” (582) and that inhibit a feminist perspective. Haraway challenges feminist women to (en)counter their gendered and racialized self in order to counter the power systems that ask for their knowledge.
credentials at the door when they are in spaces that they do not presumably know how to critique. The burden of responsibility, as Haraway argues, is with feminist women: “We need to learn in our bodies, endowed with primate color and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name” (582). Although Haraway’s call for a feminist vision is well taken, when feminist women and women of color are engaged in the practices of sociopolitical critique, their perspective based on knowledge they gained in their gendered and racialized bodies is often viewed as a revolt against the sociopolitical order rather than a revealing of the inequities in the social structure. From Haraway’s perspective:

[B]odies as objects of knowledge are material-semiotic generative nodes. Their boundaries materialize in social interaction. Boundaries are drawn by mapping practices; “objects” do not preexist as such. But boundaries shift from within; boundaries are very tricky. What boundaries provisionally contain remains generative, productive of meanings and bodies. Sitting (sighting) boundaries is a risky practice. (595)

Sociopolitical criticism from a gendered and racialized perspective cannot be exclusive of its politicized identity since the cultural roots of the subject are framed by hierarchical structures. These dominant systems make a gendered and racialized vision difficult, if not impossible, without the narratives from the domains of power interrupting the subject’s rhetoric and ordering an explanation that is flanked by resistance and struggle. The issue at stake is how feminist women, and women of color, represent their oppression, exploitation, and subjugation in their critique without their discourse being viewed as aggression towards the systems, institutions, and
social structures that invented them. This challenge often leads to a mixture of negotiation and constrained rhetoric especially for the feminist woman of color who is imbued with an ideological mix of subjectivities: black/woman, Chicana/lesbian, etc. That is, she is often forced to eliminate the perspective of one subjectivity to gain agency for another. However, as some feminist women of color note, all critiques of the sociopolitical systems are represented within the context of struggle to reverse old hegemonic practices and to prevent new subjugating discourses from emerging.

**Gender and Race Within the Context of Struggle**

In relation to the racialized woman’s identity and representation, Chicana lesbian feminist, Gloria Anzaldúa argues “As long as woman is put down, the *Indian*\(^64\) and the *Black*\(^65\) in all of us is put down” (Anzaldúa 106). For Anzaldúa, then, since both identities—Indian and Black—share a common theme of uncompromising difference. Anzaldúa correctly notes that the racialized woman’s dislocatedness in the social order is so underestimated that her racial category is often separated from her gender construction and targeted as a mechanism for repression. This holds particularly true for Evelyn Higginbotham, who argues that the subject’s racial category is the most powerful marker of difference that can be used for discriminatory practices in the social domain. To Higginbotham the transference of race not only tends to subsume other sets of social relations, namely gender and class, but it blurs and disguises, suppresses and negates its own complex interplay with the very social relations it envelops. It precludes unity within the same gender group but often appears to solidify people of opposing economic classes.

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\(^64\) Emphasis is mine.  
\(^65\) Emphasis is mine.
Whether race is textually omitted or textually privileged, its totalizing effect in obscuring class and gender remains. (255)

Higginbotham posits that the subject’s racial category instigates the most profound and coercive form of dominance by social forces and institutions of authority to limit and/or deny access to valuable resources in the polity, which include sociopolitical power. Further, argues Higginbotham, the subject’s race, unlike class and gender, remains hostile to the social order by its inability to move into the dominant power structure through assimilation. For Higginbotham, then, race is a totalizing discourse—absolute and set in motion to take center stage over class and gender by its comprehensive mark of difference. To Teresa de Lauretis, gender is also a totalizing discourse, but for de Lauretis, gender representation resists identity coherence since gender has the transcendent vision to recast its image by traversing through, in, and beyond historical and ideological spheres. She argues that “the movement in and out of gender as ideological representation [. . .] characterizes the subject of feminism, is a movement back and forth between the representation of gender (in its male-centered frame of reference) and what that representation leaves out or, more pointedly, makes unrepresentable” (26). In this way, gender frequently retreats from the power and gaze of patriarchy by assigning its own discursive value and expressions to contested and canonical narratives that represent them, and often from the perspective of the sociopolitical borders. From de Lauretis’ perspective gender is a movement between the (represented) discursive space of the positions made available by hegemonic discourses and the space-off, the elsewhere, of those discourses: those other spaces both discursive and social that exist, since feminist practices have (re)constructed them, in the margins (or “between the lines,” or
“against the grain”) of hegemonic discourses and in the interstices of institutions, in counter practices and new forms of community. (26)

Although Higginbotham and de Lauretis argue that race and gender are more internalized within the power structure than the subject’s imagination, like Haraway and de Lauretis, Raka Shome warns against disregarding sociopolitical space as a major site of negotiation for discourse. For Shome, in addition to cultural influences, the subject’s identity formation is also shaped by a time-space dynamic. Shome extends the argument of space as having a direct and immediate coherence to the subject’s perceptions, and argues that we need to resist making the framework of identity the singular fixture of the contemporary cultural landscape, the sole background against which all other analyses of cultural relations occur, for in doing so we risk rendering invisible the situated practices of space and place through which identities are continually reworked, contested, and reproduced (43).

The tempering of race and gender subjectivities for a more pronounced critique of sociopolitical space to be explored and identified that Shome espouses does not cancel oppression and exploitation based on identity. In a harmonizing approach, critique based on race and gender that Higginbotham and de Lauretis make a case for, and the critique of sociopolitical space that Shome argues for, are all fundamental to the disarming of canonical and traditional practices. To separate critiquing space on identity, to privilege a critique based on sociopolitical space can elevate one over the other since the master narratives embedded in the systems, institutions, and social structures all have a key relation in the subjugation of marginalized voices. Expanding the scenario for transformation to include all perspectives from marginalized rhetorics creates a wider sphere of opportunity to erode, subdue, and disrupt the enduring influence of a patriarchal
vision and interpretation of the sociopolitical order. For example, in her influential anthem on theories by feminists of color, scholar activist Chela Sandoval argues that a democratized global culture can “consolidate and extend what we might call manifestos for liberation in order to better identify and specify a mode of emancipation that is effective within first world neocolonizing global conditions during the twenty-first century” (2.2). That is, for Sandoval, to encourage new and broader perceptions that strengthen “coalitional consciousness” (78) that evokes individualist rhetoric. In this way, a model to dismantle the historical, canonical, and patriarchal authority by energizing and examining the significance of discourses that resists internalizing normative theories and methodologies in their research or activism is needed that will not ideologically crumble under the influence of institutional norms. For Sandoval, “a methodology of the oppressed, which is composed of the technologies that make possible differential social movement” (71), is critical to disrupting the historical internalization of dominant and authoritarian discourses within the social order. This may be because they have been resilient in perpetuating their methods, values, and beliefs to compete with shifts in historical and cultural ideologies.

Modest ideological steps to generate Sandoval’s conception of “coalitional consciousness” within feminist social movements to counter inequities across gender and race must be juxtaposed with the polemical rhetoric that comes with being different. In short, being a woman and a woman of color is not institutional friendly since these subjectivity positions require constant management of the complexities and oppressions that come with gender and race difference. Further, women and women of color react offensively and defensively to discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping and—perhaps the most damaging but most subtle form of polite hostility to their subjectivity—tolerance.
In Wendy Brown’s conception, “tolerance appears as a discourse of pure normativity, of pure recognition and its limits; what this appearance hides is the inequality and the regulation (achieved through the governmentality of tolerance dispersed in society), and not simply the normative marginalization organizing its subjects” (75). While there is no overt repression in tolerance, it is still an institutional structure used to block privileged access to power in its attempt at gendered and racial pluralism. Further, the knowledge gained by the vision of the other is subordinated by stressing liberal harmony, which “has prided itself on its universality and politically inclusionary character” (Mehta 427): this also weakens the subject’s right to critique the canonical practices and the historical knowledge of institutions as a member.

This outsider representation of knowledge based on difference is most vividly reflected by the identity power movements of the 70s (Asian, Black, Chicana/o, American Indian, gay/lesbian and feminist) that were a critique of the sterile institutional spaces that appeared inclusionary by their tolerance of them. However, gendered and racialized subjects realized their cultural and ideological knowledge was rejected since the institutions of power believed that activists’ knowledge served no epistemological function outside the domain from where it emerged. In Michel Foucault’s analysis, counter-theories involve not only a critique of coercive discourses, criticism also signals an astute comprehension for institutional change during a particular time and place in history—the kairotic moment:

So I would say: for the last ten or fifteen years, the immense and proliferating criticizability of things, institutions, practices, and discourses; a sort of general feeling that the ground was somehow cracked, even and especially that which seemed most familiar and solid to us and closest to us, our body, our everyday

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66 Emphasis is Brown’s
gestures. But alongside this crumbing and the astonishing efficacy of discontinuous, particular, and local critiques, the facts were also revealing something that could not, perhaps, have been foreseen from the outset: what might be called the inhibiting effect specific to totalitarian theories [...] (6)

In rejecting the structuring of totalitarian theories 70s identity-based movements similar to Willard’s and Wells’ nineteenth century temperance, suffrage, and antilynching movements were not declaring that hegemonic discourses lost their authority to articulate their cultural experiences the point in the “criticizability” of identity-based movements was that those normative discourses were never valid. Therefore, the debunking of old epistemologies with new rhetorical practices illustrates that methodologies which take an essentialized view of the Other are transformed by fresh (re)presentations. In Foucault’s words, the challenge of the (re)presentation is that “[...] the critique in fact indicates something resembling a sort of autonomous and noncentralized theoretical production, or in other words a theoretical production that does not need a visa from some common regime to establish its validity” (6). Moreover, the criticizability of methodologies opens up a rhetorical space for previously ignored and devalued expressions involving cultural knowledge and experiences based on identity. Yet, those who insert cultural knowledge as methodology not acknowledged by canonical foundations for criticizability are viewed as divisive and antithetical to dominant systems of knowledge. It is unjustifiable to argue that cultural knowledge within the context of struggle should be distinct from criticism of institutions since the voices of marginalized groups are often characterized by the structural characteristics that define them. Therefore, the normative codes that constrain and subjugate peripheral rhetorics must be drawn upon to accurately label and locate the nature and extent of their effect.
Signifying Difference: The Rhetoric of Confrontation

Agitation is a balancing act for both the subject and the oppressor since learning the language of the other and its signification within the sociopolitical order is key to disarming negative judgments. Sociopolitical borders and boundaries that spatially contain the subject based on their gender and race have had a profound effect on their agency. Still, there should be an unfulfilled need by the FSM to cultivate ideologically the racial or gendered subject to their vision within the movement without dissension based on otherness. When members agree to engage in intercultural rhetoric, all experiences that emerge out of the stigmatizing effect of difference can be viewed as source of knowledge to remapping the sociopolitical order. In the words of Foucault, it is “these disqualified knowledges that make the critique possible” (8) because subjugated knowledge can be the threshold to provide a rhetorical challenge, through agitation, against the exalted discourse of canonical ideology. Indeed, it is because of the disqualified knowledges that transformation occurs since they coerce, when the historical moment is on their side, dominant ideologies to rethink their hegemonic practices. Indeed, it is because of the disqualified knowledges that transformation occurs since they coerce, when the historical moment is on their side, dominant ideologies to rethink their hegemonic practices. This is especially so when canonical discourses come in conflict with marginalized groups that articulate their humanity in a language that is self-reflexive of their lived reality, rather than interpretive of their lived reality, by the generalized and nullifying rhetoric of hegemony. Therefore, it is no accident that both black and white feminist women were core to the dismantling of slavery and the call for woman’s suffrage since slavery and women’s subjugation derived from the same ideological source—religion and politics (see chapters 1 and 3).

Misunderstanding based on rhetorical style can be examined in the relationship between
Willard and Wells. In her statement at the annual WCTU convention regarding Willard’s comments that she [Wells] “put an unjust imputation upon half the white race” \textit{(On Lynchings} 60) Wells confronts Willard and demands that she expose her source of information since the alleged comments did not come directly from Wells. Wells writes:

> On the same day I had a private talk with Miss Willard and told her she had been unjust to me and the cause in her annual address, and asked that she correct the statement that I had misrepresented the W.C.T.U, or that I had “put an imputation on one-half the white race in this country.” She said that somebody in England told her it was a pity that I attacked the white women of America. “Oh,” said I, “then you went out of your way to prejudice me and my cause in your annual address, not upon what you heard me say, but what somebody had told you I said?” Her reply was that I must not blame her for her rhetorical expressions—that I had my way of expressing things and she had hers. I told her I most assuredly did blame her when those expressions were calculated to do such harm. I waited for an honest [and] unequivocal retraction of her statements based on “hearsay.” Not a word of retraction or explanation was said in the convention and I remained misrepresented before that body through her connivance and consent.

\textit{(On Lynchings} 67)

It is clear that Willard and Wells did not speak the same language. That is, they did not share the same cultural influences as a woman and as a woman and a black that shaped their consciousness and which would serve as an internal—though perhaps not conscious—link to their ideological system. Important lessons can be carried from these early misunderstandings into present day rhetorical situations. It is never practical to assume that subjects engaged in agonistic rhetoric
are from the same cultural domain. Just as Willard and Wells were unable to mask their racial bias against each other’s views, conflict can be expected in all exchanges when people of different ideological backgrounds engage in debate. A subject’s rhetoric always carries her cultural anchors and do not preserve a strict and discernible rhetorical break on a political issue since their ideological stance function as the apparatus for dissent or consent in discourse. The ideological underpinnings of the subject, as expressed rhetorically, represent the embodied beliefs, values, morals, and ethics of the subject; they also express opposition to those they are in conflict with. Thus, they function as a contextual window for defining the subject. For Craig Calhoun, this interpretive judgment is based on hermeneutics—the theory of interpretation. While Calhoun takes a critical social theory approach, he nonetheless argues that subject’s cultural knowledge/expression/difference remains situated within their ideology rather than takes flight from it. Calhoun writes:

Differences of context may also stem from the internal cultural construction of meaning. Such differences arise in language, in schemes of identification and valuation, and in orientations to social practice. They bear on the fact that understanding human beings is not just a matter of interpreting their action, but also of understanding the ways in which their own interpretations and constructions of meaning shaped their action. (49)

It is interesting to note, given the social practices of the nineteenth century that many activist black and white women crossed racially conceived and institutionally controlled spaces in the name of social action. While the social function of these spaces was to illustrate the authoritative power of hierarchal spaces regulated by race, their constituting effect was also tied to the performance of a woman (see chapter 2) who gave legitimacy, by her adherence to the contested
spaces clarity, unity, and reinforced power. For example, Wells comments that “On the same day I had a private talk with Miss Willard.” The very act of their meeting and conversing as equals clearly violated the nineteenth century hierarchy of space, imbued with racially conceived constructions of performance. Willard also violated the terms of this racially defined sphere by opening the space for Wells to confront her. This illustrates that activist black and white women were far more progressive than their less active feminine counterparts were in their revolutionary rhetoric and practice to reorder nineteenth century social roles and arrangements. What is most profoundly revealing about the rhetorical space that Willard and Wells occupy is the transformation of the space from one of racial hierarchy—white over black—to the middle—where they meet as activist women in agonistic struggle. Wells notes that she “told her [Willard] she had been unjust to me and the cause in her annual address, and asked that she correct the statement that I had misrepresented the W.C.T.U.” The vitality and directness of Wells comments also illustrates how class status and educational achievement are sociopolitical brokers when trying to disarm authoritarian power. It is hard to conceive that a black woman with less agency than Wells could approach Willard, and receive an expansive rhetorical space for confrontation. Wells’ and Willard’s confrontational rhetoric is also relevant because it offers a glimpse into the new system of agonistic struggle between black and white women over fundamental differences in ideology, which emerged out of the cultural transformation of the Reconstruction Era (see chapter 1).

As president of the WTU, Willard no doubt respected Wells on some level or she would not have given her such an open rhetorical space to speak with her during the convention when Wells could have caused more trouble by a public demand of renunciation. However, Willard rather astutely replied, “that I must not blame her for her rhetorical expressions—that I had my
way of expressing things and she had hers” without a full theoretical understanding that her cultural knowledge and rhetoric were not the same as Wells’ despite their common gender. Wells’ reply to Willard was also quite cogent when she notes, “I told her I most assuredly did blame her when those expressions were calculated to do such harm” given the space [annual WCTU convention] and context [during the lynching crisis] in which they were spoken. The truth is both Willard and Wells were right: their gendered and racial ideologies were so woven into their consciousness and reflected their cultural knowledge, values, beliefs, and morals, which ideologically defined their social protest rhetoric on temperance, suffrage, and antilynching. Neither Willard nor Wells tried to de/radicalize their voice since it embodied what they could not disguise in their rhetoric—the shape of their consciousness. Wells’ lobbying for a rebuttal of the comments did not have any obvious effect on Willard. Wells writes, “Not a word of retraction or explanation was said in the convention and I remained misrepresented before that body through her connivance and consent” (67).

However, a little over a month after the WCTUs Annual Convention and Willard’s address, which indicted Wells for accusing white women of initiating sexual liaisons with black men, an editorial in the *Union Signal* wrote the following statement on December 6, 1894, as a retraction of the statements on behalf of Willard. Perhaps fearing the loss of ethos among Wells and both black and white antilynching sympathizers, Willard again adopted a more mainstream position to diffuse the hostile racial tone, which Wells believed was both political and advocated a racially based judgment against all black people, rather than just black men. The editorial reads:

In her repudiation of the charges brought by Miss Ida Wells against white women as having taken the initiative in nameless crimes between the races, Miss Willard
said in her annual address that this statement “put an unjust imputation upon half
the white race.” But as this expression has been misunderstood she desires to
declare that she did not intend a literal interpretation to be given to the language
used, but employed it to express a tendency that might ensue in public thought as
a result of utterances so sweeping as some that have been made by Miss Wells.

(On Lynchings 67-68)

In the editorial, Willard’s rhetorical strategy is detached, for although she endorsed the editorial,
the style was inaccessible to Wells because it was a mixed rhetoric of Willard admitting some
fault, but not totally absolving Wells of the alleged comments. The editorial, which indeed was
Willard’s voice, though uncharacteristically in obscure and vague language, confounded Wells
and her interpretation of the editorial which was sharp—precise—and analytical. As Calhoun
notes, “the problem of interpretation across lines of difference is at work in any conversation”
(49) but with race and gender as apparatuses to define meaning, the sphere of interpretation is
more problematized by the signifying effect of cultural knowledge. Wells notes:

Because this explanation is as unjust as the original offense, I am forced in self-
defense to submit this account of differences. I desire no quarrel with the
W.C.T.U., but my love for the truth is greater than my regard for an alleged friend
who, through ignorance or design misrepresents in the most harmful way the
cause of a long suffering race, and then unable to maintain the truth of her attack
excuses herself as it were by the wave of the hand, declaring that “she did not
intend a literal interpretation to be given to the language used.” (On Lynchings
68)

The unfolding of a perspective by women and women of color through the lens of gender and
race is often constricted by the enduring discourse of the master narratives that questions the validity of the gendered and racialized subjects’ knowledge when it is drawn from their cultural space. This confrontation between the subject’s cultural knowledge and the essentialized narratives of ideology creates a tension often revealed by gendered and racialized others having to interconnect their cultural knowledge within a discourse, and with a fluency, that may not reveal exactly their perspective. As Calhoun notes, it is “no accident that many approaches to this problem [interpretation] focus on a model of conversation” (Calhoun 49). Further, the gendered and racialized others must also valorize their cultural knowledge without the normative perspective of the dominant ideology suppressing, devaluing, or even imposing its ideological view on their narrative.

**Gender and Race as the Lens of Perspective**

Gender and racial perspectives are imbued with/by cultural expressions and experiences that reflect the marginalized Others’ attempts to represent their role in the sociopolitical order. While their strategies may appear invalid, and are often defined that way, gendered and racialized perspectives invoke methodologies and strategies to interpret their experiences that emerged out of their marginalized rhetoric, rather than the rhetoric of dominant discourses. While these rhetorics of marginality diverge from the language of the canon, they are indeed an important way to learn about feminine interrelatedness and differences. Chandra Mohanty, who comments on the dynamic relation between cultural methodologies and feminism, supports this idea. Mohanty observes,

> that the challenges posed by black and Third World feminists can point the way toward a more precise, transformative feminist politics based on the specificity of our historical and cultural locations and our common contexts of struggle. Thus,
the juncture of feminist and antiracist/Third World/postcolonial studies is of great significance, materially as well as methodologically. (107).

The emic perspective, which is an accretion of cultural symbols, traditions, and meaning, disables the etic perspective, which is grounded in analytical conceptualization, by giving the sociopolitical actors agency to tell who they are rather than being told who they are. In this way, the lived reality of the subject’s identity is not subsumed by and in institutions of power (political, social, education, legal, law, medicine, and psychology) that presume a theoretical confidence grounded in truth which is detrimental to the ethos of the gendered and racialized subject. In the words of Mohanty, “one of the tasks of feminist analysis is uncovering alternative, nonidentical histories that challenge and disrupt the spatial and temporal location of a hegemonic history” (116), so that its knowledge is not codified and elevated over other forms of knowledge as truth for the masses. Mohanty’s challenge to develop new theories and knowledge from alternative perspectives to disarm the constitutive effect of patriarchal history underestimates the power and force history as an ideological instrument. While cultural knowledge is politically unacceptable, it is nonetheless made by subjects that ideologically problematize the authority of master narratives by the signification of their gender, race, culture, class, and ethnic perspectives against those dominant discourses.

In a contemporary example of this premise, Federal Appeals Court Judge Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina woman nominated as a US Supreme Court Justice, argues that gender and cultural/ethnic cleavages are not silent signifiers in judicial decision-making (see chapter 2);

67 Emic refers to cultural articulations from the members of a cultural group, while etic refers to an analytical articulation from individuals outside the cultural group. See “Song to Speech: The Origins of Early Epitaphia in Ancient Near Eastern Women’s Lamentations by Jan Swearingen in Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks Lipson, Carol S. and Roberta A Binkley. Albany: SUNY Press, 2004. 213-225.
rather they “will have an effect on the development of the law and on judging” (Sotomayor qtd. in Savage). For Judge Sotomayor, the signifying effect of gender, culture, class, and ethnicity do not operate within a separate sphere outside the subject’s identity in isolation but “our gender and national origins may and will make a difference in our judging” (Sotomayor qtd in Savage). In explaining the constitutive effect of these multiple subjectivities within the social order, and particularly race, Judge Sotomayor notes that “I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn’t lived that life” (Sotomayor qtd in Savage). In understanding the inequities within the sociopolitical order that having a racialized identity brings Judge Sotomayor comments, “I wonder whether by ignoring our differences as women or men of color we do a disservice both to the law and society” (Sotomayor qtd in Savage) given the signifying effect that race has on the structure and production of knowledge. However, in emphasizing the effect of her gender and race on her ideology, Judge Sotomayor was harshly criticized for her perspective although it was produced within and by the marginal space that she was relegated to as a Latina woman. Judge Sotomayor’s musings are evidence of an ethic regulated by the pervasive and influential counter resistance to liberal exclusionary politics, which for Mehta “works by modulating the distance between the interstices of human capacities and the conditions for their political effectivity” (430). Judge Sotomayor’s comments are equally reflective of her refusal to separate her gendered and racial experiences from her ideological perspective since her disqualified knowledge was developed out of her marginal status within sociopolitical order. Liberal exclusionary ideology, continues Mehta, “settles boundaries between who is included and who is not” (430), an assessment that gendered and racialized subjects, such as Sotomayor, are aware of and cannot easily dismiss since they are defined by structural boundaries in the
sociopolitical order. Further, the rhetoric of liberal exclusionary politics, as defined by Mehta, portrays and reflects the prevailing historical assumptions that the identity of difference, which is harmonized through gender and race (see chapter 1 and 2), is predictable, analyzable, and inferior—a conundrum that requires the theoretical processes of Western patriarchal discourse to engage and unravel. It also suggests that the sociopolitical actor should value the vision of a city on a hill\(^{68}\) that excludes them—a balance that requires a neutral stance when the symbolic representation of the gendered and racialized subject is anything but neutral in the sociopolitical order.

The desire for autonomy, inclusion, and justice is inextricably linked to the subject’s self-authorship, which is bound in the symbolism and representation of gender and race. However, shared beliefs over the consequences that emerge out of the aesthetic realities of gender and race can produce effective and unifying opposition to eliminate, social, political, and economic inequities in society. Therefore, the questions that emerge out of the master-status of race and gender must be considered and balanced within the historical and political moment where new questions, theories, perspectives, and subjectivities arise if only to announce that they exist.

Suspending the ideology in which difference based on race and gender is inferior rather than unlike, promotes interaction and creates a rhetorical space where inside and outside subjectivity perspectives are connected with each other because of similarities, rather than contrasted to look for distinctions. In this way, “The new cultural politics of difference can thrive only if there are communities, groups, organizations, institutions, subcultures, and networks of people of color [and gender] who cultivate critical sensibilities and personal accountability—without inhibiting individual expressions, curiosities, and idiosyncrasies” (West 108) as the by-products of their

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\(^{68}\) The phrase refers to puritan John Winthrop’s sermon “A Model of Christian Charity” delivered in 1630 which had a utopian and divinely inspired vision for America.
identity rather than counter rhetoric to dominant discourses. In placing emphasis on their identity by invoking images, symbols, and their rhetoric in a context related to their gender or race, the subjects acknowledge their profound social exclusion. However, the racial, gendered, and rhetorical consciousness of the subject has “significant degrees of freedom to shape the messages that we send, even if we cannot escape the consciousness itself” (Gutmann 168), a point that both Mohanty and Judge Sotomayor have demonstrated in theory and practice. Moreover, although symbolic representations of gender and race cannot be neutral since they are often created in, and marked by, contested historical and cultural moments, it would be a mistake to presume that they are absent of interlocking signifiers. Thus, in the process of unconsciously resisting the ideological conflict that their identity stirs, in a liminal state, subjects attempt to both manage and reverse objectifying historical narratives in dominant discourses, which claims their gendered and racial identity is nothing more than a pathology of symbols with no representational value outside their cultural geography.

**Conclusion**

The challenge for twenty-first century feminist social movements is the creation of an ideology that can accommodate the evolving state of womanhood in a global world. With the enormous signifying effect of race and gender in history, politics, religion, and the legal system, there is always a threat of divergence by the unstated tension constructed around these representations when they are bound within a shared rhetorical space like a FSM. It is a mistake to presume that U.S. feminist ideologies are an interior rhetoric and do not cross international borders. Still, the struggle to diminish social, political, and economic inequities based on race and gender in the U.S. calls for a particular ethos since there remain enormous institutional disparities that discriminate against subjects on the political and economic periphery of the social order. The
profound but fragile moment in the political culture elicited by a Western nation in electing its first black (male) president must not be lost on women because it signifies a major shift in social relations, perspectives, and ideologies. Historical moments such as President Obama’s election and Judge Sonia Sotomayor’s nomination to the US Supreme Court widen the rhetorical space for all women and people of color. Willard’s and Wells’ contributions are part of the tapestry of change that both mutually and independently inspire an ideology for twenty-first century feminism; an inclusive feminism encompasses history, politics, technology, and global borders to create new rhetorics for all people to emerge within their sphere of difference, rather than outside it.
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