POWER AND PRIVILEGE: THE PROGRESSION OF DOMESTICATING POLITICS THROUGH CATHARINE BEECHER AND ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S SOCIAL REFORM

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Introduction

It is often assumed that during the nineteenth and early twentieth century a woman's life was restricted to the domestic sphere. Her pious, emotional, and delicate nature supposedly made her unfit for participation in men's public sphere. Key figures, such as Catharine Beecher (1800-1878) and Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962), however, were decidedly vocal in the public sphere. Nevertheless, they paired their own enormous influence in the public sphere with a (seeming) focus on domesticity. Influential women have often diverted attention to their domestic duties rather than drawing attention to their political activism. Both Catharine Beecher and Eleanor Roosevelt defended women's place in the domestic sphere rather than advocate for their integration into men's public sphere in order to maintain women's superior moral position and authority over the private sphere.

Twentieth-century studies of the nineteenth century such as Mark Girouard's *The Victorian Country House* (1971) and Elizabeth Wilson's *Women and the Welfare State* (1977) claim that social spheres were divided into men's public sphere and women's domestic sphere. However, the binary distinction of such spheres fails to take into account women's involvement in reform efforts in civil society. This involvement illustrates how women's organizations shaped their public demeanor and their subsequent disposition in politics. Women's employment of their biological difference and their supposed higher emotional faculty allowed them to engage in public debate concerning issues that shaped the domestic sphere. As a result, Paula Baker argues women "had a stake in maintaining the idea of separate spheres. It carried the force of tradition and was part of a feminine identity" (634-635). Women, complying with the division of spheres, founded organizations and engaged in public debate solely regarding social ills that supposedly

concerned woman's domain. Some of these ills reflected the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century's largest political developments in the U.S., such as abolition, temperance, and women's rights.

The implications of entangling the domestic sphere with these monumental historic developments discloses women's organizations' use of tact. Dolores Hayden in *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (1981) assigns credit to women's reform organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Unions for bringing "the home into the world" but emphasizes that the union aimed to protect the domestic sphere rather than dissolve the separation between the domestic and public sphere (5). Women's organizations framed their issues as threatening to the home in order to be able to discuss them in public debate. Baker continues this argument by claiming that "women fused domesticity and politics. It [temperance] engaged more women than any other nineteenth-century cause and shows how women could translate a narrow demand into a political movement with wide concerns" (637). By constructing a narrative complicit with female difference and separate male and female cultures, reform organizations mirror the debate about the "separate spheres" context emerging in the late nineteenth century about racial segregation. Middle- and upper-class Caucasian females' "separate spheres" and the "separate but equal" legislation for decades upheld, under the guise of symmetry, a hierarchy that oppressed women and African Americans. Nevertheless, in both cases, there were strong factions on the oppressed side who favored the separation as the best route to emancipation.

Catharine Esther Beecher's legacy largely concerns her efforts for women's education and her militant anti-suffragism. Though initially Beecher was dependent on the men in her life, she developed her own moral philosophy divergent from her father's and brothers' beliefs. By expanding and increasing women's power in the domestic sphere, Beecher was able to create a

moral philosophy, that, John Thomas claims, addressed "the condition of American women, many of them as aware as she of their declining status and of the consequent need to challenge the prerogatives of men within the narrow cultural limits assigned them" (763). Due to the rapid industrialization and urbanization that took place over the course of Beecher's adult life, middle- and upper-class women faced increasing disregard of their domestic work. Barbara Epstein contends that New England's industrialization brought forth a new set of values centered around individual achievement, wealth, and fame. These values each fit men's aspirations but excluded women from the concerns of their middle- and upper-class milieus (67). By prioritizing self-sacrifice, a quality generally accepted to be inherent to women only, Beecher was able to increase the importance of the domestic sphere and subsequently increase the status of women's position. Ross Paulson argues that Beecher cleverly employed the institutions available to her, such as female seminaries, moral textbooks, and the family-unit, in order to promote self-sacrifice outside the parameters of Calvinist religion (240). She reshaped these institutions to fit the purpose of her moral philosophy that aimed to increase women's influence on the public sphere rather than their direct participation in it. Stanly Godbold claims that the new social order Beecher's philosophy promotes parallels her intellectual development away from the strict limits of Calvinist society towards a strong morale based Victorian society (1263).

Beecher feared that women's legal equality would too closely resemble male prerogatives. Therefore, her moral philosophy, which can be read as a feminist philosophy, aimed at women's equality on a social and economic scale rather than on a legal basis. The primary resources for the expansion of her ideology and the advancement of a new social order lay in the creation of household manuals such as *The Treatise in Domestic Economy* (1841) and *The American Woman's Home* (1869). Many domestic manuals were published during the

progressive era which aimed to improve the domestic sphere on both practical and more abstract levels. Domestic manuals such as *The American Woman's Home,* which Beecher co-authored with her more famous sister Harriet Beecher Stowe, sought to maintain women's separate position from men whilst increasing the respectability and status of the domestic sphere. William O'Neill contends that the skills of home management attempted to help women maintain "their great work of preserving family stability amidst the turbulence of American democracy" (187). As Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd argue in their book *Domestic Space*, the preservation of family stability illustrates women's abstract responsibility of safeguarding the values of American democracy and their roles in maintaining the national identity (2). Thus, although Beecher's moral philosophy aimed to retain women's position in the domestic sphere, the importance and influence of their position extended well into the public sphere. Beecher's own writings on public matters in relation to the effects on the domestic sphere illustrate how Beecher politicized the domestic sphere.

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt (ER) is remembered as one of the twentieth century's most influential women. However, Roosevelt purposefully narrated her own portrayal as a domestic woman. Though historians have associated the culture of divisive separate spheres with the nineteenth century, Roosevelt's cultural and social disposition towards politics in the early twentieth century signifies the endurance of its social impact. According to Paul Dennis, Roosevelt "wrote extensively . . . on the relationship between parenting, childhood, adolescence, and the troubling social issues of the time" (1). The emphasis on the effects of reform issues on the domestic sphere shifted the focus away from ER's contested political career, and instead established ER as a woman merely aiming to improve conditions for her family and those of others. Though she remained an icon during the 1930s, 1940s, and the 1950s, Roosevelt

consistently denied her own possession of any political power and instead aimed the majority of her writing and radio-shows towards a predominantly female, and domestic audience. Consequently, Roosevelt became an icon who, Dennis argues, "was pictured as a person who balanced the growth of power . . . that now characterized her life with traditional ideas concerning the role of women" (8). Roosevelt framed her public career around issues of domesticity and used her radio platform to reach the houses of millions of women and conversed on matters ranging from the inner workings of the electoral college to child-rearing.

Roosevelt, similar to Beecher, was indifferent to female suffrage, instead she aimed to sustain women's safeguarded position. She actively opposed the Equal Rights Amendment in order to retain protective legislation for women. Whereas Beecher politicized the importance of the domestic sphere in order to uphold women's position of power, Roosevelt engaged in a domestication of political issues in order to deflect criticism of her powerful political position. Roosevelt's publication of *It's Up to the Women* (1933), which resembles nineteenth-century's domestic manuals, illustrates the importance of women's traditional domestic roles. The book, published right before Franklin Delano Roosevelt's inauguration as President of the United States (1933-1945), exalts women's traditional roles throughout U.S. history and offers advice to multiple generations of women regarding their behavior during the Great Depression. Though the book engages with some progressive politics, such as women joining the labor force, its core premise relies on women sustaining the domestic sphere during this turbulent time. The content of the book reflects Roosevelt's position as a feminist, though she consistently engaged with progressive politics, she did so whilst continuously denying her ambitions and framing her political career as a wifely duty. Roosevelt's engagement with progressive reform in combination with her Victorian demeanor illustrate how she domesticated political issues.

This is a qualitative study focused on nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century development of women's history in the United States. This study uses primary source material written by Beecher and Roosevelt whose works on domestic economy have largely been forgotten or dismissed as superficial domestic manuals by scholars. However, by employing the conceptual framework of different social spheres and the inclusion of women's reform efforts in civil society; it is revealed that the domestic manuals had far-reaching implications beyond the domestic sphere. Though this study is largely centered around *The American Woman's Home* and *It's Up to the Women*, it also analyzes primary source material such as Beecher's *Slavery and Abolitionism* (1837) and Roosevelt's long-running advice columns such as *My Day* (1935-1962) in order to show Beecher's and Roosevelt's unambiguous writing on women's position in society. By historically contextualizing the primary sources and showing that women were aware of their own position and of their ability to use this position to their benefit; this study expands and diversifies women's position throughout U.S. history. This study is limited due to gaps in previous literature written about the cultural significance of domestic manuals. Moreover, due to the limited scope of the research it does not take into account Roosevelt's development as a feminist beyond the 1930s. My own limited knowledge of (Calvinist) religion made it difficult to simplify and disentangle Beecher's thoughts of women's position in society from her moral theory which is strongly entangled with religious language.

This thesis aims to analyze Catharine Beecher's and Eleanor Roosevelt's primary written material in its historic context in order to show the development of women's position in society over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Both Beecher and Roosevelt were concerned with advancing women's place in society, yet their focus on domesticity and the woman's role in a household appears paradoxical considering their own political activism.

Whereas Beecher's moral philosophy was predominantly concerned with women's expansion of power within the domestic sphere, Roosevelt engaged in a domestication of her political position by discussing complex twentieth-century politics in relation to the home. In this thesis, women's issues of the nineteenth and early twentieth century are mostly discussed from the perspective of Beecher and Roosevelt's middle-and upper-class Caucasian perspectives. Beecher's secularization of Calvinist morals signifies New England's societal progression towards a Victorian society, which Roosevelt maintains by engaging in progressive era politics with a focus on domestic rhetoric. Whereas Beecher sought to expand the importance of the domestic sphere in the public sphere and thus engaged in a politicization of domesticity, Roosevelt domesticated her political activity by framing it as her wifely duty.

Chapter 1: The Public and its Women: Women's Reform in Civil Society

Central to women's history of the nineteenth century was the separation of public and private life. When Alexis de Tocqueville visited the U.S. in 1835 he famously declared: "In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes and to make them keep pace on with the other, but in two pathways that are always different" (601). Throughout the United States' history women worked to advance education, improve healthcare and better their local communities. These efforts, though often staggering and incomplete, raise the question to what extent women were bound to the domestic sphere. Baker argues that "from the time of the Revolution, women used, and sometimes pioneered, methods for influencing government from outside electoral channels" (620-621). During the nineteenth century women "circulated and presented petitions, founded reform organizations, and lobbied legislatures" (620-621). All of these efforts were narrated from the perspective of improving the prosperity of the American family, and, more broadly, their communities. The nineteenth century and the progressive era are defined by women's political organization to bring their domestic politics onto the public stage by raising issues such as abolition, temperance, and women's suffrage. Women's reform organizations were complying with imposed gender restrictions and the constraints of female domesticity rather than challenging its limitations.

Andrea Hunt identifies the emergence of the industrial economy in the U.S. as the condition that gave rise to the separate spheres. She argues that in New England's pre-industrial economy and Puritan society "production and social reproduction were based on the household unit. Fathers were property owners, regulated economic activities, and had broad responsibilities for the children. Mothers were primarily responsible for the daily needs of all household

members and contributed to the productive activities of the household" (1169). However, due to the rise of an industrial economy in the beginning of the nineteenth century the household unit was severed into men's public and economic domain, and women's relegation to the private, domestic sphere (Hunt 1169). Barbara Epstein in her book *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (1981) argues that for middle class women "the center of these changes lay in the destruction of the home economy and the creation of domesticity, which brought with in a new degree of dependence upon men" (67). The changes from Puritan society toward an industrial society resulted in an exclusion of women from public life. As a result, in the early nineteenth century, New England-based religious institutions saw a rise of animosity against male authority that came to light during women's religious conversions that pointed to a schism between the genders. This animosity reflected the shift of the relation between the genders (Epstein 67). Whereas the home, and thus women, were previously central to society, the shift towards public life dislocated women to its periphery.

However, this shift in gender relations did not result in a complete relegation to the domestic sphere. Chandra Talpede Mohanty argues that "it is not the centre that determines the periphery, but the periphery that, in its boundedness, determines the centre" (81). This claim can be applied to the political role available to women from the private sphere, which is continuously represented as separate and disconnected. Since the publication of Barbara Welter's 1966 study "the Cult of True Womanhood," scholars have presented the nineteenth-century gender divide as a separation of the domestic and public sphere into a binary that is explained by Hunt as resting "on the idea of a breadwinner – homemaker dichotomy. Men are in paid employment and women may work for pay, but their primary responsibility is to take care of their family and the home" (1169). However, more recent studies such as Mary Kelley's *Learning to Stand and*

Speak (2006) and Laurel Weldon's "The Dimensions and Policy Impact of Feminist Civil Society" (2004) dismiss the dichotomous distinction of social spheres, and instead propose that the public domain consisted of multiple spheres; including the dominant men's sphere and several counter- and subaltern publics in which marginalized groups could more freely share their reform ideas and organize politically (Weldon 5). Although the rise of an industrial economy in the early nineteenth century resulted in women's exclusion from the dominant public sphere, it did not render positions powerless. Their relocation towards a private sphere did not exclude them from engaging in public life completely.

Jürgen Habermas's highly influential theoretical study of the cultural development of modern life established the creation of social spaces that, Philip Gould claims, "mediated between modern state institutions and the intimate private sphere" (30). Habermas's study *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* disputes that "modernity may be judged by the development during the eighteenth century of autonomous social spaces that mediated between modern state institutions and the intimate private sphere" (Gould 30). Though Habermas's study was highly influential, it was also contested because it continues to diminish women's influential role in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century society. Scholars such as Elizabeth Maddock Dillon aim to diversify the notion of separate spheres and contend that the social spheres were "contiguous and reciprocal rather than divisive or static" (qtd. in Gould 33). Historians have pointed out that women's moral influence impacted men's public sphere as much as men's economic prosperity impacted women's private domain. Kelley in her study of the academies and seminaries at the beginning of the nineteenth century employs the term "civil society" which includes: "any and all publics except those dedicated to the organized politics constituted in political parties and elections to local, state, and national office" (*Learning* 5). Kelley's study

disregards the binary opposition associated with the separate's spheres into public and male, and private and female (Kelley, *Learning* 5). Essential to this concept of Kelley's perception of a "public" is that it includes:

> both the rulemaking and the consent- generating functions of the state: The 'public' is, in her view, the total of organized politics and civil society. Thus, although Kelley obviously distinguishes 'civil society' from the actual deliberative institutions of the state (and from the franchise or actual office holding), she nonetheless understands it to be related to and even in some sense authorized by the state. (Boydston, "Civilizing Selves" 49-50)

Women's ability to organize political reform in civil society has been key to the teleological development of feminism as it is constructed today in terms of women's social, economic, and legal equality to men. Beecher and Roosevelt both engaged with civil institutions in order to justify their reform positions without facing repercussions for their political participation.

Civil Society acted as a social state between the private domain and the political nation-state. Rosemarie Zagarri contends that gendered republicanism mediated between women's activism in the public sphere and their complete submission in the domestic sphere by permitting women's participation in the public social sphere only excluding organized political institutions such as local, state, and federal offices (65). In addition, Michael Banner argues that the notion of civil society reflects the structure of Christian society as it gives priority to participation rather than individual rule: "whether in matters civil or more narrowly ecclesiastical . . . . It was in the Calvinist congregations of New England that . . . developed a practice of association, cooperation, and self-government that was determined to protect the social space thus revealed, occupied, and mapped out against encroachment by the state" (9). Women's organizations and

the construction of civil society closely met the prerogatives of Calvinist religion's prioritization of self-government and good deeds. Therefore, women's organizations were able to employ their pious and unpolitical nature in order to obtain important positions of social power and influence electoral government. Through education women were able to enlarge their sphere of influence because civil society acted as an intermediate realm of action; it did not exclude them from their private sphere, but also not confine them there.

As women organized politically for the sake of social reform, they "came to recognize the importance and power of the institutions of civil society – sometimes called mediating institutions" (Hall 483). Previously it was believed that women who founded and participated in reform associations through speeches, conventions, and publishing newspapers were bound to lose their claims to purity, piety and virtue. However, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell argues the inclusion of civil society as a counter-dominant public sphere shows women's ability to participate in the public sphere granted they kept to the imposed gender restrictions (*Man Cannot Speak for Her* 10). By shedding light on the role of women in the social domain of the public sphere, the notion of civil society "dismantles the false binary that identifies women exclusively with the household" (Zagarri 65). Kelley explains how women engaged with political reform despite their apolitical positions (*Learning* 66). Kelley constructs civil society "as the feminine other of the masculine state" (*Learning* 15). Moreover, her differentiation of the feminine and masculine state raises the question to what extent civil society influences the institutional nation state and the masculine status of said institutions (*Learning* 15). Of course, not all women participated in civil society, similar to the absence of the majority of men active in state legislation; a large majority of nineteenth-century women were excluded from any sort of public life due to their racial and economic position. Civil society acted as an intermediate site in which

Caucasion middle- and upper-class women could organize reform efforts in the intermediate public sphere.

During the nineteenth century, an essentialist view on women's anatomy developed. This view, grounded in biological science, emphasized the physiological differences between men and women which laid the foundation for the assumption that women were not able to think rationally (Zagarri 63). These claims about women's physical and mental incompetence laid the basis for women's exclusion from participation in politics. Aileen Kraditor in her book *Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* points to three arguments anti-suffragists used to refuse women's suffrage based on theology, biology and sociology. The theological reason consisted of the "mere announcement that God had ordained man and woman to perform different functions in the state as well as in the home, or that he had intended woman for the home and man for the world" (16). The biological view, aimed at those who sought scientific reasoning, rested two assumptions: "The first assumption underlay those antisuffragist arguments which identified femininity with inherent emotionalism and illogicality, traits inconsistent with the proper exercise of the suffrage" (Kraditor 18). The second biological assumption rested on the idea that women's physical nature was "too delicate to withstand the turbulence of political life. Her alleged weakness, nervousness, and proneness to fainting would certainly be out of place in polling booths and party conventions" (Kraditor 20). The sociological argument rested on the idea that "social peace and the welfare of the human race depended upon woman's staying at home, having children, and keeping out of politics. Voting implied much more than simply dropping a ballot in a box once a year. It meant on the part of woman an entire intellectual reorientation" (Kraditor 22). Though these arguments were replete with biological inaccuracies, they served as justifications to exclude women from political participation. Women's reform

organizations employed these seeming disadvantages to their benefit through using them as justification of their moral superiority.

The concept of moral suasion relies on the premise that women have a higher emotional faculty which men supposedly did not possess. Kelley argues that over the course of the nineteenth century:

> women came to be understood as comprehending and acting upon the world more through their expressive than their reasoning faculties. This purchase on the affections, which were presumed to be the primary source for moral and spiritual insight, brought its own endowment, a 'moral superiority' that was to be used in disciplining husbands and children. Women also deployed this 'moral superiority' to admonish other members of their sex whose wayward behavior violated the tenets of republican virtue. (*Learning* 26)

Kelley argues that refined demeanors expanded empathy and "modeled cultivation of the moral sense" (25). Women's organizations thus employed their supposed unsuitability for suffrage by invoking this moral superiority. This way, they were able to assume a position previously only dominated by men – "the making of public opinion" (Kelley, *Learning* 25). This separation of responsibilities for men and women had lasting effects on the household divisions for generations to come. For example, Puritan minister Jonathan Edwards "made the religious experience of his wife the model for conversion on the grounds that women had greater moral and aesthetic sensibility" (Campbell, "Femininity and Feminism" 101-102). And still in the twentieth century; Eleanor Roosevelt maintained that women had a higher intuitive faculty. Scholars such as Epstein argue that the defense of domesticity only exaggerated the imbalance of power. However, women's biological difference from men was not only seen as a justification for excluding them from electoral politics, but also gave them a supposed moral superiority

which justified their participation in public life (77). These contradictory ideas about domesticity illustrate how domesticity was simultaneously promoted and undermined.

The separation of women's social domain raises the question of the separation of social spheres throughout U.S. history. The civil rights and women's rights movements diverted following the ratification of the fourteenth amendment in 1868. However, on some social levels, they would continue to face the same oppression disguised as equality. The dispute over the equality of different social domains is reminiscent of the Plessy v. Ferguson ruling which designated African Americans "Separate but Equal" (1896; Foner 521). This ruling segregated African Americans into isolated legal and social spheres for decades to come with its effects still prevalent today. Though middle- and upper-class Caucasian women by no means faced the same structural oppression nor were their lives ever threatened for stepping outside social boundaries; their isolation into detached social spheres does indicate a parallel trajectory. Both civil rights and women's rights movements debated whether or not integration into Caucasian men's public sphere – and all the compromises that went with it – was the best option for their social standing. This is illustrated by the debate between Booker T. Washington who believed that African Americans should compromise in order to integrate into the dominant public sphere and W.E.B. DuBois who stimulated African American entrepreneurship and commercial efforts and in order to battle the underlying economic cause to worldwide racism. Throughout U.S. women's history the same struggle between assimilation and segregation can be seen. For example, some organization fought for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment in order to gain ground in men's public domain, whereas figures such as Beecher and Roosevelt, discussed in the following chapters, sought to maintain separate social spheres.

Women could act politically if they kept to the restrictions of gender propriety. Because women's moral nature provided them with a justification for public participation and because they could not vote, their actions in civil society were seen as "above-politics" (Baker 631). Zagarri argues that: "in pursuit of their goals—the eradication of slavery, the passage of temperance laws, the incorporation of charitable organizations—women reformers engaged in a variety of actions that to modern observers are undeniably 'political' in character" (68). By organizing petitions, lobbying legislators, women engaged with the legal system in order "to secure the reforms they sought" (Zagarri 68). However, historians have shown women's organizations consistently denied the political goals of their undertakings and instead narrated them from a perspective of improving their private sphere. Michel De Certeau in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* contends that "a tactic is the art of the weak" (37). This application of tact can be applied to nineteenth-century women's use of a rhetoric bound to domesticity in order to circumvent the "cultural prohibition on politicking women" that, according to Catherine Allgor "guaranteed that women's political work developed in an atmosphere of denial" (40). Moreover, by defining their reform actions in civil society as an alternative to men's corrupt politics, women were able to maintain their claim to moral superiority whilst steering clear of men's prerogatives.

The justification through the domestication of societal ills resulted in what Campbell identifies as a strategy for inclusivity. Campbell argues that the "Woman's sphere was altered by absorbing into it whatever concerned the home and its protection" (*Man Cannot* 125). She argues that the protection of the home seemed to justify any means necessary, such as "calls for the woman's ballot, labor reform," and "co-education" because each of these elements contributed to the well-being of the family and to a larger extent, society (125). Even issues seemingly lacking

a direct relation to the improvement of the domestic sphere were raised under this mantra. Campbell contends that:

> It was argued that if women were educated, they would be better able to fulfill their obligations as wives and mothers; if married women had the right to sue, to enter into contracts, to control themselves and their children against profligate husbands, or to fulfill their duties to their children in widowhood. If women were allowed to vote, they would bring to bear on politics their purity, piety, and domestic concerns, and thus purify government and make it more responsive to the needs of the home. (*Man Cannot* 14)

By framing their case in the name of improving conditions of the home they were able to demand legislation on behalf of the women and children that would improve social conditions such as legislation that would "compensate victims of industrial accidents, to require better education, to provide adequate nutrition, and to establish factory and tenement inspection," the latter still very much of concern to Eleanor Roosevelt (Baker 641).

Frances Wright (1795-1852) exemplifies that women who challenged the boundaries of gender propriety were publicly scrutinized. Wright was a social reformer in favor of abolition, universal education, religious freedom, and women's suffrage during the nineteenth century (Campbell, *Man Cannot* 17). Cima explains that Frances Wright attempted "to perform as a rational American, outside of the realm of evangelical sympathy, but her experiment failed in part because Americans did not associate a woman's body with rationality and in part because they were wedded to sympathy" (50). In 1836 Catharine Beecher, wrote about Fanny Wright:

> Who can look without disgust and abhorrence upon such an one as Fanny Wright, with her great masculine person, her loud voice, her untasteful attire, going about unprotected, . . . mingling with men in stormy debate, and standing up with bareface impudence, to

> lecture to a public assembly. . . . she has so thrown off al feminine attractions, . . . I cannot conceive anything in the shape of a woman, more intolerably offensive and disgusting. (qtd. in Boydston et al., *Sisterhood* 252-253)

Wright challenged the boundaries of what was acceptable for women and thereby became an example of what women should *not* be. Therefore, "women who attempted to speak were labeled 'Fanny Wrightists,' an epithet intended to frighten away any woman with aspirations to the platform" (Campbell, *Man Cannot* 17). Thus, women challenging the restrictions set for their participation in civil society were faced with harsh criticism and were antagonized. Lori Ginzberg claims that it went as far as saying that "unrespectability was personified by Fanny Wright" (142-143). As a result, Ginzberg claims that the epithet attached to her name was particularly effective in limiting women's activities that challenge the notion of gender propriety (142-143).

With the invocation of moral superiority and the emphasis on a protection of their purity, women first began to affect public opinion through their abolitionist efforts. Women, from the 1820s onwards, organized anti-slavery gatherings and emphasized how the institutions of slavery violated Christian values. Gay Cima claims women "engaged in abolitionist 'dialogues,' recited poems, gave speeches, and shared narratives" (40). As their appearances increased, they slowly started altering public sentiment on slavery. Their actions in the civil sphere were undeniably political, as they collected signatures for petitions against slavery and "disseminated testimonies to legislators, and attacked religious and political institutions" (Cima 40). Women's employment of their moral suasion for abolition are exemplified in Catharine Beecher's younger sister's Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* Mrs. Bird, the wife of a senator, influences her husband's policies by using her "moral suasion" (141). She is characterized as

keeping with the imposed gender restrictions: meaning she generally does not concern herself with politics; but the narrator claims there is only thing that would upset her: “anything in the shape of cruelty would throw her into a passion which was the more alarming and inexplicable in proportion to the general softness of her nature” (143). The chapter exemplifies the ideal of the separate sphere ideology and shows how women exerted their beliefs through the male figures in their lives such as the concept of republican motherhood prescribes. Stowe shows that women relied on sympathy in order to express their emotional concerns over the effect on slavery on society. Thus, women were able to affect public opinion whilst maintaining the idea of separate spheres.

Near the end of the nineteenth century the exploitation of approximately the same tactic as abolition can be found in the organization of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) established in 1873. The WTCU, led by Francis Willard from 1878-1898, was an essential part of women’s political organization during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Though Willard advocates for women’s “full legal and economic equality in marriage, co-education, dress reform, physical and manual training for girls, and a woman’s right to prevent conception,” she does so whilst claiming that home and marriage are “unaffected by these changes” (“Femininity and Feminism” 102). The progressive era saw many such contradictions. According to Campbell, the WCTU was an “acceptable outlet for the reformist energies of women during the last decades of the nineteenth century” due to its focus on domesticity (*Man Cannot* 6). The changes the WCTU sought to implement were centered around the improvement of the home and Christian society: “because brothels were often attached to saloons, alcohol was perceived as an inducement to immorality as well as a social and economic threat to the home. Women who struggled against its use were affirming their piety, purity, and domesticity”

(Campbell, *Man Cannot* 6). Due to women's application of rhetorical and political tactics the temperance movement did not challenge the accepted status of women in society and was therefore an acceptable outlet for their reformist ideas: "while taking traditional domestic concerns seriously, the WCTU taught women how to expand them into wider social concern and political action. With greater success than any other nineteenth-century women's group, it managed to forge the woman's sphere into a broadly based political movement" (Baker 638). The WCTU showcased the rhetorical and political tact surrounding the improvement of conditions of the home: even the WCTU motto "home protection" signals this cause.

The same tactic applied to both abolition and temperance was applied to the obtaining of women suffrage and citizenhood. Campbell claims that women's rights activists "extolled woman's natural capacity for nurturance and spirituality. They claimed that . . . their participation in politics would eliminate war. They affirmed woman's unique function as a 'ministering angel' and the existence of two, distinct, gender-based natures" ("Femininity and Feminism" 102). Like abolitionists, early suffragists "affirmed, to greater or lesser degrees, the natural differences between men and women and the superiority of 'womanly' traits. (102). In addition, Frances Willard argued for women's political enfranchisement and stressed the positive effects of women's active engagement in public life, it was "alleged that woman's vote will purify politics, prevent war, end the liquor problem, and civilize legal and judicial practices" ("Femininity and Feminism" 102). Essential to this invocation of women's purity is that even though Willard fought for women suffrage, she did so whilst maintaining the stereotypical position of women as housewives. Ginzberg argues that "formulating a notion of female citizenship that could still insist on women's 'primary' duties as wives and mothers became a central project of those who supported woman suffrage" (155). Suffrage and citizenhood for

women were approached from the angle of purifying politics and bringing the reform efforts women had been organizing in civil society into the nation state.

In conclusion, though it was often assumed nineteenth-century women were only ever supposed to be in a separate, private sphere in which they held no political power, women's reform organizations demonstrate women's leading positions in key U.S. historic developments. Their invocation of moral superiority and their justification of speaking in public on behalf of the domestic sphere illustrates the reciprocal nature of social spheres rather than a binary distinction between public and private domains. Rapid industrialization of society seemingly dislocated women to the periphery of society and relegated them to the domestic sphere, and although their position in public life altered it did not disappear. Women's reform organizations were able to discuss social ills granted they complied with the imposed gender restrictions: they framed their concerns in such a manner they did not challenge men's prerogatives and adhered to nineteenth-century ideals of female piety and virtue. The institutions of civil society offered them a site that did neither mean complete relegation to the private sphere nor political participation, but rather offered them a public social sphere in between in which they could discuss social ills that affected the domestic sphere. Women's morality was used as a justification to include various issues, even those seemingly unrelated to the home. This was exemplified in the organization for abolition, temperance, and female suffrage. Despite the existence of a public life for women in civil society, their actions in civil society were a continuation of the limitations of female domesticity rather than a confrontation of it.

Chapter 2: Feminist Philosopher: Catharine Beecher's Politicization of the Domestic Economy in *The American Woman's Home*

Catharine Esther Beecher, daughter of famous Congregationalist minister Lyman Beecher and older sister of famous novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe, was a prolific philosopher in her own right. At 31, she released her first book *The Elements of Mental and Moral Philosophy, Founded Upon Experience, Reason, and the Bible* (1831) in which she first introduced her argument for women's superiority based on their higher capacity for emotion (Hayden 55). In the teleological progression of feminist history women consistently gained a larger role in the public sphere. Beecher aimed to diminish this role and resisted the progression of feminism. However, Catherine Gardner argues that Beecher's writings allow for her to be perceived as a feminist philosopher; first, because Beecher herself believed she was working to advance the position of women and second, because approaching Beecher as a feminist philosopher adds to the "understanding of our nineteenth century American feminist intellectual heritage" (3). Beecher developed a moral philosophy which aimed to make women's housework in the domestic sphere into an honorable profession and thus make women to men in a separate but equal sphere.

Her moral philosophy aimed to establish a secularization of moral conscience and in addition provide women with an education that exalted women's domestic careers. Beecher's moral philosophy is centered around giving women full authority over the domestic sphere and provide them with social and economic equality to men. Mark Hall argues that her works on abolition, capitalism, and suffrage have "been dismissed as being naively conservative" (490). However, attentive reading of these works reveals that Beecher did not dismiss these reform efforts but acted from a different perspective aiming to safeguard women's power out of fear for

men's retributions for women's integration into their public sphere. Beecher politicized the domestic sphere by increasing its power rather than seek assimilation into men's public sphere. Her intellectual development reflected a larger societal change from a Calvinist society that sustained women's submission to both God and men to Victorian society which emphasized rigid gender separation rather than integration into men's public sphere.

Born in East Hampton, Catharine Beecher, the eldest of seven siblings, enjoyed a safe and secluded childhood in a Puritan household. The relationship between her mother, Roxana, and her father, Lyman, was typical of Puritan gender dynamics: Lyman wrote "'She [Roxana] entered into my character entirely' which he, according to Kathryn Kish Sklar, "considered her greatest virtue" (5). Beecher was never able to experience such submission to men's hegemony. Jeanne Boydston et al. in their book *The Limits of Sisterhood: the Beecher Sisters on Women's Rights and Woman's Sphere* (1988) argue that Catharine Beecher was an independent and autonomous child who relished being in charge (31). While the Beechers lived in Litchfield, Connecticut from 1809-1821, Catharine was trained in sociality such as "candor, truth, politeness, industry, patience, charity, and religion" with an emphasis on lady-like manners and refined conversation (Sklar 17). During this time, she "absorbed a powerful lesson in the dynamic of social power" (Sklar 3). Preceding her marriage, Lyman pushed Catharine towards a conversion experience; a lengthy process that would require her to fully submit to God. This submission for a man would soon be over and he could return to his independent life. However, for a woman, this submission was only an introduction to a life-long submission to a husband (Sklar 31). For an autonomous Beecher like Catharine, who was once referred to by her father as "the *best boy* he had," her self-government was hard to put aside and Beecher spent her

subsequent life trying to increase the power of women using the institutions available to her rather than submit to a conversion experience (Boydston, *Sistershood* 34).

The death of Beecher's fiancé Alexander Metcalf Fisher marked a turning point in Beecher's religious thinking. Fisher died before he was able to experience a religious conversion, which according to Lyman Beecher, who strongly believed in the notion of original sin and the damnation of the unconverted, meant Fisher was damned. Catharine could not bear the thought of this and ultimately rejected Lyman's religious beliefs (Sklar 35). To her brother she wrote: "Oh, Edward, where is he now? Are the noble faculties of such a mind doomed to everlasting woe, or is he now with our dear mother in the mansions of the blessed?" . . . Could I but be assured that he was now forever safe, I would not repine" (*Autobiography I* 356). The desperation in her letters signifies her unwillingness to accept the damnation of the unconverted.

This, in addition to her own aversion to submitting to men's hegemony, caused her to develop her own moral philosophy. This moral philosophy included a secularization of moral conscience which encompassed that those who lived good and faithful lives would be graced by God independent of their converted status. In a later letter to her father she writes that she believes that on "the Day of Judgment we shall find that . . . there was more reason to hope for one whose whole life had been an example of excellence, than for one who had spent all his days in guilt and sin" (*Autobiography I* 373). Fisher's death marked the beginning of Catharine's divergence from her father's faith. She renounced her father's rejection of good works and his sole focus on a conversion experience. She spent the rest of her life fitting her beliefs into a new mold for morality: Beecher became concerned with "the creation of a unified society, the merging of piety with morality, and the modification of orthodox Calvinist doctrine" (10).

Beecher's first widely published writing: *The Elements of Mental and Moral Philosophy* (1831) is centered around the mind's capability of rationalism as its own source for reason and morality. Londa Shiebinger claims that Beecher's later development of the philosophy also incorporated a compelling and all-encompassing social theory which included religion, morality, sociality, education, politics, and economic philosophy. In each of these aspects, independent conscience was prioritized (237). In *Elements* Beecher stressed the importance of social and secular morals rather than Calvinist unilateralism. She believed that self-sacrifice for the good of other should be people's driving force. In *The Duty of American Women to their Country* (1845) and *The Evils Suffered by American Women and American Children: The Causes and the Remedy*, (1846) Beecher:

> sets out arguments supporting women's special duty to educate and to provide moral example through acts of benevolent utility involving personal sacrifice and self-denial. According to Beecher, women's nature is expressed through leadership in child rearing, in education, and in social reform. The home is an environment created by the woman. The family is a microcosm of the state. (Schiebinger 241)

The application and focus on women as social reformers through education and the home show her eagerness to increase woman's power by means of their virtue. Expanding women's all-encompassing practical skills could be applied to the public sphere and women's traditional virtue gave them authority over the reform of social practices which had been diluted by men's self-absorption.

Beecher's dissatisfaction with the social limitations placed upon women by New England Puritanism contributed to her reworking of the common-sense philosophy developed by Reid, Ferguson, and Stewart, among others, as one of the first Americans (Schiebinger 236). Beecher's

Moral Philosophy adapts Scottish Common-Sense philosophy in order to fit Puritan "virtues of self-denial and self-sacrifice" (Schiebinger 236). According to Schiebinger, Common-Sense philosophy "asserted the connection between internal conscience and virtue and external, social morality. According to Common-Sense philosophy, conscience, not God, was the source of judgment on the morality of individual actions (237). Because self-sacrifice and submission had been assigned as female traits, Beecher's moral philosophy was able to use these concepts to women's benefit. Beecher castigated Calvinist "constraints on an individual's moral freedom through its inculcation of guilt and fear"; in *Common Sense Applied to Religion, or the Bible and the People* (1857) Beecher trails the historical development of the dogma of original sin and salvation of the elect, and reprobates original sin and the conversion experience as perverse (365-366). Though Beecher continuously supported the Calvinist notion of self-constraint, she reoriented the Calvinist view towards a position where self-control and personal sacrifice which were to be reinforced by the principle of benevolent utility which made it "the duty of the individual to sacrifice personal good to the greater good of the many" (Schiebinger 238). Beecher's moral philosophy combined pragmatism and common-sense philosophy with the concept of benevolent utility in order to fit it to Calvinist notions of self-sacrifice.

Beecher believed that due to their divinely attributed role as the moral compass women could not be involved in the public sphere. Her moral philosophy was an amelioration of the universally accepted position of women in the domestic sphere. Gardner argues that Beecher's view deviates from the standard of moral power by offering a robust variation that "will require both education and economic independence, and is supported by an ethico-religious system" (12). Whereas previous essays on domestic economy maintained that men reserved authority over the household, Beecher "established herself as a leading advocate of domestic feminism by

claiming that woman's greater capacity for self-sacrifice entitled her to rule the home" (Hayden 55-56). This demonstrates that Beecher wanted women's social sphere to remain separate rather than integrate fully into men's public sphere. Her moral philosophy included a reform of women's education in order to elevate the reputation and renown of the domestic profession that would provide women with separate, but equal power. She became the ultimate domestic feminist (Hayden 55).

Beecher was convinced the divinely attributed power relationship between the different genders did not riddle women with complete subservience. In her essay *Slavery and Abolitionism: with Reference to the Duty of American Females* published in 1837, she wrote that whilst women held "a subordinate relation in society to the other sex, it is not because it was designed that her duties or her influence should be any the less important, or all-pervading. But it was designed that the mode of gaining influence and of exercising power should be altogether different and peculiar" (*Slavery* 37-38). She believed that although the different genders exercised their authority in different realms, they were equally powerful. The political power, she argued, should belong to men still: because they were "the proper persons to make appeals to the rulers whom they appoint, and if their female friends, by arguments and persuasions, can induce them to petition, all the good that can be done by such measures will be secured" (*Slavery* 39). Rather than gain direct political power, Beecher feared women would lose their virtue and moral sensibility if they engaged in the public sphere.

Therefore, she believed that influencing the men through women's proper education would eventually lead to a wholesale review of American society. Sklar argues that Beecher's efforts in increasing and expanding women's power over the domestic sphere caused her "to innovate," and "to seek new channels of cultural influence, and to design an ideology that gave

women a central place in national life. The home and the family, she believed, could be redefined as the social unit that harmonized various national interest and synchronized different individual psyches" (Sklar xiii). Because Beecher insisted that women's participation in public life would ultimately lead to a decline in power she emphasized the importance of the private sphere for the national stability. Moreover, she devoted her life to the education of women in practical skills in order to make domestic work into a "profession" just as her grandniece Charlotte Perkins Gilman would elaborate on in her publication of *Women and Economics* (1898). By increasing the moral power and status of private domestic work, Beecher aimed to make women equal to men despite maintaining separate spheres of power.

As early back as 1837, Beecher already warned against the retributions women would face if they acted to assertively in the public sphere. Beecher sought to distinctly clarify the boundaries of gender distinctions by calling for women's withdrawal from the public domain. For instance, she argued that women's participation in the abolitionist movement:

> because it draws them forth from their appropriate retirement, to expose themselves to the ungoverned violence of mobs, and to sneers and ridicule in public places; because it leads them into the arena of political collision, not as peaceful mediators to hush the opposing elements, but as combatants to cheer up and carry forward the measures of strife. (*Slavery* 39)

Women's petitions could be deemed as "obtrusive, indecorous, and unwise" and consequently could "increase, rather than diminish the evil which it is wished to remove" (*Slavery* 40). She warns that as soon as women gave into ambition or their "thirst for power" their "ægis of defence" would be gone. According to Beecher the appropriate characteristics of women included: "delicacy of appearance and manners, refinement of sentiment, gentleness of speech,

modesty in feeling and action, a shrinking from notoriety and public gaze, a love of dependence, and protection" (qtd. in Boydston et al. 252-253). In addition, Beecher argues that "all the sacred protection of religion, all the generous promptings of chivalry, all the poetry of romantic gallantry," depended on "woman's retaining her place as dependent and defenceless, and making no claims, and maintaining no right but what are the gifts of honour, rectitude and love" (*Slavery* 38). She was concerned that, like Fanny Wright, women would face backlash from attempting to claim political power. Gardner argues that Beecher sustained the belief that the social order had been created by God in order to protect the weakest members of society such as women and children from oppression (14).

Boydston et al. argue that throughout Beecher's life she showed a profound "fear of the brute force of males and of the social, sexual, and physical vulnerability of women" (246). This fear is already evident in 1837 but becomes even more palpable after the 1850s. In 1869 she writes that "[since] God has given to man the physical power," they would always chastise women who question their authority. Moreover, she believed men would never rescind that power and she warned the suffragists that their methods were "not safe" (*The American Women's Home* 340). Though she agreed with suffragists that women's "happiness and usefulness are equal in value to those of man's," and that "it is the right and the duty of every woman to employ the power of organization and agitation, in order to gain those advantages which are given to the one sex, and unjustly withheld from the other" she did not agree that suffrage would resolve women's issues ("An Address on Female Suffrage" 12). Nevertheless, she realized that claiming the advantages of equal rights would take a long time and the evils suffered in the meantime would not decrease if women's organizations kept pushing for suffrage. Therefore, she presented "another method for gaining the advantages unjustly withheld" (*Suffrage* 13). Though she agreed

with the suffragist's goals, she feared their methods and sought to elevate the eminence of women's domestic profession rather have women engage with politics.

Apologists for domesticity, such as Beecher, aimed to give women the ultimate authority over the domestic sphere by educating them and elevating their professions to be equally important as men's professions. Kelley explains that "the claim that women's learning was dedicated, not to self-actualization, but to social improvement was designed for the same purpose it had served in its post-Revolutionary articulation—legitimating women's engagement in making public opinion" (*Learning* 102). Like many feminists during the progressive era, Beecher, sought financial independence or "independent livelihood" for women but was faced with the problem that women were not trained in skills that could be beneficial to this cause (Beecher, "Better Than the Ballot" 81). In *The American Woman's Home* Beecher writes: "the modern girls, as they have been brought up, can not perform the labor of their own families as in those simpler, old- fashioned days; and what is worse, they have no practical skill" (254). In 1869, Beecher wrote her essay "Something for Women Better than the Ballot" following African American's (supposed) enfranchisement. At this time, women's suffrage movements were aggravated and questioned if pursuing suffrage was a viable path. During the progressive era middle- and upper-class unmarried women were completely dependent on their brothers, and fathers "who often unwillingly support them from pride or duty" ("Better Than the Ballot" 81). For such women there was nothing else to do but remain dependent chiefly on the labor of others till marriage is offered, which to vast numbers is a positive impossibility" ("Better Than the Ballot" 81). Perhaps Beecher was deflecting some of her own frustrations as a woman who never married nor had children onto these philosophies.

As a solution she offered that the only way out of being "an incumbrance" was marriage, which "for this they are trained to feel that it is disgraceful to seek. They have nothing to do but wait to be sought" ("Better Than the Ballot" 81). Beecher philosophized that if institutions provided to train women in useful skills, like men are trained in "agricultural chemistry, political economy, and the healing art," they "would gain a profession suited to her tastes, and an establishment for herself equal to her brother's, while she could learn to love and honor woman's profession" ("Better Than the Ballot" 82). In 1852, Beecher became a co-founder of the Women's Educational Association which aimed to:

> aid in securing to American Women a liberal education, honorable position, and remunerative employment *in their appropriate profession;* the distinctive profession of woman being considered as embracing the training of the human mind, the care of the human body in infancy and in sickness, and the conservation of the family state. (Beecher, *Common Sense* 224)

She divided the business of women into three departments; the training of the human mind, the care of the human body, and the charge of the domestic economy. Each, she argued, were as important as law, medicine, and divinity were to men (*Common Sense 388*). Women were divinely attributed the responsibility for the cultivation of people's minds, Beecher argued, therefore their mission was "is to train immature, weak, and ignorant creatures, to obey the laws of God; the physical, the intellectual, the social, and the moral—first in the family, then in the school, then in the neighborhood, then in the nation, then in the world" (*Suffrage* 86). Women's education was framed in a way that would improve the home, state, and nation as a justification for their education.

By framing women's power in a domesticating manner by attributing to them only the domestic sphere, Beecher evaded criticism of her moral philosophy because its ultimate purpose was grounded in domesticity. By arguing in favor of maintaining the separate spheres, Beecher was able to publish texts on various topic related to benefitting the progression of women's position. Beecher was able to voice her politics in spite of a climate in which "etiquette manuals written by both men and women prescribed more insistently the proper behavior for middle-class ladies. Woman's attributes – physical weakness, sentimentality, purity, meekness, piousness – were said to disqualify her for traditional public life" (Baker 629-630). By treating the domestic sphere as a microcosm of the state, Beecher framed her issues in accordance with gender propriety; she aimed to contribute to a structural change in society. Boydston et al. contend that "domesticity turned out to have unexpected implications. By attributing to women precisely those values that seemed most endangered by the dislocations of early industrialization, domesticity provided the framework within which Catharine . . . organized to reform American society" (*Sisterhood* 22). By aiming to reform matters concerning the well-being of women, children, the home, and their local communities; women were able to carve out substantial roles in the public sphere by working from the perspective of the private sphere (Baker 620-621).

Though previously Beecher had written for a more mobile audience, following increasing urbanization in the 1850s, she wrote for a more urban audience in which the difference between men and women had resulted in a clash which made men and women adversaries, for example, by women's labor as industrial workers (Sklar 210). Sklar argues that Beecher's Victorianism was a continuance of domesticity's goals (such as keeping the "natural" gender divisions rather than class division), she argues that Beecher felt the need "to discover new ways to maintain the boundaries between men and women in an urban environment where both sexes might be

performing similar functions" (211). Victorianism provided Beecher with such new divisions between the sexes rather than stick to those of the original domesticity (211). Sklar contends that "in her later thought, after Catharine had recast her Calvinist heritage into a form more appropriate for the Victorian era, she removed morality from the sphere of the church and treated in purely as a social entity. Yet the heart and its motivations remained at the core of her moral philosophy" (Sklar 12-13). Beecher's personal development reflects the larger cultural shift of secularization of a moral system that equals society's shift from a Calvinist to a Victorian society. Though Beecher was unable to break with Calvinism completely she relayed the focus towards the "social dynamics of the Calvinist system [rather] than in the original religious purpose it was designed to serve" (Sklar 242). Beecher was interested in the practical workings of the theological system but continued the "natural" gender division rather than go along with the emerging class divisions.

From the 1850s onwards, it becomes more apparent that Beecher struggled with defending women's position in the private sphere and was unable to adhere to her own preaching. Though contradictory to her own claims against women's petitioning for the abolitionist cause: "in her Educational Reminiscences, she proudly recalled her anonymous participation in an 1828 petition campaign on behalf of the Cherokee" (Boydston et al. *Sisterhood* 245). Moreover, in her 1870 "Address on Female Suffrage" she warned that she and the opponents of women's suffrage might bombard Congress with "such an array of petitions and remonstrances . . . as never before entered congressional halls" (Boydston et al. *Sisterhood* 245). During the 1850s, Beecher wrote *Truth Stranger than Fiction* which defended her former student Dalia Bacon so-called "improper flirtation" with a younger man. Bacon had claimed that the minister in question, MacWhorter, had initiated the relationship and proposed marriage, but a

clerical court had acquitted him. Beecher however, wrote a 300-page attack on not only MacWhorter, but also Yale University, and the Connecticut Congressional clergy because she recognized the social ambiguities she was trying to solve in society. Beecher:

> made clear in the opening chapter that her quarrel was equally with the sexual double standard that taught women 'that a happy marriage is the summit of all earthy felicity'; and yet penalized them for pursuing that goal aggressively. She may have been remembering the cool responses which, recurrently, had greeted her own assertiveness. (Boydston et al. *Sisterhood* 245-246)

Beecher's own participation in civil society conflicted with her published writing but simultaneously acts as a defense of women's preservation of moral virtue. By pointing out the double standard illustrates the complicated battle between separate domesticity and assimilation into men's public sphere.

Beecher and Stowe's 1969 publication of *The American Woman's Home* (*TAWH*) can be read as a site of feminist resistance. Though the book is not explicitly philosophical, her works on the rebranding of home economics served as a traverse between pragmatic domestic work and its larger function in American Christian Morality similar to the bridge between enlightenment and pragmatism (Schiebinger 242). Therefore, Beecher's works on domestic economy must be seen as practical examples to her complex moral theory. *TAWH* embodied the culmination of Beecher's feminist resistance to women's narrowly assigned sphere. The domestic guide contains advice ranging from the design of the house, ventilation of the rooms to safeguard the family's health, the eradication of vermin, the management of young children, healthy exercise, and the duty of New England Christians to take care of the homeless, particularly homeless

children. Schiebinger argues that Beecher's understanding of women's nature comes from Calvinist tradition but she also expanded the duty of wives and mothers beyond the home:

> women must make the world a virtuous place by populating it with virtuous children and also by instilling virtue in others through teaching, persuasion, and example. . . . women, who are naturally more virtuous than men, must achieve hegemony outside the domestic sphere through activism to transform the social practices which men had instituted and which were inconsistent with virtue and morality. (241)

Beecher treated the domestic sphere as a form of preparation for civil engagement. Yet she discouraged civil engagement.

Though her earlier writings make it seem Beecher's theory was resembled a "separate but equal" doctrine, *TAWH* shows how the elevation of home management could potentially lead to women's integration into men's public. Valerie Gill argues that Beecher's domestic advice was a larger symbolic reflection of their integration into men's public sphere. According to Gill the books progression from domestic reflections towards suggestions on how to take care of those who are not able to meet middle-class family standards "reflects an understanding of the home as a centrifugal entity, a moral force that radiates outward from the center of the actual Christian house to the circumference of society" (21). Though it seemed that Beecher did not want women to engage with Civil Society, her writings about the home representing the larger state show that her writings belie this claim (Hall 489). Gardner argues that "the way Beecher allows for women's moral superiority over men: in homes and in schools . . . [would] lead to a wholesale moral reform of America" (8-9). Beecher codified the home as a microcosm of the state. Institutions of civil society are taken as a primary and critical element of democracy, despite Beecher's fervor to maintain the separated spheres, her goals were "*breathtakingly political*"

(Hayden 56; emphasis added). Though Beecher aimed to advance women's power in society, her moral philosophy was conservative and also contradictorily repressive. Boydston et al. argue that although Beecher's ideology is "fundamentally bound to Beecher's class and racial interests, it was nonetheless steeped in discontent, critical of the narrow 'sphere of usefulness' allotted to females, and constantly subversive of it. It was the politics of a divided self, writ large into the gender ideologies of a developing nation" (*Sisterhood* 241). Beecher remains a highly contradictive figure; her advancement of women's position by attempting to enclose them in a "narrow sphere of usefulness" is exemplary of the way women could only increase their power by domesticating politics.

In conclusion, Beecher was ultimately concerned with the advancement of women in society, but she maintained traditional gender roles. By secularizing morality in her philosophy, Beecher's intellectual development reflected a larger cultural trend from a Calvinist ethic in which society affirmed a set of moral principles towards a Victorian ethos which actuated manners and principles (Paulson 238-239). Beecher promoted a conservative and narrow ideology of the separate spheres and rejected women's participation in a counter-public sphere. Moreover, she argued that it was unsafe for women to closely approach men's prerogatives and therefore sought to elevate the renown of women's education. By educating middle- and upper-class women in a variety practical and intellectual skills they would gain absolute authority of the domestic sphere and therefore obtain social and economic equality with men despite their existence in a separate social sphere. Though Beecher actively spoke out against women's participation in abolitionist and suffragist efforts, she did not renounce their goals. A prolific writer, and a present voice in civil society, Beecher employed a domestication of politics in order to retain women's position in a separate sphere. As a result, she was able to vastly expand

women's opportunity for education and contributed to the "social acceptability of women in various professions" (Boydston, *Sisterhood* 248). By expanding the power of the home, Beecher politicized the domestic sphere through which the home became a moral force that radiated reform outwards to the public spheres.

Chapter 3: Denial of Self-Interest: Eleanor Roosevelt's Domestic Progressivism in *It's Up to the Women!*

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt's position as a feminist has been a long-debated topic. In 1939, *Time Magazine* hailed her the "world's most foremost political force" ("Oracle"). In that same article she was named an "oracle to millions of housewives" ("Oracle"). In contemporary feminist studies these praises are seemingly contradictory, yet they disclose Roosevelt's clever employment of targeting a largely female audience and teaching them about politics and the importance of their participation in their communities. Roosevelt, like Beecher, was a prolific writer and consistently wrote about her observations of society; she was devoted to writing columns; making radio and television shows; and hosting social events that were largely targeted to the common woman who did not concern herself with politics. Blanche Wiesen Cook, arguably Eleanor Roosevelt's most authoritative biographer, contends that there was no place in the early twentieth century for political women, "except in the background" (379). ER's position in the background of a huge political platform enabled her to keep intact the moral sensibility of women as mothers and housewives and therefore keep intact the social separation of gender roles of Victorian society whilst increasingly engaging with progressive politics. Roosevelt continued the tradition of separate gender spheres by framing her public achievements as her duty as a wife and mother. Roosevelt's fabrication of her career in compliance with Victorian gender roles signifies her domestication of politics as a continuation of the nineteenth-century tradition of protecting women's moral position in society. Her publication of the domestic manual *It's Up to the Women* marks the site of struggle between women's domestic roles and their duty of advancing democracy through civil engagement.

John Youngs explains that Roosevelt was born into aristocracy and raised by strictly Victorian parents (13). David Roosevelt (DR), grandson of FDR and ER, writes that her youth was marked by the premature death of both her parents before age ten. Roosevelt was subsequently raised by her maternal grandmother until 1899; when she was sent to Allenswood in England to enjoy an education with "emphasis on social responsibility and personal independence" (DR 63). It was at Allenswood that Roosevelt was educated in moral responsibility by one of the most influential role-models of her life: Mademoiselle Souvestre (DR 31). Roosevelt learned to act from a position of *noblesse oblige*, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as: "(The principle that) noble ancestry and privilege entail responsibility" ("Noblesse Oblige, A"). The education she enjoyed deeply instilled a moral responsibility and public duty she carried with her throughout her life. Returning to heavily industrialized New York in 1902, Roosevelt employed this moral duty to aid the less fortunate. ER, perhaps attempting to escape the emotional responsibilities bestowed upon her by her relatives, started volunteering in some of the poorest districts of New York City. She helped found the Junior League for the Promotion of Settlement Movements and started teaching calisthenics and dance to tenement children (DR 72). During the short window of time preceding ER's marriage to FDR in 1905 she was balancing the expectation of aristocratic social life and her responsibilities in reform organization.

ER's marriage to FDR in 1905 temporarily ended her reform career. In many ways, she began to live an exemplary upper-class Victorian life secluded to her domestic sphere. During this time, ER moved away "from Souvestre's example and buried herself in the details of childrearing, home-making, seasonal travel, and lavish entertainment" (Cook 177). Not entering on men's public domain; in her autobiography (1961) she writes that in the year 1910, when the

family moved to Albany for FDR's political career, she considered it a wife's "duty" to be interested in "whatever interested her husband, whether it was politics, books, or a particular dish for dinner" (*Autobiography* 88). The moral responsibility she exhibited in her early career seemingly disappeared until 1914 when her ER's reformist energies were re-awakened by World War I. Together with millions of working class women who took on new roles traditionally occupied by men; such as wireless operator, mechanics, and mail carriers, ER volunteered for the Red Cross in spite of the fact that it was considered inappropriate for women from her class to take up such labor (DR 111). According to close family fried Joseph Lash, "Eleanor was the 'dynamo' behind the canteen service, presided over Navy Department rallies, [and] . . . managed her household, served as wife, mother, daughter-in-law" (67). Nevertheless, he argues "she still spoke the language of male supremacy", and "did not believe in knowing things which your husband did not wish you to know'" (Lash 67). Finding out about her husband's affair with Lucy Mercer in 1918 changed this acceptance of male hegemony and signified a turning point in ER's thinking. Lash defines the affair as the turning point from ER's suppression (77-78). Though initially suffering depression and isolation, slowly the impact of the war and the watershed effect of the affair put an end to ER's endless Victorian support for her husband and she started engaging more with social and public life (Lash 78). Though the war inevitably reopened her eyes to the suffering around her and the need for reform, the affair shattered the confines of her family home. Lash explains the affair as a rebirth: "she was no longer submissive, and a new force had been released in herself and in the world, and in a different way she began to love" (78).

Throughout her lifetime, ER actively advocated for civil rights, union rights, and openly disagreed with some of her husband's politics. Nevertheless, she framed her public persona as the "wife-of" in order to adhere to the proverbial double standard. Cook argues that:

> ER herself gave us all the images of homeliness, helplessness, and inadequacy that have since become the clichés of her life. She created for the future a picture of rectitude and quietly encountered duty, of constant if not thankless service to her husband, children, and grandchildren. She told us nothing of her political ambitions or of the intimate details of her private life. And virtually every book written subsequently caters to her own presentation. (10)

Cook claims that Roosevelt purposefully maintained the picture of herself as an ideal politician's wife rather than a political activist. She became known as the "wife of" and did not seek to challenge this notion. She had been raised with the stereotypical view that a woman "lose her femininity to engage in public life" (DR 135). Nevertheless, *New York Times* writer Samuel J. Woolf wrote that "she is the strongest argument that could be presented *against* those that who hold that by entering politics a woman is bound to lose her womanliness and charm'" (qtd. in DR 135; emphasis added). The *New York Times* profile is typical of the media representation that culturally conserved the separate spheres; Roosevelt is depicted knitting. At 47 she is described as an "old-fashioned" woman who spends as much time as she can with her family (Woolf 122). By consistently harking back to the importance of family and her rejection of direct influence in politics she aimed to keep "her womanliness and charm."

When asked in her column *If You Ask Me* about the accusations that she ever "meddled in government activities" she deflects:

> I was never conscious of meddling in government activities. I passed on inquiries, complaints and suggestions which were sent to me. Having learned since that time that even high department heads sometimes felt my interest meant they were obligated to do things they did not think they should do, I am shocked and grieved. I had always supposed they would do only what they thought right and not accept any suggestions they considered wrong. (ER, April 1954)

She used her "wife-of" position to communicate with thousands of ordinary people and organize politically from a standpoint of improving and advancing women's place in society just as Beecher did. In order to do so, ER portrayed her participation in public affairs as a wifely duty rather than admit her own ambition: "she never acknowledged her own joy in the game, or her own skills at manipulating the cards" (Cook 341). Just as Beecher warned against men's retributions if women showed any ambition, ER portrayed herself as a reluctant participant in politics and as a mere stand-in for her husband rather than a competitor in the political arena. ER did not challenge the double standard women in politics were – and are – presented with.

ER faced opposition to her outspokenness, two months preceding FDR's inauguration, *The New York Times* castigated ER for her many public appearances and radio speeches and complained about her "outspokenness." Betty Houchin Winfield elicits that this was particularly apparent when ER suggested she would be the White House contact that the nation could write to (333). An editorial in *The New York Times* reads: "it is not indelicate or impolite to express the hope that she will refrain from such utterances in the future. The very best helpers of a President are those who do all they can for him, but keep still about it" ("in the House of Friends" 12). This a glaring example of ER's public request for power from a traditionally female position: maintaining social contacts. Furthermore, the criticism in the *New York Times* shows ER was

constantly pressing the margins of what was an acceptable position for her. Though ER publicly aimed to fulfil the duties that were customary for the first lady she did not always play this role. Winfield argues that "while so many of her activities were done 'for him,' they were also publicly independent 'of him.'" (338). ER undeniably an industrious woman, the 1920s were abound with social reform and active participation in public life. For example, during her 15 year-long Val-Kill partnership with Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman, ER presided over *Women Democratic News,* the Todhunter School for girls, and the Val-Kill furniture factory which aimed to supplement income for rural families. Though each of these efforts concerned traditionally female reform issues, she was often criticized for acting "in her own right" (Winfield 338-339). As a result, ER stressed the importance role of dutiful wives and employed it to her advantage (Winfield 336).

Just as Beecher prescribed a solid half-decade previously, Roosevelt reflected on the role of women to perform social duties. In a column for the *Kings Features Syndicate* in 1935 she wrote: "many a woman in her drawing room by a judiciously dropped word has made or broken a man's life and there is no question but what the public official has more to gain from the right kind of wife than has a man in almost any other walk of life. She can make friends for him and oh, how she can make enemies for him" (qtd. in Winfield 338). Furthermore, Roosevelt's publications in magazines allowed her to expand and influence her and her families' public image: "Eleanor Roosevelt publicized and kept alive the expectation of a close-knit family with her remarks about family birthdays, holidays, weddings, new births, visits and her relationship with her husband" (Winfield 338). By fabricating the image of a close-knit family in her public appearances, Roosevelt was able to deflect criticism of her public appearances and keep intact her reputation as the "wife-of" whilst educating many women through these publications.

Like Beecher, ER positioned herself as a teacher. Not only did ER teach immigrant children, she also volunteered her time teaching English literature and history. Mary Jo Binker and Brigid O'Farrel argue that she positioned herself as a civic educator, particularly geared towards women ("Neglected to Tell You"). Over the course of her career, Roosevelt wrote hundreds of columns and articles, particularly for women's magazines such as "*Good Housekeeping, Woman's Home Companion, Ladies Home Journal* on such diverse topics as 'Ten Rules for Success in Marriage' and . . . on more generalized subjects as the 1940 'Fear is the Enemy.'" (Winfield 332). During her years in the White House all the way up to her death in 1962 she published her daily column *My Day* (1935-1962) in which she disclosed the intimate details of her family life and daily activities to an audience of millions of people, particularly housewives. These columns show the range of questions Roosevelt was asked to answer during her public appearances. On November 10th she writes: "When the time came for questions everything in the world was asked of me from such domestic questions as: 'What is your favorite recipe, can you cook it yourself and can you tell us what the ingredients are?' to 'What do you think the chances are of bringing about peace in the Far East?'" (*My Day* 1937). In her advice column *If You Ask Me*, which ran from 1941-1949 in the *Ladies Home Journal* and from 1949-1962 in *McCall's*, ER discussed both issues such as an income tax-return for people who struggled sending their children to college (June 1942), the difference between the Democratic and Republican Party (November 1961) and the electoral college (April 1961). She discusses issues not solely from a political perspective but rather as the perspective of a mother. Anya Luscombe contends that in a 1941 radio broadcast following the attack on Pearl Harbor she "shared her feelings as a mother of a son serving in the navy" rather than objectively analyze the

events (3). By hosting programs and shows that were geared towards women, ER was able to discuss both politics and give a traditionally female perspective on political issues.

Unlike Beecher, ER came to believe in the necessity of women's public participation. Nevertheless, she remained convinced that the "natural" biological distinctions of the nineteenth century were accurate. In her column *My Day* she agreed that women "are generally more intuitive than empirical" (5 Aug. 1939). Though she is keen to add that women are capable of empirical thought, the column shows that ER held on to Victorian divisions of gender. Similarly, she supported women's interest in politics and encouraged them to partake in it, but only on a local community level. She writes that she would encourage women to think about participating in politics because of the influence they could bear on "the life in their community" (My Day, 28 Dec. 1938). ER does not immediately beseech women to have lofty ambition, rather, she feels: "that it is more important for women to begin their interest in public affairs in their local communities. They can hold office there, or promote other women for office, so that in local communities the balance would be 50-50 between men and women and the women's point of view would be a vital part of every community decision" (28 Dec. 1938; Cook 338). These columns illustrate that Roosevelt maintained the ideas of nineteenth-century's ideas on women's participation in the public sphere for the sake of their community rather than encourage their participation state or national politics. Though women were able to vote and allowed to be involved with politics, ER continued to promote women's traditional domestic role and their responsibility for the community.

Much like Beecher, Roosevelt sought to maintain the notion of female difference in order to protect women from legislation that would render them vulnerable. In her 1933 book *It's Up*

to the Women she praised the National Recovery Act because its legislation would protect women's labor laws. ER argues that:

> women have a right to demand equality as far as possible but I think they should still have the protection of special legislation regarding certain special conditions of their work and until we actually have equal pay and are assured of a living wage for both men's and women's work. . . . They should also be allowed a certain number of days off before and after the birth of a child. This legislation is primarily necessary because as yet women are not as well organized or as able to negotiate for themselves with the employers. (*It's Up to the Women* 101)

The NRA laws would protect female "difference". Eileen Boris argues that "Though the courts previously emphasized female biological weakness, (an argument that the reformers would employ to their advantage), Roosevelt stressed the social necessity for protective legislation rather than its biological base" (59-60). Similar to many nineteenth-century apologists of domesticity, Roosevelt employed women's biological difference in order to protect their roles. However, unlike these apologists, Roosevelt sought to furnish women with additional legislation that would serve to protect their interest in labor unions. Roosevelt used female difference to her advancement in order to maintain the protective legislation for women.

Just as Beecher, Roosevelt treated political legislation from a perspective of women's advancement. Paula Pfeffer argues that, "although militant feminists have long criticized Eleanor Roosevelt for her opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, her views regarding equality of men and women were far more complex than partisans in those old arguments would have us believe" (39). Despite ER's affiliation with the "social feminists of the League of Women Voters, and with the effort to achieve protective legislation for women workers" she opposed the

Equal Rights Amendment (Cook 356). ER feared that legislation such as ERA would fail to protect or even "destroy the few laws that served to protect women and children in the industrial workplace that they had been able to achieve" (Cook 356). The Equal Rights Amendment actually caused a rift in the feminist movement that ultimately shared the same goal. ER and the protectionist division within the movement believed that in order to gain legislation for a 48-hour work week for all people they should demand it for women *first.* Alternatively, the ERA activists believed that demanding such protections for women would result in their unemployment, considering they were already paid less and needed to work longer hours in order to earn a living wage, this would be disastrous. The result was a split amongst activists that both wanted to protect women. ER sought to protect women not by making them equal in law but rather by obtaining protective legislation for them. ER did not oppose the concept of equal rights for women, but rather did not believe that a constitutional amendment claiming abstract equality would solve anything.

Roosevelt's 1933 publication of *It's Up to the Women* marks the culmination of her progressive, feminist politics infused with traditional, Victorian, gender roles. ER's title harks back to *The Ladies Home Journal*'s *(LHJ)* campaign "It's Up to the Women" which ran in 1932. Public relations pioneer Edward Bernays's idea was to encourage women – who were largely in charge of the family budget – to spend the money in order to save the economy rather than save it. Jane Marcellus claims the campaign shows how magazines at the height of the depression "conflated gender, shopping, and patriotism at a critical historical moment, when women's roles were highly contested and discourses of thrift and consumption competed in relation to patriotism" (392). The *Ladies Home Journal*'s campaign was not only the effect of these dominating attitudes towards women, but also an attempt to form society around typical

Victorian gender roles. At this point in history, women's participation in the public sphere was still contested, though the binary opposition of the ideology of separate spheres had largely disappeared. Its effects were still prevalent in society. Marcellus claims:

> Women's roles were controversial. Their participation in wartime industries and passage of woman suffrage in 1920 had seemed to change public perception about their workplace capabilities, but a backlash emerged in the late 1920s. As values shifted from thrift to consumption, the tie between domesticity and consumption was strengthened. . . . Employed women were often blamed for the Depression, yet the idea that women were family 'purchasing agents' introduced business discourse into housewives' consumer roles. (392-393)

The *Ladies Home Journal's* campaign reflected the backlash against women who supposedly occupied men's positions in the workplace. As a result, women's roles as head of the household and in charge of home economics, as Beecher had originally presented, were reinvigorated. Critically, women resisted; not the least Eleanor Roosevelt. The *Ladies Home Journal*'s campaign was met with resistance for its prescribing attitude for women's roles to save the economy. Many women, of course, had little to spend. Linda Steiner argues that women during the depression era were deconstructing and actively reconstructing the meaning of dominant texts (Steiner 2). ER's *It's Up to the Women* can be seen as reconstructing the meaning of this campaign: "By reclaiming and reworking *LHJ*'s language, . . . ER sought to construct a more expansive view of what was "up to the women" (Marcellus 392).

ER continued Beecher's tradition of elevating the importance of women's home economics. ER's 1933 publication of *It's Up to the Women* at the height of the great depression has not been widely studied for its feminist purpose. The book has largely been neglected by

Roosevelt scholars, perhaps because of its paradoxical message. For example, Charles McGovern who wrote extensively on the *Ladies Home Journal* campaign, only included ER's book in an endnote, writing that ER's book presents "a more expansive interpretation for the political potential of women" (439). In addition, Diane Blair writes that ER used *It's Up to the Women* as an opportunity to for women to expand their public role in a time of crisis (204-205). Whereas Lois Sharf points out that ER "harked back to traditional ideals of feminine goals strangely at odds with her own growing influence" (qtd. in Marcellus 399). This criticism is coherent with Maurine Beasley's interpretation of ER's contested relationship with feminism. Beasley offers that ER "cannot be counted as a full-scale feminist because she did not acknowledge the overall effects of gender on society" (qtd. in Marcellus 399). Indeed, Emily Wilson in *The Three Graces* argues that with *It's Up to the Women,* ER:

> observed that women could be good wives and mothers, that they should economize even if they are women of wealth, and that even the average homemaker could find ways to make do and should consider getting a job outside the home—perhaps the most challenging idea in the book. All of these efforts should be done with a 'bigness of soul.' . . . It hardly reflected her own difficulties. Her view that women had always carried America through hard times was true enough, but for most women, saving their families and their country was an unattainable goal. She was whistling in the dark, while facing daunting prospects in her own life of what lay ahead when she moved to Washington. (103-104)

Just as Beecher's *The American Woman's Home*, Roosevelt's domestic manual contains chapters on both the incredible mundane, such as the inclusion of healthy recipes for women to cook for their families, and how to spend their leisure time. These mundane topics were paired with the

active call for women to engage with public life, such as ER's call for women to join labor unions. This "'catholicity of subjects' can also be seen as a strategy to reach many women," Marcellus argues; because "the book's early focus on household budgets and child-rearing and its later focus on women's employment, public life, and the NRA suggest ER cast a wide net, drawing in traditional women for whom overt feminism was threatening before moving on to her political message" (399). Such an interpretation, Beasley argues, would be in accordance with ER's tendency "to merge traditional and modern roles" (qtd. in Marcellus 399). By combining home economics with women's responsibility to drive the economy forward, ER is continuing Beecher's elevation of the importance of women's traditional roles.

Contrary to the *Ladies Home Journal*'s campaign, ER discouraged increased consumer spending. By emphasizing the importance of women's responsibility for home economics rather than engaging with the 1930s campaign that promoted consumerism, ER offered a feminist resistance to a dominant ideology, by reinvigorating women's traditional role as maintainers of the household. She writes: "Sometimes I think the most troubled people I know are the very rich.... They have never known what it was to deny themselves anything that they really wanted, and now they have to learn to do it cheerfully and without a feeling of martyrdom (ER, *It's Up* 1). She continues that those women that had "an opportunity to live simply" were aware that "luxuries of life are not really essential to happiness" (*It's Up* 1-2). Similar to the *LHJ*, ER connects women's role in the Depression to their important historical conduct in times of hardship. She writes: "Undoubtedly . . . the women who landed from the Mayflower faced in that first winter in the stern New England country the first great crisis in the development of our nation" (8). Moreover, the Revolution would never have been won "unless women had been able to bear the hardships and privations" (8). Likewise, she argues that "it was 'up to the women' to

carry on while the men were fighting" during the Civil War (9). Now, during the depression, ER, attributed the responsibility to women to "tip the scales and bring us safely out of it" (9). However, unlike Beecher and the *LHJ*, ER renounced the idea that the home and the workplace are in binary opposition: "I never like to think of this subject of a woman's career and a woman's home as being a controversy" (*It's Up* 66). ER believed that women could still work after marriage, not only out of economic necessity but also self-fulfillment (*It's Up* 66). Contrasting her progressive positions of women in the labor force with her own denial of political ambition typifies ER's engagement in progressive politics whilst still holding onto Victorian ideals of gender propriety.

Roosevelt's final chapter "Women and the N.R.A" may be the most controversial part of the book. The National Recovery Act, which formed the cornerstone of the New Deal, encouraged manufacturers to increase their prices so they could rehire workers, and simultaneously encouraged consumers to pay these high prices in order to restart the economy. The NRA thus tied patriotism to consumerism (Marcellus 399-400). Whereas *LHJ* calls on women to spend as much as they can, ER writes: "It is up to the women . . . to see that they live within their incomes, that they buy as fairly as possible from the fair merchants and buy only such goods as are manufactured by fair manufacturers" (*It's Up* 107). ER resists the traditional picture presented by the *LHJ* and appeals to women to bypass the "evil of installment buying" (108). In the final paragraphs of *It's Up to the Women*, ER wrote that when she was a young girl, her grandmother would remind her that she was to be more "sensible and more thoughtful" than her brothers. Though ER wrote she did "not mean for a minute that we should go back to the ideas of that generation or that women should return to the old status" (112). Instead, she is only pointing out that women: "have always been a tremendous power in the destiny of the world and

with so many of them now holding important positions and receiving recognition and earning the respect of the men as well as the members of their own sex, it seems more important than ever that in this crisis, 'It's Up to the Women'" (112). Though ER rejects that women should merely return to a position of influence rather than power, she does point towards women's history of power within the household. Though Roosevelt supported women's labor and their advancement far beyond the domestic sphere, she the domestic manual reminiscent of *The American Woman's Home* with its chapters on budgets, family health, recreational activities to engage with children. Katherine Parkin contends that *It's Up to the Women* "advanced the home economics philosophy of empowering women" (453). According to Parkin, the conviction remained throughout the twentieth century that women's control of the budget could ultimately determine the family's prosperity, though this prosperity was obviously, largely, dependent on their husband's income. With the Great Depression, ER believed that women could "'prove their true worth in society' and 'achieve higher status'" . . . Even if were successful however, "society bestowed credit on the bread winner, not the bread maker" (Parkin 453). Thus, Eleanor Roosevelt continued the tradition of embedding women's value in their self-sacrifice.

In conclusion, Eleanor Roosevelt was born in an era shaped by Beecher's perception of women's roles. Raised according to strict Victorian norms, Roosevelt held onto the ideas of gender propriety her entire life: she denied her own ambitions, framed her political career as existing solely out of wifely duties; and geared her reformist efforts towards teaching women. However, unlike Beecher, Roosevelt supported women's increasing participation in public life such as joining the labor force for their own self-fulfillment. Roosevelt, similar to nineteenth-century women's reform organizations, employed a tactical position as a mother, nurturer, and teacher in order to engage with civil institutions. By doing so, she kept intact the position of

women as moral guardians of the family and their authority to speak from a domestic perspective on a public platform. She supported women's labor and aimed to protect their position with special legislation within it. The contrast between her own denial of politicking, belief in women's higher intuitive faculties and her support of women's engagement in politics reflects Roosevelt's struggle between gender propriety and political advancement of women in society. Her own position of engaging with political issues whilst emphasizing her wifely duties illustrate how she domesticated politics.

Conclusion

Though women's participation in public life altered significantly over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the core premise of separate sphere ideology remained central to women's position in society. During the nineteenth century, women's biological difference supposedly rendered them unable to think rationally or carry the responsibility of the ballot. Therefore, women who sought to reform society employed their supposed moral superiority rather than challenge male jurisdiction. Due to their position in the domestic sphere, women's reform organizations related all ills to the domestic sphere in order to justify their political action in the public sphere. Women's reform in civil society signified that women's participation existed in a counter-sphere to the dominant public male sphere which included all participation in public life except for direct participation in electoral channels. By framing societal ills in such a manner they served as protecting or improving conditions of the home, women were able to maintain their image of purity, piety, and "true-womanhood". Major reform organizations of the nineteenth century such as the abolition, temperance, and women's rights movement tactfully employed women's pious and unpolitical "nature" in order to justify their presence in public life. Moreover, the tactful employment of women's pious natures illustrates how women's reform organizations conformed to domesticity's ideals rather than challenge its limitations.

Both Catharine Beecher and Eleanor Roosevelt countered the progression of the teleological development of feminist history towards integration into the public sphere. Due to New England's industrialization cultural values shifted towards individual achievement. These cultural values did not coalesce with women's supposed virtue and self-lessness which relegated

middle- and upper class women to the periphery of society. Beecher feared this development would fail to protect women's power and aimed to increase their independence by promoting equal pay and social equality by highlighting their moral superiority and emotional faculties. Beecher aimed to expand the conceptualization of women's sphere by attributing them full authority over the home and increase their power within the domestic sphere rather than break away from the separate spheres tradition. In addition, Beecher promoted domesticity because of the fear of the repercussions women would face if they approached men's prerogatives too closely. She sought to improve the reputation of women's education and support women's careers, predominantly as educators. In order to achieve this, Beecher devoted her life to the improvement of girls' education and taught them both practical and intellectual skills that would improve the conditions of the home but also elevate the status of the domestic profession.

Beecher did not actively support women's rights. However, she did aim to advance women's position in society and gain social and economic equality. Therefore, she can be perceived as a feminist. Central to her philosophy remained women's self-sacrifice for the general good of society. Though Beecher remains a highly contradictive figure, her contributions to the to the expansion of women's education and the amelioration of moral power impacted women's position in society. Beecher's reworking of common-sense philosophy towards a moral philosophy with an emphasis on women as social carriers of morality signified the development of the notion of the separate spheres of Calvinist society with its emphasis on women's submission towards a Victorian society with a strict emphasis on separate, but supposedly equal gender roles. Beecher's *The American Woman's Home* published in 1869 signified the culmination of Beecher's work. Though it may not seem like much more than a general domestic manual, its vast range of topics shows Beecher's women's expansion of the domestic sphere to

furnish women with increasing authority and skill to independently run a household. Though Beecher's moral philosophy sought to retain women's position in the domestic sphere, it politicized the importance of the private sphere. The book's "simple" domestic duties had far reaching implications for women's position in society.

Eleanor Roosevelt, born six years after Beecher's passing, was one of the most influential people of the first half of the twentieth century. Roosevelt's discussion of political issues throughout her career is paired with a rhetoric focused on domesticity. Roosevelt was raised strictly Victorian, but her education instilled a moral responsibility towards aiding the poor in society. Roosevelt's disposition towards politics illustrates the continuance of the notion of separate spheres in rhetoric rather than social division. Her lifelong indifference to women's suffrage shows the deeply ingrained tradition of women's organization outside of the electoral channels. Furthermore, Roosevelt's engagement in progressive era politics is coupled with domestic rhetoric that keeps intact the social and cultural significance of a separate woman's sphere. Her continued participation with the remnants of separate spheres illustrates how twentieth century women were able to combine progressive politics whilst retaining their pious nature. ER consistently denied her own ambition in politics with society in accordance with gender propriety.

Eleanor Roosevelt's 1933 publication of *It's Up to the Women* illustrates her clever employment of combining domestic economy with grand-scale politics. The book resembles a domestic manual such as *The American Woman's Home* – complete with healthy recipes at the centerfold. Though the book praises women for providing stability throughout the United States' turbulent history, it also calls for women's participation in public life. The book is both a traditional work on domestic economy and a progressive manifesto that calls on women to join

the labor force during the Great Depression. Though Roosevelt's manifesto is a somewhat paradoxical work and remains largely forgotten, its contents show the continuation of a separate sphere ideology. The contested relationship between women's integration into men's public sphere and the preservation of traditional female roles, as Beecher and Roosevelt portrayed remained prevalent throughout U.S. history.

In a way, Beecher and Roosevelt's political positions mark the beginning and end of the progressive era. Their reform efforts and engagement with civic institutions are illustrative of women's reform of the domestic sphere and civil improvement over the course of the progressive era. Beecher's secularization of morality signifies the development from an emphasis of "private piety" towards a stress on "public morals" (Paulson 238-239). During the Progressive Era women's engagement with reform, and their awakening to their civic duty, was key to the development of women in public life. In her young-adult life Roosevelt also engaged with social reform before retreating back into the domestic sphere. However, following 1920, which is generally understood as the end of the progressive era, ER increasingly engaged with politics. For example, she became the leader of the women's division of the New York State Democratic Party and subsequently became head of the women's division of the Democratic National Committee in 1928. Though she enacted these position in accordance with gender propriety, it does show how women's position in politics altered significantly during the progressive era.

During Beecher's lifetime women were not supposed to be involved in any political activity, whereas Roosevelt's adult life saw as drastically increasing political involvement on women's part. Though the focus on domesticity remained tied to their political advancement, they were able to be involved in politics to a certain extent. Throughout her lifetime Beecher held onto the idea of women's domesticity and, despite not being married or having children

herself, she promoted domestic life. Roosevelt, constantly challenged the boundaries set for her political involvement despite having precisely what Beecher promoted. Roosevelt increasingly engaged with (radical) leftwing politics such as the civil rights and labor rights movement and often openly disagreed with her husband's politics. Moreover, she encouraged women's participation in public life and their political involvement. This illustrates how women's positions developed over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth century.

Crucial to Beecher's and Roosevelt's assessment as feminists is that both women were both literal and civic educators. Teaching enabled both Beecher and Roosevelt to exert their influence in civil society and educate their audience about women's public involvement. Beecher often discussed the domestic sphere in relation to the public whereas Roosevelt discussed social ills in relation to the private sphere. Roosevelt engaged in civic teaching and taught women about politics through her many columns, radio, and television shows. Most of her writing was aimed at women for whom she explained both the complex inner workings of U.S. legislation, as well as simple domestic advice for all ordinary citizens. Whereas Beecher's emphasis on women's self-sacrifice for family and overall good of society secluded women from public life, ER actively engaged with public life and encouraged women, particularly those of higher classes, to get involved with (local) politics. The tradition of women's reform of the nineteenth and early twentieth century allowed women to engage in public debate granted they only engaged with those ills that directly affected their domestic sphere. Whereas Beecher aimed to increase women's power by politicizing the domestic sphere, Roosevelt domesticated her political actions by framing them in relation to her private life in order to deflect criticism of her powerful political position.

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