

CLARINA HOWARD NICHOLS:
A RHETORICAL CRITICISM OF SELECTED SPEECHES

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a rhetorical criticism of selected speeches written by Clarina I. Howard Nichols. Howard Nichols was a prolific writer, orator and activist in the 19th century. Although she participated in the abolition and temperance movements, her greatest contributions came through her activism in the woman's rights movement. As the editor of a local newspaper in Vermont and as a public speaker, Howard Nichols was effective in getting woman's property rights legislation passed in several states and was instrumental in getting liberal woman's rights provisions incorporated in the Kansas Constitution.

The two research problems examined in this thesis concerned special rhetorical obstacles faced by female orators in the 19th century: First, how was Howard Nichols able to overcome her audiences' hostility regarding her role as a public speaker; and second, how was Howard Nichols able to meet the contradictory demands of her audiences to be both traditionally feminine and logical in her public discourse?

A method called descriptive analysis was employed to help answer the research questions. The texts of seventeen speeches written by Clarina Howard Nichols were examined to discover patterns in stylistic and strategic elements. I analyzed the lines of argument she developed, her selection of evidence, her use of metaphor, the ways in which she adapted to different audiences, her use of humor, the persona and tone she adopted in

different rhetorical situations, and the roles she sought to induce her audiences to play.

This textual analysis led to several conclusions. First, Clarina Howard Nichols used a variety of strategies in order to put her audiences at ease and overcome their hostility. Her emphasis on her femininity, her nonverbal communication, her repetitive use of a theme about women's responsibilities, and her use of humor were all effective strategies designed to deflect the audience's attention from her violation of social norms and her strong, authoritative role. Howard Nichols met the contradictory demands placed on female rhetors to be both feminine and logical by accentuating her feminine characteristics, employing supporting materials that were drawn from personal experiences, and arguing in a clear, discursive fashion.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, the public discourses of Clarina I. Howard Nichols, an early woman's rights activist are examined and critiqued. Howard Nichols was a prolific writer and public speaker who "helped to sow the seeds of female equality and liberty from Vermont to California and who was instrumental in awakening thought on woman's rights during the early stages of the struggle."¹ In part because of her persuasive appeals, Howard Nichols was the first woman ever invited to address the Vermont Legislature and was the only woman given a seat at the Kansas Constitutional Convention. Howard Nichols's editorial writing has been cited as persuading Vermont legislators to pass laws giving "married women the right to inherit, own, and bequeath property

to hold joint property deeds with their husbands and giving wives the right to insure their spouses lives."² In addition, Clarina Howard Nichols has been credited with singlehandedly getting several woman's rights provisions incorporated into the Kansas Constitution³--provisions which "secured for women liberal property rights, equal guardianship of their children, and the right to vote in all school district elections."⁴

Purpose of the Study

The public speaking situation presumes that a special, hierarchical relationship exists between speaker and audience. Inherent in this relationship is the audience's acceptance of the speaker as a skilled expert in some field. It also presumes that

the speaker holds a measure of "power" on the basis of this expertise. Female rhetors challenge traditional power relationships and violate their prescribed sex roles when they speak to public audiences. In the 1800's the problems faced by female rhetors were compounded by the belief that a woman would be "desexed" by speaking to a "promiscuous" audience of men and women. A woman who spoke publicly knew that she might encounter hostile audiences and, in some cases, physical violence. In most cases, the female rhetor was seen as an oddity. Elizabeth Cady Stanton remarked that people frequently came to listen to her speeches only because she and other woman suffragists were like "dancing bears."⁵ It seems highly appropriate, then, to examine the discourses of a successful female rhetor who braved ridicule, scorn, and censure in order to speak publicly. Simply put, by studying women's rhetoric, one can examine exemplary cases of the ways speakers overcome hostility to persuade audiences.

A second purpose for pursuing this line of research is personal.⁶ The invisibility of women in society at large, and in academic fields in particular, is a pervasive and difficult problem for scholars. It is not, however, evidence that women have been absent from active public or academic life. Rather, women's invisibility in the general society indicates that women have not had control of the means to insure that their contributions and achievements were properly recorded. Their lack of visibility in the academic world demonstrates both the inherent sexism in academic institutions and the limitations of

conventional research tools and methodologies.

The last fifteen years have been fortunate ones for "unconventional" researchers because of the proliferation of new theories, methods, and, in some cases, academic fields. For example, Communication Studies has seen the development of generic⁷ and social movement research.⁸ The new methods have encouraged the growth of research concerned with large bodies of rhetoric and non-establishment rhetors, rather than with single speeches by famous, white men. Similarly, the study of social history has encouraged research which examines and records the lives and experiences of large groups of ordinary people. This can be contrasted with more traditional perspectives which have been concerned primarily with military and political history. Finally, and most importantly, the birth and growth of Women's Studies programs has allowed women scholars to have an academic home where their research is not simply "tolerated," but actively encouraged.

Significance of Research

The most important justification for studying Clarina Howard Nichols is her role in the woman's rights movement and the need to explain how her achievements were related to her public discourses. The significance of her work can best be demonstrated by placing Howard Nichols among her times and peers, that is, by placing her in a historical setting. The following biographical discussion will be broken into two parts: Howard Nichols's years in New England and Howard Nichols's years after she moved to

Kansas. Howard Nichols changed her life dramatically by moving from a life of relative comfort to a grueling pioneer existence. Most of the historical/biographical treatments of Howard Nichols center either solely on her years in New England or on her Kansas experiences. What is needed, however, is a complete picture of Howard Nichols's life in order to understand her value to the cause of woman's rights.

One of the most common misconceptions regarding the woman's rights movement is that activists were only interested in winning woman suffrage. Gaining the right to vote was the culmination of the earlier women's movement, not its sole activity, and many woman's rights provisions were suggested, repeatedly debated, and some were finally won.

In some respects, it was the less visible and less "showy" issues which brought women the greatest measure of day-to-day freedom and justice. For example, women's property laws gave women the legal right to their own earnings and inheritance; liberalized divorce laws allowed women to escape violent and frequently life-threatening marriages and still retain the custody of their children; relaxed inheritance laws gave a woman the right to inherit her husband's estate rather than watch relatives (and the State) divide property which had often been bought with her earnings and labor.

The vast majority of improvements in women's legal status came about as a result of local or statewide battles. In most cases, the rights won were due to the efforts of a number of

committed feminists. As in any social movement, someone had to put up posters, gain access to local meeting-houses, make arrangements for visiting speakers, respond to articles and editorials in newspapers, and exert pressure on local politicians. It is only recently that comprehensive histories of the "major players" in the woman's rights movement have been written. The names and histories of the many women and men who were responsible for the unremarkable, day-to-day requirements of attaining woman's rights were usually not preserved, and their names are now rarely remembered. There were a few feminists, however, who were activists on both the local and national level. Howard Nichols was unusual because she played the role of activist for a national audience and in her home communities.

The New England Years

Clarina Howard was born in 1810 in West Townshend, Vermont, to her parents, Birsha and Chapin Howard.⁹ She spent her formative years in Vermont attending the West Townshend public schools. Even at age 18, she recognized the inequities faced by women and, for her commencement address, compared the value of a scientific education for women to the value of an "ornamental" education. She began teaching in public and private schools soon after her graduation, and in 1830 married Justin Carpenter, a Baptist minister. They moved to New York and Clarina Howard Carpenter began teaching at the Brockport Academy. Later, she founded a women's seminary at Herkimer, New York.¹⁰ During this same time, she gave birth to two sons and a daughter.

In 1839, she separated from her husband and moved to Brattleboro, Vermont, where she began writing for the Windham County Democrat. By 1843, she had filed for, and was granted, a divorce from Carpenter.¹¹ Soon after her divorce was settled, she married George Nichols, the publisher and editor of the newspaper. Between the years 1839-1843 Clarina Howard Nichols became intimately familiar with the legal problems faced by separated and divorced women because she experienced comparable difficulties in her own life. These years were especially influential for her writing and speaking career; her arguments in favor of temperance legislation, liberalized divorce laws, and child custody for women were presented with a poignancy that can best be attributed to personal experience.

Clarina Howard Nichols labored for six years as the "hidden" editor of the Windham County Democrat, because her second husband was seriously ill.¹² She would not allow her role as editor to be publicly acknowledged because she first wanted to prove to her readers that she had the skill necessary to write and edit a progressive and liberal weekly newspaper which promoted a number of reform movements, particularly woman's rights. Howard Nichols's role as the "hidden" editor allowed her the opportunity to hone both her skills as a writer and her arguments in favor of woman's rights without the controversy which usually surrounded a woman in a position of authority. She was fortunate to have the support of her husband and to have her efforts recognized.

Howard Nichols was one of the very early proponents of

woman's rights. She had been writing supportive editorials several years before 1848--the year the first Woman's Rights Convention was held at Seneca Falls, New York.¹³ Her debates with legislators and local preachers began around 1847 after she published a series of editorials supporting liberalized property laws for married women.¹⁴ As a result of her editorials, which deplored the economic and legal constraints placed upon women, Howard Nichols started receiving a number of invitations to speak to groups on topics relating to woman's rights. In 1852, Howard Nichols became the first woman ever invited to address the Vermont Legislature after she submitted a petition asking that women be allowed to vote in district school meetings. Howard Nichols's reputation as a fine public speaker grew, and she began lecturing to lyceum groups, woman's rights organizations, and a host of temperance and woman's rights conventions. Between the years 1850 and 1854, Howard Nichols spoke at eight different temperance and woman's rights conventions.¹⁵ Her time between traveling, attending conventions, and raising a family was spent writing for the Democrat and preparing for her extensive lecture schedule.

It was in 1852 at the Syracuse, New York, National Woman's Rights Convention that Clarina Howard Nichols met Susan B. Anthony and began a close friendship that lasted until Howard Nichols's death in 1885. Ida Husted Harper comments on a letter that Anthony received from Howard Nichols. In this letter, Howard Nichols predicts Anthony's commitment to the movement and her success in it:

It is most invigorating to watch the development of a woman in the work of humanity: first, anxious for the cause and depressed with a sense of her own inability; next, partial success of timid efforts creating a hope; next, a faith; and then the fruition of complete self-devotion. Such will be your history.¹⁶

The two women had more than a close friendship, however. Howard Nichols corresponded with Anthony for years and provided her with detailed accounts of woman's rights activities in the Territories.¹⁷ There is some evidence to suggest that Howard Nichols helped Anthony with speech writing and theory development in the early years of their friendship.¹⁸ While there is still some question about the degree of assistance given by Howard Nichols, there can be no doubt that Anthony's role as an activist was influenced by her friendship with Howard Nichols.¹⁹

Clarina Howard Nichols's final years in New England were spent traveling across the East Coast and mid-western states lecturing on woman's rights and temperance. Her efforts and those of others culminated in the passage of progressive laws in Wisconsin and Ohio which gave women the right to sue and be sued independent of their husbands and which allowed women to take legal control of their families when husbands were intemperate. Unlike the midwestern states, New England state legislatures were not so easily influenced. Howard Nichols found herself and her ideas "greeted with suspicion and fear by the vast conservative majority in New England."²⁰ It was the entrenched, conservative values of New England, the declining health of George Nichols, and

the plans of the New England Emigrant Aid Company that led Clarina Howard Nichols to decide to move to the Kansas Territory. In her reminiscences, Howard Nichols wrote of her justification for leaving Vermont: "It was a thousand times more difficult to procure the repeal of unjust laws in an old State than the adoption of just laws in the organization of a new State."²¹ With this perspective in mind, Clarina Howard Nichols joined the New England Emigrant Aid Company and moved her family to Kansas—a territory that would later play a pivotal role in the events leading to the Civil War.

Years in Kansas

When Clarina Howard Nichols moved her family from Vermont to Kansas, she became part of a group that tried to settle the territory and keep it from becoming a slave state. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act placed the new territory in the middle of the slavery controversy when it was announced that Kansas citizens would decide the issue for themselves. The result was that both northerners and southerners tried to "homestead" their supporters in the area in order to influence the outcome of the state elections and the constitution.²²

Howard Nichols fervently believed that Kansas ought to remain a free state and joined the New England Emigrant Aid Company in order to settle the country. She arrived in what would later become Lawrence, Kansas, in 1854 and staked out a farm nearby. In her reminiscences, published in the History of Woman Suffrage, Howard Nichols tells of her greeting when she arrived in Lawrence,

Kansas. When her party had made its way to the office of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, great cheers erupted from inside. Howard Nichols assumed the cheers were for her companions, S.C. Pomeroy (who would later become a Kansas Senator) and Dr. Charles Robinson (who was later to become the first governor of the state). Instead, she learned that the cheers were for her:

. . . 'the boys' had been hotly discussing women's rights, when one of their advocates who had heard her lecture, expressed a wish that his opponents could hear Antoinette Brown on the subject; a second wished they could hear Susan B. Anthony; and a third wished they could hear Mrs. Nichols. On the heels of these wishes, the announcement of Colonel Pomeroy, that 'Mrs. Nichols was at the door,' was the signal for triumphant cheering.²³

The greeting Howard Nichols received when she arrived at Lawrence was to become a standard response. Although she regularly faced opposition, she was treated with respect even by those who did not agree with her positions.

Howard Nichols started writing for local newspapers soon after her arrival in Kansas as well as becoming a correspondent for several eastern papers. It was through this medium that she began to spread her ideas and encourage woman suffrage activities in the state. In 1855, Howard Nichols was invited to attend the Free-State Constitutional Convention as a delegate, but had to decline because of her husband's rapidly-worsening health. Later that year Howard Nichols's husband died, and she traveled to Vermont to settle his estate. By the time her legal matters were settled in 1856, open warfare had broken out in Kansas and

prevented her from immediately returning to her home. Instead, she began canvassing western New York at the request of Horace Greeley in order to raise funds for "bleeding Kansas."²⁴ When she was finally able to return to Kansas, she moved her family to Wyandotte county and became the associate editor of the Quindaro Chindowan, a strong Free-State newspaper. Once again, Howard Nichols had a public outlet for her ideas on woman suffrage.

In 1859, the territorial legislature authorized a constitutional convention and began electing delegates to attend. Howard Nichols was not a delegate, but was chosen by the Moneka Woman's Rights Association to attend the convention and represent their interests. Even though she was not able to vote on bills or resolutions, Nichols's role at the constitutional convention was influential. Paternalistic accounts have portrayed her as sitting quietly, watching over the proceedings as she knitted. This is a somewhat romantic depiction. Howard Nichols did, indeed, knit while listening to the debates, but more often than not, she was taking notes and responding to the actions on the floor. Howard Nichols also held conferences with the convention delegates at the home of Mrs. Lucy B. Armstrong, a Wyandotte school teacher who watched the convention proceedings. Several accounts tell of Howard Nichols lobbying the delegates as they sat around Lucy Armstrong's tea table.²⁵ Howard Nichols's role at the constitutional convention helps to demonstrate the degree of respect that she commanded. When questions relating to woman's rights were being debated, and it seemed that the cause would

suffer, the delegates would turn and look at her for direction. She would rise and say: "Gentlemen, this cannot be!" The convention delegates decided that before voting on several issues relating to woman's rights, they would like to hear Howard Nichols's ideas. A rather lengthy debate ensued over whether she would be granted the floor.²⁶ Instead of giving her the opportunity to address the convention on the floor, a separate evening was set aside for a "special" address to be given by Howard Nichols. This unique treatment insured that the entire group of delegates attended the speech. However, this same special "status" precluded publication of her address as part of the official proceedings of the convention, and no text of her speech exists. Clarina Howard Nichols's work at the constitutional convention insured that Kansas women gained provisions which allowed them property rights, equal guardianship of their children, and the right to vote in all school district elections. Sandra A. Madsen writes that: "Through Nichol's [sic] efforts, Kansas entered the Union in 1861 with the most liberal laws relating to women of any other state. As a result of her efforts, the University of Kansas, when opened in 1864, was the first state university in the United States or in the world to receive both men and women students on an equal basis."²⁷ Joseph Gambone calls her role at the convention her greatest achievement.²⁸

Howard Nichols's work in woman's rights activities continued after her experiences in the Kansas Constitutional Convention.

She canvassed the state urging adoption of the proposed Constitution and continued lecturing for woman's rights. In 1860 she began a long tour of Wisconsin and Ohio, speaking on woman's rights topics. In 1861, Howard Nichols returned to Kansas and was invited to address the new legislature on the question of woman suffrage.²⁹ Although the suffrage measure failed, provisions were granted which gave legal rights and protections to widows.

Clarina Howard Nichols left Kansas for a period of two years in order to work in Washington, D.C., as a clerk in the Army's quartermaster department, and then was assigned to be matron of a home for poor, black women and children. In 1866 she returned to Kansas and continued lecturing on woman's rights. Howard Nichols was farming during the time of the 1867 Kansas Campaign for Woman Suffrage, but she took off four weeks in order to travel across Kansas with her friend Susan B. Anthony and other woman suffrage leaders. She also wrote extensively in newspapers during this time to persuade voters to accept the woman suffrage amendment. Even though the referendum failed, Howard Nichols found great joy in being with her friends again.

The 1867 suffrage campaign was essentially the last time Howard Nichols participated in the day-to-day activities of the movement. By this time she was 57 years old and her health was poor. Because she was ill, she moved to Pomo, California, in the hope that a change of climate would do her good. Howard Nichols did not quit writing for the cause of woman's rights after she moved to California; instead, she remained a correspondent for a

number of Kansas and New England newspapers. Howard Nichols also regularly responded to public letters and editorials which cast woman's rights in a negative light. Finally, in 1876 she wrote her reminiscences for the History of Woman Suffrage. A group of women from Kansas decided to honor Howard Nichols for her many achievements by starting a fundraising campaign in order to buy a \$150.00 steel-plated picture of Howard Nichols for the History.³⁰ The group was successful and the picture was printed with her reminiscences.

Clarina Howard Nichols died in 1885 in California at the age of 75. Four days before her death, she wrote to the National Woman Suffrage Association Convention: "God is with us--there can be no failure, and no defeat outside ourselves that will not roll up the floodwork and rush away every obstruction."³¹

Howard Nichols did not live to see women win the right to vote, but her many legislative successes allowed her the opportunity to see women's lives dramatically changed in very real ways. In all, Howard Nichols devoted nearly twenty-five years of her life to the cause of woman's rights through her public speaking and individual activism. Additionally, she spent another ten years using the persuasive means she knew best--writing.

Review of the Literature

In 1973 the Kansas Historical Quarterly began publishing an eight-volume series of the letters and papers of Clarina I. H. Howard Nichols. The editor of this mammoth project, Joseph

Gambone, titled his biographical essay and the two-year series: "The Forgotten Feminist of Kansas: The Papers of Clarina I. H. Howard Nichols, 1854-1885." The title of Gambone's work quite aptly reflects the historical and scholarly treatment of this early feminist. It is as if Clarina Howard Nichols has simply drifted out of the history books. Even though other researchers have essentially neglected Howard Nichols in their secondary materials, the available primary materials are numerous and accessible.

Secondary Sources

An extensive literature search has uncovered a number of published secondary sources concerning the work and activities of Clarina Howard Nichols. There are severe limitations to all of the available material, however. Most sources are biographical in nature, and devote only a page or two to Howard Nichols's contributions. Many of the sources limit their discussion to a single paragraph. The secondary materials fall into four different categories: 1) biographical sketches; 2) histories of the woman suffrage movement and its leaders; 3) academic sources, including unpublished theses; 4) general U.S. histories, histories of Kansas and the Kansas Constitutional Convention.

1) Biographical Sketches--A very large number of materials are available which briefly describe who Clarina Howard Nichols was and why she was important. Most of these biographies are listed in descriptions of county populations, Who's Who

references, and the like. Their value is quite limited. Most sources simply "lift" sections from other biographical sketches. As a result, the works are very similar and they consistently misspell Howard Nichols's first name--calling her "Clarinda." Occasionally, one can find tidbits about Howard Nichols (such as the fact that President Taft was her first cousin³²), but these are rare and not particularly useful.

2) Histories of the Woman Suffrage Movement and its Leaders--A second, more useful, set of related materials exists which documents Howard Nichols's contributions to the movement and her influence on different leaders, such as Anthony. These sources are usually written for a popular audience and do not provide detailed accounts or descriptions. Another problem is that it is hard to determine the degree of importance or influence of any woman since nearly all are described in extremely glowing terms. Ida Husted Harper, for example, refers to Clarina Howard Nichols as "among the nearest and dearest, a forceful speaker and writer, a tender, loving woman."³³ Wilmer A. Linkugel notes that this style of writing is common to the biographies of woman suffragists, especially those written by authors who themselves were part of the movement.³⁴

There are several publications on woman suffrage which mention Howard Nichols briefly, but are most useful in describing the overall scope of the movement. Perhaps the best treatment is Eleanor Flexner's book, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States.³⁵ Flexner's extensive work

traces the beginning of the movement from the colonial period and follows it through to the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

Other sources that mention Howard Nichols, but examine particular topics or leaders of the woman suffrage movement, include:

Paulina Wright Davis, A History of the National Woman's Rights Movement; Ellen C. Dubois, Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of An Independent Women's Movement in America 1848-1869; Blanche G. Hersh, The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America; Alma Lutz, Susan B. Anthony: Rebel, Crusader, Humanitarian; and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's autobiography, Eighty Years and More.

3) Academic Sources--A small group of academic journal articles mention Howard Nichols briefly or include her name in a listing of other exceptional feminist activists. One such article is Jeanne McKenna's discussion of Sam Wood in "With the Help of God and Lucy Stone."³⁶ McKenna describes the work done by Wood during the 1867 Kansas Campaign and very briefly mentions that Howard Nichols took part in the campaign. Another source which was useful was Samuel Johnson's article on the New England Emigrant Aid Company.³⁷ Johnson does not mention Howard Nichols, but he discusses the Company's role in settling Kansas.

Several unpublished sources are tangentially related to Howard Nichols because they treat the 1867 Kansas Campaign for woman suffrage. Mary Cowper's 1914 Master's thesis, "A History of Woman Suffrage in Kansas,"³⁸ is a short work, much of which is devoted to Clarina Howard Nichols's role in the Kansas Constitutional Convention. However, Cowper takes all of her

materials and documentation directly from Howard Nichols's reminiscences, which were published in the History of Woman Suffrage;³⁹ no primary materials were used. Sandra A. Madsen's 1975 doctoral dissertation on the rhetoric of the 1867 Kansas Campaign for woman suffrage includes a small biographical section on Howard Nichols. She also critiques the effectiveness of Nichols's speech, "The Responsibilities of Woman," for her Kansas audiences. However, Madsen does not do textual analysis, but analyzes Nichols's discourse according to the "rhetorical situation."⁴⁰

One available academic source is so fine that it deserves special attention. This is the previously cited series of Howard Nichols's letters and papers edited by Joseph Gambone. The series includes an excellent introduction treating Howard Nichols's life and activities. The editor searched through the collections of Howard Nichols's papers at several academic depositories across the country in order to present a relatively complete, biographical picture. Great care was taken with documenting the names, issues, and events described by Howard Nichols in her papers. However, there are several problems with this edited series in relation to the proposed research project.

The Clarina I. H. Howard Nichols Collection at the Kansas State Historical Society (the major Howard Nichols repository) has been expanded in the thirteen years since Gambone published his work. Thus, important letters and papers have not been included. Further, Gambone did not reprint all the available papers. In

fact, only those works that Howard Nichols wrote after she came to Kansas were included. Papers from her New England years were incorporated only into the introductory essay. In addition, no texts of Howard Nichols's few extant speeches are included. Finally, no attempt was made to provide any sort of critical analysis. Gambone's work has been an excellent resource--a stepping-off place. The eight installments provide a kind of academic map of the uncharted territory of the Clarina Howard Nichols papers. However, critical analysis and commentary are still to be done.

4) General U.S. Histories, Histories of Kansas and the Kansas Constitutional Convention--Historical works were also examined to provide a context for the events of Clarina Howard Nichols's life. Elbert Smith's The Presidency of James Buchanan⁴¹ outlines the tumultuous times, particularly in Kansas, which led to the Civil War. His discussion includes the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the fight over the Lecompton Constitution, and other events in "bleeding Kansas." The larger historical context is especially important because it was Nichols's anti-slavery convictions that influenced her to leave New England.

A great many historial treatments describe the general history of the state of Kansas and the Kansas Constitutional Convention. One such document is Gustave Gaedbert's analysis, The Birth of Kansas.⁴² Unfortunately, this history does not include women's contributions. In order to assess Howard Nichols's role in the Kansas Constitutional Convention, one must turn to the

official debates and proceedings. Of particular interest is the debate over whether or not to let Howard Nichols speak on the Convention floor.⁴³

Primary Sources

The primary materials available for this study are of two types: newspaper accounts and the Clarina I. H. Howard Nichols Manuscript Collection at the Kansas State Historical Society.

Newspapers provide two different kinds of information about Clarina Howard Nichols. There are the accounts of Howard Nichols's speaking tours and woman suffrage activities, and there are articles, editorials, and letters to the editor that Howard Nichols wrote herself; there are very few texts of Howard Nichols's speeches. There are many descriptions of Howard Nichols's speaking engagements, audience reactions, and the like, and these accounts have been useful. In addition, many editorials were written about Howard Nichols, particularly in regard to her participation in the Kansas Constitutional Convention. The Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS) in Topeka, Kansas, has been of invaluable help in finding these newspaper accounts.

Howard Nichols wrote hundreds of articles and editorials during her lifetime. The KSHS houses a wide assortment of Kansas newspapers useful in locating the writings that Nichols published in Kansas. Gaining access to the articles and editorials that Howard Nichols wrote for New England newspapers posed a much more difficult problem. Fortunately, Joseph Gambone's extensive work

in his serialization of Howard Nichols' papers includes many articles and editorials that were printed in New England newspapers while Howard Nichols lived in Kansas.

The bulk of useful primary material comes directly from the large Howard Nichols collection of original, hand-written manuscripts housed at the Kansas State Historical Society. The Society has made copies of some original letters and articles which are located at other research libraries. Other repositories include the Howard Nichols Collection at the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College, the Howard Nichols Collection in Huntington Beach, California, and other smaller, public libraries in Vermont and Ohio.

The Howard Nichols Collection in Topeka, Kansas, contains hundreds of pages of letters, newspaper articles, legal documents, and a large collection of her poetry. There are letters to and from suffrage leaders like Stanton and Anthony. Upon Clarina Howard Nichols's death, Susan B. Anthony gave Howard Nichols's granddaughter most of the letters she had received from Clarina throughout their friendship. There are many letters from people who were not famous, but which provide useful information about Howard Nichols's personality and suffrage activities.

Methodology

This research project takes its methodology from two related, academic disciplines: Communication Studies and Women's Studies. Communication theories provide the method of descriptive analysis

and critical evaluation. In addition, rhetorical theories of social movements have been incorporated in order to demonstrate Howard Nichols's significance to the Woman's Rights Movement. Rather than evaluate the quality of Howard Nichols's discourses as works in and of themselves I have put her activities in an historical framework.

The research was undertaken in order to answer several questions regarding the rhetorical discourses of Clarina Howard Nichols. The researcher's primary interest was to determine how Clarina Howard Nichols was able to overcome the suspicions and hostilities of her audiences in order to persuade them of her positions. Howard Nichols's success was remarkable given the constraints and obstacles female rhetors had to overcome in the 1800's. Changes in a democratic society have always been attempted through participation in a "marketplace of ideas." During Howard Nichols's lifetime, women were excluded from this marketplace. Those women who dared to speak in public were violating a sacred social value. They paid dearly for their violation by being scorned and ridiculed. Female rhetors had to deal with detractors who called their femininity into question and referred to them as "desexed." Simply put, the rhetorical obstacles faced by female speakers were very different from those faced by men.

I believe that women who succeed in public speaking situations must be able to meet the contradictory demands of their audiences. That is, a female rhetor must reassure her audience,

either verbally or non-verbally, that she is an emotional, demure, non-threatening woman. In short, she must prove she is feminine. While assuaging the fears of her audience, a woman must simultaneously make clear, logical arguments in order to appeal to her audience's reason. I contend that it was Howard Nichols's ability to meet the contradictory demands of being traditionally feminine and traditionally logical which allowed her to succeed as a woman's rights activist. Thus, I have sought to identify those strategies Howard Nichols used in her public discourses which allowed her to meet these competing rhetorical demands. Specifically, I have looked at the lines of argument she developed, her selection of evidence, her use of metaphor, the ways in which she adapted to different audiences, her use of humor, the persona and tone she adopted in different rhetorical situations, and the roles she sought to induce her audiences to play. These stylistic and strategic elements have been examined to show how Howard Nichols was able to overcome audience hostility.

This thesis is, first and foremost, a rhetorical analysis. There are several specific implications of this decision: 1) I assume that rhetorical acts like speaking and writing are valuable and can help account for political behavior; 2) Critical emphasis is on Howard Nichols's public discourses, not her private letters; 3) Private correspondence between Howard Nichols and others has been used for historical/biographical purposes; 4) Social history methods will be used to document Howard Nichols's role in the

Woman's Rights Movement.

Therefore, I shall provide a brief historical background of the Woman's Rights Movement and the influential role that Howard Nichols played in it, describing Howard Nichols's interests and activities in the movement, including her work for temperance, and her decision to move to Kansas in light of her anti-slavery beliefs.

The major part of my research involves analysis of a selection of Howard Nichols's oral and written speeches. To a great extent, the discourses have been chosen for analysis according to their availability. All were published; those delivered were given prior to her move to Kansas. Another special kind of "speech" will also be analyzed. Frequently, Howard Nichols was invited to address temperance or woman's rights conventions, but was not able to attend because of the high costs and long distances involved in traveling. Instead of simply declining, Howard Nichols would write a speech that would then be read by another woman. Because there are so few extant speech texts, these written speeches provide us with a close facsimile of what Howard Nichols would have said, had she been able to speak in person. Copies of all the speeches criticized in this thesis can be found in Appendix A and B. The texts to be analyzed are:

Personally Delivered Speeches

"The Responsibilities of Woman," Woman's Rights Convention, Worcester, Massachusetts, October 15, 1851.

"Address to Vermont Legislators," Montpelier, Vermont, December 3, 1852.

"Address to the Whole World Temperance Convention," New York, New York, September 3, 1853.

"Address to the National Woman's Rights Convention," New York, New York, September 8, 1853.

Written Speeches

"Address to the 2nd Woman's Temperance Convention of the State of New York," 1852.

"To Susan B. Anthony," May 4, 1863.

"To Susan B. Anthony," December 27, 1872.

"To Susan B. Anthony," June 26, 1876.

"To Susan B. Anthony," May 1877.

"To Susan B. Anthony," July, 1878.

"To Virginia Minor," April 25, 1879.

"To Elizabeth C. Stanton," December 30, 1879.

To the National Woman Suffrage Association," May, 1880.

"Address to Worcester Woman's Suffrage Convention," October 9, 1880.

"To Susan B. Anthony," May 13, 1881.

"Address to the National Woman Suffrage Association Convention," February 25, 1884.

"To Susan B. Anthony," January 7, 1885.

Chapter 2 provides a description of the rhetorical problems faced by early female rhetors, especially those advocating woman's rights; a brief history of events leading up to the emergence of an organized movement; and a description of the issues that Clarina Howard Nichols concerned herself with during her activism

in the woman's rights movement. Chapter 3 describes and analyzes the oral speech text, "The Responsibilities of Woman," to discover the strategies employed by Howard Nichols to overcome the hostility of her audience and to meet the competing demands of that audience. Chapter 4 describes and analyzes the three oral speech texts given by Howard Nichols in a similar fashion. Chapter 5 describes and analyzes the written speech texts with special emphasis on how she overcame the obstacles posed by a written speech. Chapter 6 provides a summary and conclusion of the study.

Endnotes

¹ Joseph G. Gambone, "The Forgotten Feminist of Kansas: The Papers of Clarina I. H. Nichols, 1854-1885," Kansas Historical Quarterly, 39 (Spring, 1973), p. 12.

² Mothers of Achievement in American History 1776-1976. Compiled by the American Mothers Committee, Inc. (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1976), p. 539.

³ The belief that changes in women's property legislation can primarily be attributed to the efforts of women's rights activists has recently been challenged by legal historians. Several different explanations have been forwarded to account for the development and success of women's property rights in the 1800's. One such theory postulates that women's "legal reforms were instituted to advance capitalism and the interests of the ruling classes" (Matsuda, 1985, p. 52). Unfortunately, this perspective fails to justify why the legal reforms were not equally as popular in the eastern states as the western ones. Other scholars like Richard H. Chused have argued that the role of the organized woman's rights movement was incidental to the development of the legal reforms before 1850. This may well be the case given that the woman's rights movement received its primary impetus in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention. Chused proposes a variety of factors to account for the pre-1850 woman's property legislation: "Rather, one must hypothesize that shifts in the nation's economy, job map, family structure, agricultural productivity, banking practices, and trade structures would be mirrored by piecemeal, one step to the left, one step to the right, reforms in legal norms and that changes would reflect generally held perceptions about women's appropriate sphere of influence" (Chused, 1983, p. 1423). Chused goes on to concur that the role of the woman's rights movement's was influential in attaining legal reforms after 1850 (Chused, 1983, p. 1424). Blanche Hersh, a woman's historian, argues that the efforts of the woman's rights activists were valuable and speaks specifically of Howard Nichols's rhetorical influence: "The successful campaign in Vermont was led by Clarina Howard Nichols, a feminist-abolitionist who edited the Windham County Democrat, the newspaper her husband published. Her series of articles in 1847, followed by public speeches and an address to the legislature, resulted in passage of the state's first married women's property law that year" (Hersh, 1978, p. 55). In this thesis I will take the position that while Clarina Howard Nichols and other woman's rights activists did not originate woman's property rights reform and were not solely responsible for those reforms, they did have a significant impact. It will be my contention that Howard Nichols's success in legislative and women's property rights reform can be attributed to her persuasive appeals. See Mari J.

Matsuda, "The West and the Legal Status of Women: Explanations of Frontier Feminism," Journal of the West, 24 (January 1985), pp. 47-57; Richard H. Chused, "Married Women's Property Law: 1800-1850," Georgetown Law Journal (1983), pp. 1359-1425; Blanche G. Hersh, The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978). See also Richard H. Chused, "Late 19th Century Married Women's Property Law: Reception of the Early Married Women's Property Acts by Courts and Legislatures," American Journal of Legal History, 29 (January 1985), pp. 3-35 and Richard H. Chused, "The Oregon Donation Act of 1850 and 19th Century Federal Married Women's Property Law," Law and History Review, 2 (Spring 1984), pp. 44-78.

⁴ Gambone, "The Forgotten Feminist," p. 13.

⁵ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1815-1897 (New York: Schocken Books, 1971, rpt. T. Fisher Unwin Edition, 1898).

⁶ Louis Gottschalk, Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1950), pp. 58-60.

⁷ See, for example, Karlyn K. Campbell and Kathleen H. Jamieson (Eds.), Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action (Falls Church, VA: The Speech Communication Association, 1978).

⁸ See, for example, the entire, special Winter 1980 issue of the Central States Speech Journal for an explication of the many issues and methods of social movement theory.

⁹ Gambone, "The Forgotten Feminist," p. 13.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

¹¹ Howard Nichols' divorce decree (April 21, 1830) stated that the divorce was granted on grounds that: "Lester Carpenter . . . the marriage covenant hath not kept . . . for that the said Justin hath treated your petitioner with cruelty, unkindness, intolerable severity so much that she need-ceed, under the necessity of leaving him." Clarina I. H. Howard Nichols Collection, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas. Other accounts simply state that Clarina left her husband because of his intemperance. See Jennie S. Owen, "Woman Knitted Her Way Into Constitution of the State of Kansas," Topeka Capital Journal, March 2, 1939, p. 9.

¹² Madeline Kunin, "Clarina Howard Nichols: Green Mountain Suffragette," Vermont Life, 28, No. 2, 1978, pp. 14-15.

¹³ In a letter to the editor of The Herald of Freedom, dated

April 14, 1856, Howard Nichols commented that her written involvement with women's rights began fourteen years earlier, approximately 1842: "True, it is scarcely fourteen years since I first sought, through the press, to awaken public attention to this department of legal action, and if I have done anything towards reforms securing better protection and greater freedom to my sex, I may be excused for indicating one source of the courage, which, at so early a day, was an indispensable qualification in advocating legal rights for married women." "The Forgotten Feminist," Kansas Historical Quarterly, 39, No. 2 (Summer 1973), p. 246.

¹⁴ Clarina Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences by Clarina I. Howard Howard Nichols," in Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda J. Gage (Eds.) History of Woman Suffrage, V. 1. (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1882), p. 172.

¹⁵ The conventions include the 1850 Woman's Rights Convention at Worcester, Massachusetts; the 1851 National Woman's Rights Convention at Worcester, Massachusetts; the 1852 Woman's Rights Convention at Syracuse, New York; the June 1854 Woman's Rights Convention at West Chester, Pennsylvania; the June 1854 New York Woman's State Temperance Convention in Rochester, New York; the September 1853 Whole World Temperance Convention in New York City; the September 1854 National Woman's Rights Convention in New York City; and the February 1854 Woman's Rights Convention in Albany, New York. See Gambone, "The Forgotten Feminist," pp. 12-28 and Clarina I.H. Nichols Collection, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

¹⁶ See Alma Lutz, Susan B. Anthony: Rebel, Crusader, Humanitarian (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), pp. 32-33.

¹⁷ See Letters from Clarina Howard Nichols to Susan B. Anthony in Clarina I. Howard Nichols Collection, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas and the Clarina I. Howard Nichols Collection at Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

¹⁸ Although the account is sketchy, Susan B. Anthony is reported to have told a granddaughter of Howard Nichols (Mrs. Nellie Moncrief of Potter Valley, California) that many of Anthony's first woman's rights speeches were written by Howard Nichols. Genealogical papers, Clarina I. Howard Nichols Collection, Kansas State Historical Society. Alma Lutz also argues that Howard Nichols's influence on Anthony's feminist theories has been grossly underestimated. Lutz, Susan B. Anthony, p. 33.

¹⁹ Gambone comments that: "She developed a very close and personal relationship with Susan B. Anthony and was, perhaps, more

instrumental in influencing Miss Anthony to participate actively in the woman's rights movement than previously believed by other historians." Gambone, "The Forgotten Feminist," p. 13.

20 Ibid., p. 20.

21 Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences," p. 193.

22 Samuel A. Johnson, "The Emigrant Aid Company in Kansas," Kansas Historical Quarterly, 1 (November, 1932).

23 Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences," pp. 185-186.

24 Ibid., p. 186-187.

25 Jennie Owen, "Woman Knitted Her Way Into First Constitution of the State of Kansas," Topeka Capital Journal, March 2, 1939.

26 Kansas Constitutional Convention: A Reprint of the Proceedings and Debates of the Convention Which Framed the Constitution of Kansas at Wyandotte in July, 1859 (Topeka, KS: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1920), pp. 72-75.

27 Sandra A. Madsen, "The Campaign for Woman Suffrage in Kansas: A Study in Rhetorical Situation," Diss. University of Kansas, 1975, p. 11.

28 Gambone, "The Forgotten Feminist," p. 12-13.

29 Ibid., p. 25.

30 Mrs. F.G. Adams, Kansas Biographical Pamphlets, Vol. 2, H-P, Topeka, Kansas, May 10, 1881.

31 Clarina Howard Nichols, "Letter to Susan B. Anthony," in "The Forgotten Feminist," Kansas Historical Quarterly, 40, No. 4, (Winter, 1974), p. 562.

32 Kansas Library Bulletin, Vol. 2, Nos. 2, 3. June-September, 1934, p. 15.

33 Ida Husted Harper, The Life and Works of Susan B. Anthony (Indianapolis: The Bowen-Merrill Company, 1898), p. 102.

34 Wilmer A. Linkugel, "The Speeches of Anna Howard Shaw: Collected and Edited with an Introduction and Notes." 2 vols. Diss. University of Wisconsin, 1960, p. 245.

35 Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge: Harvard University

Press, 1959), pp. 89, 92-93.

³⁶ Jeanne McKenna, "With the Help of God and Lucy Stone," Kansas Historical Quarterly, 36 (Spring, 1970), 13-26.

³⁷ Samuel A. Johnson, "The Emigrant Aid Company in Kansas," Kansas Historical Quarterly, 1 (November, 1932), 429-441.

³⁸ Mary O. Cowper, "A History of Woman Suffrage in Kansas." Thesis. University of Kansas, 1914.

³⁹ Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences," pp. 171-200.

⁴⁰ Madsen, "The Campaign for Woman Suffrage in Kansas."

⁴¹ Elbert B. Smith, The Presidency of James Buchanan (Lawrence, KS: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1975).

⁴² Gustave Gaedbert, The Birth of Kansas (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1940).

⁴³ Kansas Constitutional Convention, pp. 72-75.

CHAPTER II

Some think it very much out of place for a lady to be a public speaker and I think myself that it is rather out of their sphere, but if they think it their duty to be a public speaker, I think there is no impropriety in it.¹

Melissa Dolloff, 1858

Introduction

In 1847, Clarina Howard Nichols began to speak publicly for woman's rights by advocating legislation that would give women the right to inherit, own, and bequeath property. Even though Howard Nichols had been a public figure for nearly eight years through her work on the Windham County Democrat, her decision to speak out in public forums was an important one. Not only was she embarking on a physically exhausting occupation, but she was setting herself up for potential scorn and ridicule. One can appreciate the importance of Howard Nichols's decision only by examining the special circumstances faced by female rhetors of the 19th century. Thus, this chapter will address three related issues: 1) the unique rhetorical problems faced by Howard Nichols and other female public speakers of the time; 2) the precursors of the woman's rights movement; and 3) the various woman's rights issues that Clarina Howard Nichols addressed and fought for during her lifetime.

Woman as Rhetor

In every speaking situation, a rhetor must determine exactly what obstacles stand in the way of successfully persuading an

audience to his/her position.² Each speaker faces different problems, given the variations in issues, purposes, accommodations, audiences, and events which precede the particular discourse. Clarina Howard Nichols and other female activists had to confront all these problems as well as those posed by being a female rhetor. That is to say, women speakers had to deal with the rhetorical problems of any speaker, as well as a set of problems that were sex-specific. To understand the unique obstacles faced by female speakers, one must examine the changing social norms of the early 1800's and how these norms restricted women's public and private lives.

Historian Nancy Cott writes that the years 1780-1830 were a time of far-reaching transformations in the United States: she cites urbanization, economic growth, increasing foreign commerce, banking, agricultural production, and the growing inequity in the way wealth was distributed in the United States as factors in creating such transformations.³ Cott notes that during this time Americans began to develop a clear sense of proper public and private "spheres of influence for men and women." With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, men's activities were no longer centered in the home, but moved outside, into the public sector. The turbulent and unpredictable nature of life during this time had the important function of codifying the differences between men's and women's work and their separate roles. While tasks had always been somewhat separated between the sexes, this period of change created specific definitions of what constituted women's

and men's "spheres." Woman's sphere was in the home; man's sphere was in the rough-and-tumble world of business, commerce, and politics. Cott argues that the strict separation of men's and women's spheres set in motion two different responses by women--an emphasis on domesticity or the "cult of true womanhood" and the woman's rights movement:

But woman's sphere had the defects of its virtues. In opening certain avenues to women because of their sex, it barricaded all others. It also contained within itself the preconditions for organized feminism, by allotting a "separate" sphere for women and engendering sisterhood within that sphere. It assigned a "vocation" comparable to men's vocations, but also implying, in women's case, a unique sexual solidarity. When they took up their common vocation women asserted their common identity in "womanhood," which became their defining social role: gender ruled, in effect, their sentiments, capacities, purpose, and potential achievements. Without such consciousness of their definition according to sex, no minority of women would have created the issue of "women's rights."⁴

Cott's main point is that the cult of true womanhood created a basis for extending the influence of woman's sphere.

The belief that woman's true place was in the home crystalized during the years 1820-1860. Barbara Welter argues that women were given an ethic that prescribed the qualities of a true woman; she was pure, pious, submissive and domestic.⁵ These four virtues were extolled in books, magazines, and from church pulpits. Stories in popular magazines and novels frequently depicted female characters who challenged the ideas of "true womanhood" as candidates for madness, even death. The

perception that women who lived public lives were mad was not restricted to fiction. Clarina Howard Nichols received an off-handed compliment from the Vergennes Vermonter when it said about her:

. . . Mrs. Nichols is a most able and interesting exponent and defender of the cause which she vindicates. She is not a 'ranting fanatic' but eminently a sensible and judicious 'female woman' who expects to build up her cause by the aid of reason and common sense. Let us put by our prejudices and give her a hearing.⁶

Unfortunately, while the cult of true womanhood was the social norm to which all women were supposed to aspire, only middle- and upper-class white women could really practice it in its complete form. For those women like Clarina Howard Nichols, who had to work outside the home or on the family farm, true womanhood was beyond their grasp.

Given that women's proper place was in the home, and their proper role was to be pure, pious, submissive and domestic, women who spoke publicly violated strict social values. Clarina Howard Nichols knew that the penalty for women who addressed public audiences included scorn, ridicule, censure by friends and family, assaults from clergymen, and even physical violence. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's family, for example, reacted to her public lectures on woman's rights by temporarily disinheriting her⁷ and Pennsylvania Hall was burned down in 1838 by an angry mob after women, including Angelina Grimké, spoke to promiscuous audiences about the abolition of slavery.

Church leaders were particularly adamant that it was "unseemly" for women to speak in public. In 1838, the abolitionist speakers Sarah and Angelina Grimké were rebuked in a pastoral letter from the Council of Congregationalist Ministers of Massachusetts after they began debating men in public forums. The Council asserted that the very act of public speaking by women was unnatural and would "threaten the female character with widespread and permanent injury."⁸ The Council went on to predict doom for public activists:

But when she assumes the place and tone of man as a public reformer . . . her character becomes unnatural. If the vine, whose strength and beauty is to lean upon the trellis-work, and half conceal its clusters, thinks to assume the independence . . . of the elm, it will not only cease to bear fruit, but fall in shame and dishonor into the dust.⁹

The belief that female rhetors were "unnatural" underscored a series of arguments designed to further discourage women's public activities. Many critics argued that public speaking would ruin a woman's "retiring delicacy," would make her "mannish" in behavior, and would "unsex" her. Because women were so strongly identified with soft, demure behavior, the possibility that they might be masculinized through public discourse was equivalent to their becoming social freaks. When Clarina Howard Nichols became the first woman to address the Vermont legislature, her detractors expected her to show some indication of her demented, mannish state. After her speech was successfully received, her chief opponent commented that, "in spite of her efforts, Mrs. Nichols

could not unsex herself."¹⁰ Therefore, the greatest obstacle with which female rhetors had to contend was the disapproval of their communities in order to reassure their audiences that they were truly feminine women.

In addition to the lack of support for women who spoke in public, female rhetors had three other sex-specific problems to deal with; physical accommodations, audience/immobility, and contradictory audience expectations.

Since it was believed that female speakers were odd creatures who risked losing their femininity, public accommodations were often off-limits to women. The paternalistic attitudes about "saving" women from madness or death, coupled with blatant opposition to their speaking, insured that woman's rights activists' requests to use town halls or churches were met with curious skepticism or denial. When women were able to secure public meeting places, they faced problems of safe transportation, lack of financial support, and poor housing. Male speakers also faced difficulties, but their problems were not grounded in the fact that they were men, that as men they ought not be speaking. Although it was acceptable for a man to travel by himself, a woman who traveled alone was often viewed as foolhardy or scandalous. The alternative to being tainted by scandal was paying for the services of a chaperone.

The issue of financing lecture trips or tours also shows how women faced unique difficulties. White men were never legally restricted from owning their own wages or property, as were women.

Thus, men did not necessarily have to rely upon the financial support or approval of another person before embarking on lecture tours. Clarina Howard Nichols had so little money that she traveled to Kansas towns in a tiny mail carrier and stayed in filthy rooming houses in order to save what money she had.¹¹

Once women were able to reserve meeting places and travel to town halls or churches, they usually faced hostile audiences who attended only to see the "spectacle" unfold. If the audience was comprised of both men and women, the female speaker was scorned and criticized for addressing a "promiscuous" audience. This problem was an extension of the belief that female rhetors did not know their place. That is, by standing in front of a group of men and speaking to them as an authority on legal and political questions, female rhetors flagrantly violated the norm that women were to defer to and be submissive to men.

A female speaker also faced great difficulties if her audience was comprised solely of women because she had to convince them that they were "agents of change."¹² Persons in an audience must first perceive themselves as capable of making the changes that the speaker desires before they can act to implement change. Unfortunately, women of the 1800's rarely saw themselves as agents of change, in part because social norms restricted their sphere of influence, and also because they were legally femme covert or "dead in the law." As long as women were considered the legal property of their husbands or fathers, and did not have the right to own their own earnings or property, there were few

formal avenues of change available to them. Only men had the ability to legislate the changes necessary to improve women's legal status and to enact woman suffrage. Thus, a female rhetor often found herself in the untenable position of speaking to female audiences that, even if sympathetic, believed that they could do little to alter their political or legal situation. If a speaker faced a promiscuous audience, she immediately had to defuse the hostility that had attracted them to hear her in the first place.

Finally, female rhetors had to contend with the inconsistent and contradictory demands placed upon them by audiences. That is, a female speaker had to prove, contrary to belief, that she was feminine, and that she was neither mad nor unsexed. However, the very act of standing in front of an audience as an authority on legal and political issues was at odds with this ideal. Once a woman was able to calm the fears of her audience and reassure them of her femininity, she had to contradict her own message and demonstrate that her arguments were not based on emotions or sentimentality. In short, she had to be logical.

The conflict faced by female rhetors between demonstrating their femininity and making forceful arguments is consistent with the domesticity/woman's rights dichotomy described by Nancy Cott. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell argues that this contradiction is one of "womanhood" v. "personhood" or "private" v. "public" life.¹³ Regardless of its title, this problem is unique to female speakers. It is, I believe, the definitive description of the

situation female rhetors faced in the Woman's Rights Movement.

Clarina Howard Nichols's public connection to the early woman's rights movement began when the movement was in its infancy. Howard Nichols published her first editorials in support of woman's rights in 1847--only a year before the first woman's rights convention took place at Seneca Falls, New York. Just as Howard Nichols's ideas had developed over a period of years and in tandem with influential events in her life, so the movement, itself, grew and matured.

The written histories of woman's rights often describe 1848 as a watershed year for the movement. During this pivotal year, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and three other women met and made plans for the first Woman's Rights Convention. The Seneca Falls Convention set the standard for future woman's rights events, and can be said to be the "moment of inception" for the entire movement. However, it would be inaccurate to argue that this first, organized activity was also the philosophical or theoretical beginning of woman's rights. Like all social movements, a series of events led Clarina Howard Nichols and others to take public action.

Precursors to the Woman's Rights Movement

Mary Wollstonecraft

It is ironic that one of the earliest seeds of American feminism was sown by a British woman, Mary Wollstonecraft, who wrote A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. This was

Wollstonecraft's second essay, published in 1792, more than 50 years before the recognized beginning of the woman's rights movement. In her first essay, A Vindication of the Rights of Man, she answered Edmund Burke's claim that revolutions were not legitimate political actions. Buoyed by the success of her first tract, she expanded on earlier themes and argued that both men and women were recipients of natural, God-given rights. Just as men were justified in fighting oppressive monarchies, women were also justified in fighting the tyranny of men over women. In addition to identifying women as heirs to natural rights, she spoke against the strict social limitations placed on women, particularly in education. In one of her bolder arguments, she criticized the institution of marriage, saying that women would not be able to gain respect in their marriages as long as they were economically dependent upon men. Wollstonecraft's essay was widely read in Europe as well as in America. It became known as the "feminist Bible" because its greatest impact was on those women who became active in abolitionism and woman's rights.¹⁴

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman is noteworthy because it set the tone for the arguments and issues that would later become the very essence of the woman's rights movement. For example, Wollstonecraft was able to make clear the connection between feminism and American democratic ideals. As Kohrs Campbell pointed out in the "personhood" v. "womanhood" dichotomy, the concept of "personhood" is based on the belief that all persons are endowed with God-given, inalienable rights. This link between

natural rights and feminism was first articulated by Mary Wollstonecraft. In clarifying the connection between "democracy" and woman's rights, feminists were able to "position the women's rights movement within the mainstream of American reform."¹⁵ In short, Wollstonecraft was able to encapsulate the two major themes of the woman's rights movement: natural rights and sex roles.

Not all persons held Wollstonecraft's treatise in as high regard as many women, however. Miriam Gurko writes:

The tendency of most men was to dismiss it, sometimes without even reading it, as ridiculous or typical of a woman's petulant complaints . . . those who considered it a dangerous and immoral book were disturbed as much by the personal life of its author as by its outspoken ideas on sex and feminine passion. Mary Wollstonecraft had dared to become an independent, self-supporting woman, and had lived with two men without marriage, and borne an illegitimate child.¹⁶

As would be the case with later feminists, Wollstonecraft's private life was used as evidence for dismissing her public persona.

Frances Wright

Thirty years after Mary Wollstonecraft's morals were assailed by her critics, another woman, Frances Wright, contended with many of the same problems. Frances Wright was a Scotswoman who came to the U.S. in 1824 and became the first white female public lecturer in America. Wright was a freethinker who edited a newspaper with Robert Owen. They later co-edited the Free Enquirer. In her lectures, Wright contended that women needed good educations and

that "men were themselves degraded by the inferiority imposed on women."¹⁷ Even more than Wollstonecraft, Fanny Wright's spectrum of reform beliefs were wide, varied, and especially radical: She spoke on "equality for women, emancipation for slaves, the political rights of workingmen, free religious inquiry, free public education for everyone She even advocated birth control and equal treatment of illegitimate children."¹⁸

Fanny Wright became a notorious figure during her life in the United States for several reasons, including her association with the concept of free-love and the failure of the Nashoba experiment. She bore the brunt of much criticism because she wore the controversial Bloomer costume in public. Between the risqué personal life she led, the public attention she drew by wearing the Bloomer costume, and her radical political ideas, Fanny Wright's name became synonymous with wild, sinful behavior. She was publicly denounced as a "'red harlot', a 'fallen and degraded fair one', and a 'disgusting exhibition of female impudence.'"¹⁹ These public assaults were not only fueled by the positions she took as a lecturer, but, also, by the fact that she was a public lecturer. Wright's topics drew immense crowds of men and women, and thus, she violated norms by speaking to promiscuous audiences. Eleanor Flexner argues that Wright's insistence on rational thinking and free inquiry were too much for her audiences; she was accused of atheism and free love--particularly loathesome sins.²⁰

Fanny Wright is important to the cause of woman's rights not only because of her early feminist ideas and arguments, but also because of her notoriety. In fact, her name came to symbolize all the repressive tactics society used against female speakers. When wishing to scare or put down a woman's rights lecturer, people would refer to her as a "Fanny Wrightist." It was an abuse comparable to being called a "lesbian" in the 1970's and 1980's. In a letter to Lucy Stone, the Reverend Antoinette Brown described the response of town's people to her activism and demonstrated how Fanny Wright's name was used against feminists: "Sometimes they warn me not to be a Fanny Wright man, sometimes believe I am joking, sometimes stare at me with amazement and sometimes seem to stare back with a kind of horror."²¹ (emphasis added)

Abolition

One of the strongest precursors of the woman's rights movement was abolitionism and women's activity in female anti-slavery societies. In fact, Ellen Dubois writes that "Stanton and Anthony cited abolition 'above all other causes' as the source of woman's rights."²² It is worth noting, then, why abolitionism attracted women in such astounding numbers, especially when other reform movements (including moral reform, education, child labor) predated woman's rights. Some writers credit women's involvement in abolitionism to the "religious" nature of the movement. That is, religion was one of those few areas encompassed by woman's "sphere", and was, therefore, an acceptable use of women's talents. Dubois claimed:

Women's involvement in abolitionism developed out of traditions of pietistic female benevolence that were an accepted aspect of woman's sphere in the early 19th century . . . The abolitionist movement was one of the many religious reforms that grew out of evangelical Protestantism . . . Unlike other pious activisms, however, abolition had an unavoidably political thrust and tendency to outgrow its evangelical origins. As the movement became secularized, so did the activities of benevolent women in it."²³

The abolition movement provided a great service to the cause of woman's rights in two related ways: First, it demonstrated the similarities between the Negro's condition and woman's condition, thus "raising the consciousness" of female activists about women's oppression; and second, by barring women from participation or membership in abolitionist societies, the movement forced women to create their own organizations. This provided women with much-needed skills in organizing, protesting, and speaking--skills that transferred easily into woman's rights activism.

Some critics have tried to make the argument that women who worked in the abolitionist movement saw themselves as "slaves" to men and put their own oppression before that of Blacks. It is true that many of the women who came to an understanding of the inequitable male/female relationship while working in the abolitionist movement later became woman's rights activists. And while women did make a connection between black slavery and female "slavery," the analogy was based on their identical legal status. I believe feminist speakers and writers used the similarity of legal experience as a way to radicalize or raise the consciousness

of their audiences.

The most relevant role that abolition played for the woman's rights movement was as a kind of political training ground. When men refused to allow women to take part in abolition organizations, women started female anti-slavery societies. The experience of creating their own organizations developed women's skills as organizers, writers, and speakers. In addition, they learned how to petition, how to raise funds, how to garner support, and how to defy public opinion. In many ways, the abolitionist movement provided a training ground for and conduit to woman's rights. It was in precisely this manner that Clarina Howard Nichols became an advocate for woman's rights.

Ellen C. Dubois argues that the abolitionists gave the kind of support which allowed an autonomous woman's movement to grow and take hold. She also points out that while abolitionism nurtured woman's rights, it also restricted it. For example, woman's rights articles and tracts were published in abolition newspapers with anti-slavery funds, and woman's rights conventions were often held simultaneously with meetings of the American Anti-Slavery Society. On the other hand, women were quite poorly treated in the anti-slavery societies and got support only as long as there was no controversy over mixing the two issues. Once women began to be seriously embroiled in the fight for woman's rights, they were advised to put aside their concerns, for "This is the Negro's hour." Dubois concludes that the skills woman's rights activists acquired as part of their work in abolitionism

sheltered them from the reality of male resistance to woman's rights:

The fearlessness of female abolitionists sheltered the woman's rights movement from a confrontation with the very real fears of male opposition and public disapproval that lay between it and the mobilization of large numbers of women.²⁴

Two women who were able to break through the barrier that Dubois described were Sarah and Angelina Grimké.

Sarah and Angelina Grimké

Sarah and Angelina Grimké were two sisters from Charleston, South Carolina, who moved to Philadelphia in 1822.²⁵ The Grimkés left their family home because of ideological differences over the issue of slavery. While Sarah and Angelina were raised to be proper, Christian women, they were unable to square the bondage of their father's slaves with their Christian beliefs. After much dissension with their family and home community, the two sisters eventually moved North where they became ardent abolitionists.

The Grimké sisters were particularly important to the abolitionist movement because of their life in the South. As women who had lived in a slave-holding family, their anti-slavery beliefs were seen as authentic and persuasive. It was a much more powerful argument for the Grimkés to explain their moral opposition to slavery than for northern men who had never been to the South. In addition, Angelina was a gifted speaker.

Thus, it was the combination of the Grimké's southern slave-owning heritage, their good education, and their speaking skills which made them so attractive to the abolitionists. By 1836, they were paid agents of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and spoke to large, public audiences. Carol Hymowitz and Michaela Weissman comment on the sisters' public lectures. Hymowitz and Weissman point out:

Driven by moral necessity to testify against slavery, the Grimké sisters became the first respectable American women to speak in public. No doubt many people came just to gape at the two "unnatural" women on the podium, but the sisters' style had a way of winning the most skeptical audiences. Dressed with Quaker simplicity, their manner refined and "lady-like," the sisters hardly looked like "brazen" women.²⁶

As long as the Grimké's spoke only to female audiences on the issue of slavery, they were accepted. However, trouble started when their audiences became so large that they could no longer speak in private parlors and moved to public halls. Despite their attempts to restrict audiences to women, many men came to hear them. Soon they were speaking to mixed audiences, and finally, Angelina debated a young man in public. The crime of debating with a man resulted in nearly all churches being closed to their lectures, and clergy began attacking them for stepping outside their proper sphere. Catharine Beecher, the noted educator and domestic reformer, criticized the Grimké sisters for addressing mixed audiences. Angelina answered Beecher's charges by claiming that women and men had "just as much right to sit upon the throne of

England as in the presidential chair of the U.S."²⁷ As the anti-slavery issue became mixed with the "woman question," as it was then called, the Grimké^s experienced the vindictiveness of the press:

Some journalists referred to Angelina as "Devileena." Inevitably, the sisters' unwed state encouraged speculation that the Misses Grimké having failed to find white husbands, were willing and eager to take Negro mates. "Why are all the old hens abolitionists? Because not being able to obtain white husbands they think they may stand some chance for a Negro if they can only make amalgamation fashionable."²⁸

One of the reasons the Grimké^s sisters are important to this study is because they help to demonstrate the negative consequences that female rhetors faced. Even the most proper, religious woman could anticipate being attacked by the church, press, and other reformers if she stepped outside the narrow sphere of her existence and spoke to public audiences.

Seneca Falls Convention

The first woman's rights convention held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 is most often identified as the beginning of the Woman's Rights Movement. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott had been planning the Seneca Falls convention for nearly eight years, since they met at the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. The women delegates who attended the London conference were restricted from taking their seats, speaking, voting, or submitting resolutions. This experience impressed upon Stanton

and Mott the necessity for women to begin assessing and fighting for their own rights. Thus, in 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Coffin Mott, Martha Coffin Wright, Mary Ann McClintock, and Jane Hunt sent out a call for a convention "to discuss the social, civil, and religious conditions and rights of woman." This broad statement of objectives typifies the breadth of issues with which woman's rights activists concerned themselves.

Clarina Howard Nichols's Activism in the Woman's Rights Movement

Clarina Howard Nichols's formal involvement in the woman's rights movement came just as the movement itself formally began. In 1847, Howard Nichols published a series of editorials in the Windham County Democrat that addressed women's lowly legal and political status. These editorials were the impetus for legislation, which was introduced and passed in the Vermont legislature, that gave married women's property rights for the first time.²⁹

That Howard Nichols chose 1847 as the year of her political debut is interesting given that she had been editor of the Democrat for four years prior to 1847. Perhaps Howard Nichols was positively influenced by Ernestine Rose's success in obtaining women's property rights in New York State, an effort that began in 1837. Howard Nichols's start in the movement might also have been a response to the dichotomy faced by women who had to work outside their homes. Historian Ellen Dubois argues that many women who could not fulfill the expectations of the cult of domesticity to be pure, pious, domestic, and submissive found relief in expanding

women's role definitions through work in the woman's rights movement. By definition, then, Howard Nichols could not run the Windham County Democrat and be a "true woman." Although it is not absolutely clear whether or not Howard Nichols personifies Ellen Dubois's thesis, it is interesting that she, individually, found cause to begin her public activism at approximately the same time that Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott completed plans that set the woman's rights movement in motion.

Nature of Clarina Howard Nichols's Activism

Clarina Howard Nichols took part in the woman's rights movement through a variety of activities. She worked primarily on individual projects, initiated by herself, which were local or statewide in scope. However, she did take part in what can be described as the "national" woman's rights movement through participating in national conventions and the National Woman Suffrage Association.

Clarina Howard Nichols came to the Woman's Rights Movement with some experience from the abolitionist movement. Throughout her lifetime, she also took up causes, such as canvassing New York state in behalf of "bleeding Kansas" and fighting for temperance laws. However, the majority of her activism was concerned with woman's rights, particularly women's property rights. For example, she began her public career writing in favor of legislation which gave married women in Vermont the legal right to own their own earnings and property. Howard Nichols was also interested in how laws affected women's financial lives. She

worked on legislation that gave women the right to sue and be sued independent of their husbands, and the right to insure their husband's lives. Howard Nichols was concerned about liberalizing divorce laws, including allowing women to gain custody of their children. She also fought for legislation that strengthened inheritance rights for women and improved facilities for women's education. Clarina Howard Nichols devoted her time and energies to helping other women in their day-to-day existences. She was less involved in working for woman suffrage and was, in fact, originally opposed to the idea because she thought it was inappropriate for women to vote. After four years of activism, however, she changed her perspective and began supporting the fight for woman suffrage.

Howard Nichols's activism was focused on local or state-wide legislation because the woman's movement was in its infancy when she started advocating woman's rights. There were very few local woman's rights groups anywhere in the country during the first five years of her activism, and the national associations did not begin to form until 1866. Without the presence of a national organization to influence the direction of the woman's rights movement, it was incumbent upon women like Howard Nichols to define its scope through local and regional efforts. In short, Clarina Howard Nichols and those other women were the movement.

Howard Nichols's activism was also influenced by her employment. Her vocation as a newspaper writer and editor afforded her unique opportunities unavailable to other activists.

Not only did her position provide her with a public outlet for her opinions on woman's rights, it also allowed her to meet politicians and local dignitaries, and to find out about and follow activities of other woman suffragists, and it gave her valuable experience in developing successful strategies and lines of argument. Simply put, her experience as the editor of the Democrat taught her skills which would prove beneficial to the woman's rights movement. It is no coincidence that Howard Nichols both began and ended her 35-year involvement in woman's rights with the medium she knew best--writing.

In many ways, Howard Nichols's modes of activism were influenced by the independence she experienced in her writing career. Just as writing is a solitary enterprise, the speaking tours and legislative campaigns that Howard Nichols worked on "were highly individualistic matters which put a premium on personal initiative and bravery."³⁰ She was acutely aware that she had embarked on a cause that was "against popular prejudices"³¹ and that she might well be its sole proponent in her community. Thus, it was rare for Howard Nichols to work in a capacity which was directed, organized, or overseen by a larger, hierarchical structure. Rather, Howard Nichols usually was the initiator or sole promoter of the cause she espoused. A good example of the success Howard Nichols found as an "independent" activist involved the issue of inheritance rights for women. In 1849, any widow in Vermont who had no children and had an uncontested will was only able to inherit 1/2 of her husband's

estate, regardless of its size; the other half went into the state treasury. These practices often stripped a woman of half of very meager resources and left her unable to support herself. The History of Woman Suffrage recounts Howard Nichols's role in the passage of a bill that resolved this inheritance dilemma for women in Vermont:

Mrs. Nichols had written up a case occurring among the subscribers to the Democrat, in which \$500, the whole estate, was divided, the half of that amount all the law allowed for the support of a woman, then in the decline of life, and sent fifty marked copies of the paper to members of the Legislature elect. One of them introduced the bill, which passed the first day of the session.³²

The final factor that affected Howard Nichols's relationship to the woman's rights movement was where she lived. Throughout most of her life, Howard Nichols lived in out-of-the-way places. Developments in transportation and communication were quite minimal, so that newspapers and letters constituted the best available means of information. In Vermont, she lived in the Green Mountains region and was, thus, physically isolated from other woman's rights activists. When she lived in Kansas, the transportation and communication problems were even greater than when she lived in the East. Thus, Howard Nichols's physical surroundings contributed mightily to keeping the majority of her activism on an independent, individualistic level. Given the transportation and communication limitations, the harsh terrain, and her lack of financial resources, it is quite remarkable that

Clarina Howard Nichols was able both to persevere on her own and to have any connection with the national woman's rights movement.

Once Clarina Howard Nichols had publicly committed herself to the cause of woman's rights, she found a vast opportunity to grow and expand with the movement. The years between 1847, when she published her series of editorials on women's property rights, and 1854, when she left for Kansas, were filled with a number of woman's rights activities. Howard Nichols received a fair amount of attention for her success with women's property rights, and she soon became a popular lecturer. She was invited to speak at clubs, social groups, lyceums, and debates. Between the years 1849-1850, she had even more legislative successes. She lobbied the legislature on bills that legalized joint property deeds for husbands and wives, permitted a woman to insure her husband's life, and broadened the inheritance rights of women.

Howard Nichols also began attending woman's rights conventions throughout the East. She observed the first national woman's rights convention held in Worcester, Massachusetts. A year later, she was invited to return to the 1851 convention, again held in Worcester, in order to make a major address to the convention. Howard Nichols gave a speech entitled "The Responsibilities of Woman" in which she argued that men were unable to evaluate the needs of women. The speech was a great success. It was transcribed and ultimately reprinted by Steam Press as part of the Woman's Rights Tracts Series. Sixteen years later, copies of the speech were still being distributed and were

sent into Kansas during the 1867 referendum on Negro and woman suffrage.

Howard Nichols's successful speech in Worcester helped to make her visible to persons outside Vermont, and she began receiving a number of invitations to speak at woman's rights and temperance conventions throughout the East. In 1852 at the Syracuse, New York, Woman's Rights Convention, Howard Nichols met and became friends with Susan B. Anthony. The Syracuse convention was the first ever attended by Susan B. Anthony, and she had not yet become a woman's rights advocate. Howard Nichols was duly impressed with Anthony's potential and strongly encouraged her to become active. Howard Nichols was also invited to attend the 1852 conventions of the New York Woman's State Temperance Society at Albany and Rochester, although she had to decline because of previous commitments. She did, however, accept an invitation to speak at the 1852 woman's rights convention held at West Chester, Pennsylvania.

It was in 1852 that Howard Nichols began circulating a petition among the businessmen of Brattleboro that encouraged legislators to allow women to vote in school district elections. The petition was signed by over 200 prominent businessmen and was sent to the Vermont Legislature. When the Legislature began discussing the issue, Howard Nichols feared the worst because it was assigned to the Educational Committee, and the chairman was a bitter foe of woman's rights. Howard Nichols wrote to a friend, Judge Thompson, that she feared that the chairman, in his

committee report would "lampoon 'Woman's Rights' and their most prominent advocates, thus sending his poison into all the towns ignorant of our objects, and strengthening the already repellent prejudices of the leading women at the capital."³³ Judge

Thompson got the leaders of the three parties, Whig, Free-Soil, and Democratic together, and they were able to pass a resolution of invitation for Clarina Howard Nichols to address them, with only one dissenting vote--the head of the Educational Committee, who said: "If the lady wants to make herself ridiculous, let her come and make herself as ridiculous as soon as possible, but I don't believe in this scramble for the breeches!"³⁴ With this invitation, Howard Nichols became the first woman to address the Vermont Legislature.

Judge Thompson was so concerned that Howard Nichols would be addressing an empty House gallery that he canvassed door to door in Montpelier, asking women to attend Mrs. Nichols's presentation, even if they were not in agreement with her position. As it turned out, the galleries were filled with women who, in fact, did not approve of woman's rights. In concluding her remarks to the Legislature, Howard Nichols made reference to the head of the Educational Committee's unfortunate remark:

. . . though I had earned the dress I wore, my husband owned it--not of his own will, but by a law adopted by bachelors and other women's husbands . . . I will not appeal to the gallantry of this House, but to its manliness, if such a taunt does not come with an ill grace from gentlemen who have legislated our skirts into their possession. And will it not be quite time enough for them to taunt us with

being after their wardrobes, when they shall have restored to us the legal right to our own?³⁵

This summation was uproariously received by both the legislators and her audience of women. Howard Nichols goes on to describe the reaction:

With a bow I turned from the Speaker's stand, when the profound hush of as fine an audience as earnest woman ever addressed, was broken up by the muffled thunder of stamping feet, and the low, deep hum of pent-up feelings loosed suddenly from restraint. A crowd of ladies from the galleries, who had come only at the urgent personal appeal of Judge Thompson, who had spent the day calling from house to house, and who a few months before had utterly failed to persuade them to attend a course of physiological lectures from Mrs. Mariana Johnson, on account of her having once presided over a Woman's Rights Convention, these women met me at the foot of the Speaker's desk, exclaiming with earnest expressions of sympathy: "We did not know before what Woman's Rights were, Mrs. Nichols, but we are for Woman's Rights."³⁶

In addition to these reactions, the editor of The Herald had previously advertised that he would bring Mrs. Nichols a suit of men's clothing at the end of her speech because he believed she would be "mannish" in demeanor. By addressing the issue head on, and with humor, Howard Nichols was able to gain the sympathy of her audience. The suit of men's clothing was never presented.

Even though Clarina Howard Nichols's speech was a resounding success, the Vermont Legislature was in no mind to give women the vote, even in school district elections, and the measure ultimately failed. The experience of addressing the Legislature

gave Howard Nichols more publicity, and her popularity as a lecturer and convention speaker grew. She began speaking on tours of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts in an effort to attain liberal legislation for the women of those states. Howard Nichols wrote in her reminiscences that she was sent out at least twice a week during this time, and travelled in Vermont anywhere from 6 to 20 miles from her home.

In 1853, Howard Nichols went on a lecture tour of Wisconsin with Lydia Fowler, in which she urged the adoption of state prohibition laws. The two women travelled over 900 miles and spoke to an estimated 30,000 persons during those months. It was agreed that Lydia Fowler would introduce the topic by noting the physiological effects of alcohol, but the main presentation was always provided by Howard Nichols. This same year, Howard Nichols gave speeches at the Rochester, New York, Woman's State Temperance Convention (June), the Whole World Temperance Convention (September 1-2), and the National Woman's Rights convention in New York (September 6-7). (For texts of these speeches, see Appendix A.)

Howard Nichols's connection with the organized woman's rights movement ended in 1854. Clarina Howard Nichols moved her family to the Kansas Territory in 1854 and 1855 with the help of the New England Emigrant Aid Society. Her decision to shut down the Windham County Democrat and move to Kansas was in response to her husband's poor health, and also as a way to promote her anti-slavery beliefs. Because she was so far away from the East

Coast where woman's rights conventions were usually held, Howard Nichols began relying on her individual writing and organizing skills to keep her active in the movement. Howard Nichols was a correspondent to a large number of Eastern newspapers while she lived in Kansas. Additionally, she kept an informal tie to the organized movement by sending many written speeches to Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. These speeches were then read at the woman's rights conventions that Nichols could not attend.

Clarina Howard Nichols did not end her woman's rights activism after moving to the Kansas Territory. On the contrary, she fought for the adoption of many of the same reforms that she had fought for while living in Vermont. Retaining her commitment to improving the lives of women through her struggle to pass woman's property provisions, temperance legislation, education reform and woman suffrage laws, she travelled across the state of Kansas lecturing on these topics and in support of ratification of the proposed state constitution. She also participated in the 1867 referendum for Negro and woman suffrage.

The woman's rights movement is often erroneously perceived to consist solely of a fight for state and federal suffrage amendments. This perception is unfortunate because it keeps hidden the breadth of women's concerns and many issues on which woman's rights activists were highly successful. Clarina Howard Nichols's participation in the woman's rights movement involved these other important issues: divorce reform, child custody, education, property rights, and inheritance rights.

The following two chapters are concerned with the texts of Howard Nichols's personally delivered speeches. It is in these texts that one can see how she attempted to persuade audiences to accept the legislative reforms that improved women's legal and political status.

Endnotes

- ¹ Melissa Dolloff, September 9, 1858, p. 22 of her diary. Cited in Faith L. Pepe, "Towards a History of Women in Vermont: An Essay," Vermont History, 45, No. 2 (Spring 1977), p. 78.
- ² Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1972).
- ³ Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 3.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 201.
- ⁵ Barbara Welter, Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976), p. 21.
- ⁶ Madeline Kunin, "Clarina Howard Nichols: Green Mountain Suffragette," Vermont Life, 1978, p. 16.
- ⁷ Miriam Gurko, The Ladies of Seneca Falls: The Birth of the Woman's Rights Movement (New York: Schocken Books, 1974).
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 39.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 39.
- ¹⁰ Clarina Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences by Clarina I. Howard Nichols," in E.C. Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, (Eds.), History of Woman Suffrage, V. 1, (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1882), p. 174.
- ¹¹ Mrs. Samuel A. Kingman, "Clarinda (sic) Howard Nichols: A Personal Memory," The Club Member, April, 1908, V. 4-6, pp. 27-28.
- ¹² See Clarina Howard Nichols's discussion about the difficulty of convincing women they had the power to change their situation. Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences," pp. 183-184.
- ¹³ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Femininity and Feminism: To Be or Not to Be a Woman," Communication Quarterly, 31, No. 2 (Spring 1983), pp. 101-108.
- ¹⁴ Carol Hymowitz and Michaela Weissman, A History of Women in America (New York: Bantam Books, 1978), p. 77.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 77.

- 16 Gurko, The Ladies of Seneca Falls, p. 18.
- 17 Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 25.
- 18 Gurko, The Ladies of Seneca Falls, p. 33.
- 19 Ibid., p. 33.
- 20 Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 27-28.
- 21 Ellen C. Dubois, Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America 1848-1869 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 30.
- 22 Ibid., p. 31.
- 23 Ibid., p. 33. See also Hymowitz and Weissman, p. 78.
- 24 Ibid., p. 52.
- 25 Hymowitz and Weissman, A History of Women in America, pp. 80-81.
- 26 Ibid., pp. 81-82.
- 27 Ibid., p. 82.
- 28 Ibid., p. 83.
- 29 Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences," p. 172.
- 30 Dubois, Feminism and Suffrage, p. 51.
- 31 Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences," p. 184.
- 32 Ibid., p. 172.
- 33 Ibid., p. 173.
- 34 Ibid., p. 173.
- 35 Ibid., p. 173-174.
- 36 Ibid., p. 174.

CHAPTER 3

"THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF WOMAN"

History and Background of the Speech

Four years passed between the time that Clarina Howard Nichols embarked upon her public advocacy of woman's rights in 1847 and her first major speaking engagement in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1851. Howard Nichols had improved her speaking skills and had gained enough recognition and respect as a public lecturer that, by 1851, she was invited to the Worcester, Massachusetts, National Woman's Rights Convention to give an address to the delegates. Howard Nichols's speech, entitled "The Responsibilities of Woman," was well received and, as a result, the speech was reprinted as a pamphlet for the Woman's Rights Tract Series.¹

It should not be assumed that, because Clarina Howard Nichols was speaking at a woman's rights convention, she reached only "true believers." On the contrary, nearly all woman's rights convention audiences contained a healthy mix of clergy, reporters, men, women, stalwart advocates and staunch opponents. It was quite common, for example, for clergymen to attend the conventions both as spectators and as opposition speakers. The convention halls were also filled with persons who believed the goings-on were a source of entertainment and, thus, did not hesitate to heckle the speakers and try to disrupt the meetings. Finally, the woman's rights advocates who attended the conferences spanned the ideological spectrum. There were women who believed that woman

suffrage was too radical an idea as well as those who supported the controversial issue of free love. Therefore, Howard Nichols could not assume that she faced a supportive, homogenous audience at Worcester or at any of the other conferences where she spoke. While the audiences at woman's rights conventions were certainly more open and receptive to Howard Nichols's ideas than were her newspaper readers or the public at large, she faced negative attitudes and obstacles everywhere she went.

The degree of hostility Clarina Howard Nichols could expect to face in any given audience is important because by overcoming it, she provided us with a measure of her skill as an orator. Public speaking is a complex task in the best of circumstances. Persuading antagonistic audiences that believe one ought not be speaking in the first place is a talent that warrants close scrutiny.

Analysis of "The Responsibilities of Woman"

"The Responsibilities of Woman" is a unique and important speech because it demonstrated the breadth and scope of Howard Nichols's rhetorical skills. Within the limits of this one speech, she was able to speak philosophically, to illuminate the legal inequities faced by women, to stir her audience to laughter and disdain, and to impress upon them the need for women's property laws. "The Responsibilities of Woman" was a sophisticated, complex discourse in which Howard Nichols was able to mesh the competing demands and needs of her listeners with her

own desire to persuade the audience.

Clarina Howard Nichols had two purposes in speaking to the Worcester audience. Because she spoke after many others, one purpose was to tie the arguments made by other speakers at the conference into a coherent whole. In the introduction, she referred to her role as being like that of the biblical character Ruth who gathered up wheat from the field that other gleaners had left behind. In her words, she would "present any branch of the subject not presented . . . and be as a Ruth among my fellow-laborers." (para 1) Her allusion to the book of Ruth is doubly appropriate for this audience because the biblical story focuses on the love and commitment between Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi. After her husband died, Ruth refused to return to her own family, who were Moabites, and instead pledged herself to the care of her mother-in-law, saying: "Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there will I be buried."² Because they were destitute and had no men to provide for them, Naomi encouraged Ruth to go into the fields after the harvesters and pick up grain off the ground so that they would not go hungry. Boaz, the owner of the fields, noticed Ruth's work and eventually married her, taking in her mother-in-law, Naomi, as well. This story of respect, love, and commitment between women is an apt comparison, given the audience Howard Nichols faced.

Howard Nichols had a second purpose in giving the

"Responsibilities" speech, a purpose which more directly concerned the everyday lives of women and children. She wanted to convince her audience that women suffered numerous injustices because they did not have the legal right to their own wages or property. Changing the laws that kept women in this untenable position was the express purpose of Howard Nichols's speech.

The ability to use logical argument and evidence to persuade an audience to a particular position are traditionally considered masculine traits. Because Clarina Howard Nichols's primary purpose in speaking at Worcester was persuading the audience to change the laws that stripped a woman of her wages and personal property, her goals were at odds with the audience's perception of what was an appropriate female role. The herculean task she faced was both to reassure her listeners that she was a typical woman as well as to violate her socially prescribed role by being logical, argumentative, and authoritative. Howard Nichols was able to meet these contradictory expectations only by adapting her methods and strategies to fit her specific audience.

Clarina Howard Nichols adapted her methods to meet the requirements of her audience by using four general rhetorical strategies. First, she strove to assuage the fears and create rapport with her listeners by stressing her femininity and showing how much she was like the women in the audience. Second, she delighted the aesthetic sensibilities of her audience with her vast understanding of, and skills with, language. Third, through strategic use of supporting materials, she developed a

sophisticated rhetorical structure to help her audience understand the complex topic she addressed. Fourth, she used sarcasm and humor constructively to make her audience laugh and cheer.

Clarina Howard Nichols attempted to create identification with her audience by reassuring her listeners that she was a traditional woman. Almost immediately after beginning her speech, Howard Nichols compared herself to the biblical character, Ruth, thereby affiliating herself with a respected female character. She followed this comment with a discussion of women's proper sphere and how her "pride of womanhood lay within this nice sphere." (para 2) In the fourth paragraph, Howard Nichols told the audience that she was a wife, mother, sister and daughter and that she revered her husband, father, and brothers "for their manliness." (para 5) By the time that Howard Nichols began her discussion of women's property rights, the audience understood that they were not listening to an "unsexed" or masculine woman.

Howard Nichols' arguments also created identification with her audience. For example, she called upon the men in the audience to educate their wives. This was a controversial topic because it was believed that educated women would become masculine and would challenge men's authority at home and would compete with men in the work world. Howard Nichols argued, however, that educating women would make them better wives and mothers, and that they could more easily meet their responsibilities in life if they had proper educations. Similarly, when she began her discussion of women's property rights, she claimed that it was in behalf of

her children that she wanted changes in the law:

It is behalf of our sons, the future men of the republic, as well as for our daughters, its future mothers, that we claim the full development of our energies by education, and legal protection in the control of all the issues and profits of ourselves, called property." (para 8)

Howard Nichols did not limit herself to verbal assurances that she was a typical woman. Instead, she used a nonverbal device that went with her wherever she traveled--knitting! She recognized that people expected her to be a "ranting fanatic" and she purposely chose to knit in public in order to disarm such individuals.³ One can look at historical treatments of Howard Nichols to see how effectively she convinced people of her traditional womanhood by knitting in public. In an article entitled, "Woman Knitted Her Way Into First Constitution of the State of Kansas," Jennie Small Owen emphasized Howard Nichols's knitting:

A knitting woman helped write the Constitution--or at least put in a word now and then until she had literally knitted certain equal rights for Kansas women into the charter. Moreover, she knitted and "put in" with such tact and charm that she was invited to address the first session of the Kansas legislature when it met in Topeka in 1860. Whether Clarinda [sic] Howard Nichols, the courageous and intelligent Vermont woman who sat calmly knitting thru the Wyandotte Constitutional convention in 1859, brought her needles and yarn to the legislature is not recorded.⁴

Howard Nichols was aware that the image of domesticity that she

put forward helped to lessen hostilities and create common sources of interest for her newspaper and speaking audiences. On several occasions, she wrote about her woman's rights ideas by using fictionalized characters who submitted "editorials" to the Windham County Democrat. In one such published editorial, writing as an ordinary woman named Deborah Van Winkle, Howard Nichols described a train trip in which two women knitted together:

. . . an intelligent, matronly lookin woman cum in, lookin for a seat--I motioned her to set by me, and she did. You see, Mr. Editor, my eye fell on some knittin needles that stuck up out of her work pocket, and I knew in a minit that she and I had got some ideas in common And purty soon we had out the knitting and took turns on it for recreation We had a deal of talk about bringin up children--for we was all parents tu--and last of all we got on to 'wimmin's rights,' and I' like to 'av added-wimmin's wrongs!⁵

T. Seymour Basset, a Vermont historian, has commented on Howard Nichols and her knitting "ploy," saying that she carried it "like a flag."⁶

Clarina Howard Nichols strove to create identification with her audience primarily for the purpose of decreasing hostility and to assure her listeners that she was a "true woman." She chose other strategies that were designed to build bridges between the women in the audience and herself, but had nothing to do with decreasing hostility. For instance, the issue of women educating themselves demonstrated that Howard Nichols understood women's frustrations and discontents, and that she had discovered one solution to the problem. In addition to serving as a source of

commonality between speaker and audience, the issue was a way to overcome the rhetorical obstacle of women not seeing themselves as agents of change. That is, when Howard Nichols encouraged women to educate themselves for "practical life," she provided a means for them to take action. Howard Nichols knew full well that even women at woman's rights conventions were not all willing to become active participants in the political struggle for the vote or for woman's rights. Because she was not a radical reformer, Howard Nichols did not make radical demands of the women in her audiences. Instead, she asked them to improve their own lives through educating themselves. She encouraged them to reach for goals that were beneficial, reasonable, and attainable.

The second category of strategies employed by Howard Nichols to persuade her Worcester audience was her expert use of the English language. Because "bereavement . . . left me the sole parent of sons by a first marriage," (para 9) Howard Nichols began working for the Windham County Democrat and started her life-long career of writing and editing a newspaper. Her occupation as a writer trained her to vividly recreate situations and events for her readers and to stir their interests and imaginations. One can recognize Howard Nichols's ability to make different kinds of appeals by looking at the variation in tone in her writing. For example, when she spoke of the different kinds of laws that negatively affected women, her tone was formal and informative; when telling the heart-rending stories which illuminated the effects of these laws, her tone became personal and impassioned;

when discussing the scope and boundaries of "woman's sphere," Howard Nichols's tone became distant and philosophical; at other times she was emotional, satirical, and sarcastic. In general, however, Howard Nichols's speaking style can be described as modest and measured. Her caution can be attributed to the importance she gave to her first major speaking engagement, but it also illuminates her desire to deflect attention from herself. She understood that if attention were to become focused on her or her "scandalous" past, people would ignore her message and her ideas. Her cautious tone was not an accident, but planned. In a letter to Abby Hemenway in 1881, Howard Nichols commented upon her reluctance to appear to seek publicity. Twenty-seven years prior to Howard Nichols's letter, Miss Hemenway had requested original writings from Howard Nichols to put in an anthology on Vermont writers. Howard Nichols apologized and offered an explanation for her long delay in responding to Hemenway's request:

As I would like, if noticed at all, to be noticed in connexion with my lifework--in which for some five years I labored in Vt. first and alone, against reproaches, ridicule, and the prejudices of many dear to me . . . It may be too late. If so, I shall regret that I had not before taken thought and courage to come out from behind the old haunting fear of seeming to seek publicity, which I felt, and justly, would lessen my personal influence and prejudice the cause of women.⁷

Clarina Howard Nichols's modesty or desire to avoid appearing to seek publicity can also be seen in the "Responsibilities" speech, where she presented very little information about herself.

Although she told many stories about people she knew or things she had seen, the audience learned almost nothing about her personal life or situation. In the introduction, she referred to herself as a traditional woman who had grown up with the "most refined notions of woman's sphere." (para 2) In the 9th paragraph, she spoke of having been the sole parent for her sons, but did not mention the circumstances leading to that situation. Finally, in the 24th paragraph, she referred to herself as self-educated. Each reference served to increase Howard Nichols's credibility with her audience by reassuring them that she was a traditional and modest woman.

Clarina Howard Nichols's most obvious language strategy was her redefinition of "woman's rights" as "woman's responsibilities." When Howard Nichols gave this speech in 1851, she had only recently accepted the idea of woman suffrage as an appropriate goal for the woman's rights movement. In this discourse, she took pains to put distance between herself and explicit calls for "woman's rights." Howard Nichols differentiated between woman's rights as attaining political privileges and woman's rights as correcting wrongs against females. Her interest was in ending the legal injustices that hurt women. This distinction can be seen when she commented:

I shall say very little of woman's rights; but I would lay the axe at the root of the tree. I would impress upon you woman's responsibilities, and the means fitly to discharge them before Heaven. (para 4)

When Howard Nichols concluded her lengthy discussion of women's property rights, she again distanced herself from calls for woman suffrage.

Now, my friends, you will bear me witness that I have said nothing about woman's right to vote or make laws. I have great respect for manhood. I wish to be able to continue to respect it. (para 21)

Therefore, redefining woman's rights as woman's responsibilities was not a choice made by Nichols to manipulate her audience into accepting her proposals, but was a true reflection of the discomfort she felt in regard to woman's rights. Although the positions Howard Nichols advocated were much like those of her more radical contemporaries, she was able to speak about them in very different ways. Giving women property rights so that they might better fulfill their roles as wives and mothers was a difficult argument for opponents to rebut.

Howard Nichols's use of language techniques as rhetorical strategies was a significant factor in accounting for the success of this speech. Her command of the language manifested itself in ways so varied and creative that additional categories must be used to describe them. The following discussions on structure, supporting materials, and humor constitute other rhetorical strategies that are intimately connected with Howard Nichols's mastery of the English language.

Clarina Howard Nichols used a third rhetorical strategy that involved her choice of supporting materials and the complex

structuring of "The Responsibilities of Woman." She treated a range of different topics, including women's education, woman's sphere, divorce laws, inheritance legislation, and the problem of intemperate husbands. The issue at the center of the text, however, is property rights for married women. Howard Nichols claimed that "the law which alienates the wife's right to the control of her own property, her own earnings, lies at the foundation of all her social and legal wrongs." (para 11) These strong words demonstrate the importance of the issue for Howard Nichols, and they indicate a political perspective which she maintained throughout her life.

Property rights for married women wasn't a simple topic to approach rhetorically, nor was it a legal problem easily overcome. Howard Nichols fervently believed that nearly all of the legal difficulties faced by women could be attributed to the inability of women to control their earnings and property. Thus, she tried to make clear the connections between the lack of property rights and a "constellation" of women's legal problems. Rather than overwhelm her audience with a long list of laws that needed reform, Howard Nichols was able to demonstrate a common source for the varied injustices as well as a common solution. This constellation of issues corresponds to the various stages and states of a woman's life. For example, Howard Nichols showed how women were wronged before marriage (fathers did not will property to daughters because it became the property of the daughter's husband); at the time of marriage (losing the property that a

woman brought to the marriage); after having children (not being able to force husbands to support minor children and the lack of child custody rights); when divorced (unequal meting out of punishment in cases of infidelity, small alimony payments, the non-existence of child support laws); at the time of remarriage; and at the time of death. This constellation or cluster of related issues is the focus of Howard Nichols's arguments in "The Responsibilities of Woman."

The structure of the speech was primarily topical. Howard Nichols moved from a discussion of women's proper sphere to education, to property rights and all its ramifications, to divorce, and then back to education again. To the extent that she described her role as a "gleaner" in her introductory remarks, it should not be surprising that she follows this type of "meandering" route. In addition, she also employed a problem-solution format when making reference to the specific laws and used a narrative-dramatic structure when telling the long stories that accompanied the legal descriptions. While at first this seems to be a haphazard, loosely structured discourse, it is, in fact, tightly woven together. Howard Nichols used the central theme of women's property rights both to account for the multitudinous legal injustices endured by women and to tie together the various "gleanings" of other speakers at the convention. She did not confuse her audience, even in the face of the complexities of her woman's property topic and the different issues she addressed. Rather, she organized her comments into a

patterned structure that was identifiable and appropriate for her audience. This pattern can be likened to a wheel.

With property rights for married women as the hub of the wheel, every part or segment represented one of the issues in the constellation of woman's property rights. Howard Nichols would spend approximately 30 seconds to a minute introducing the legal topic and using legalistic language. She would then move from this introduction into a simple explanation of how the law worked, devoting 1-3 minutes on these comments. Then, she would begin a long story illustrating how the law affected the lives of specific individuals, devoting approximately 5-10 minutes to each story. After providing additional comments and transitions, Howard Nichols moved to the next issue in the constellation and began the structure anew. In this way, she was able to create a sense of coherence and demonstrate a common source for the varied injustices that she described.

The wheel pattern used in "The Responsibilities of Woman" is a complex, yet fully understandable structure. It functions well to allow the audience to keep pace with Howard Nichols, in addition to keeping the discourse balanced. By interweaving the logical, legal descriptions with the emotional stories, Howard Nichols was aided in striking the delicate, contradictory balance between being feminine and being logical. The primary reason that the wheel structure was so effective was because of Howard Nichols's strategic choice of supporting materials. The three major types of supporting materials or evidence used in the

discourse are biblical allusions, male authorities, and personal examples.

Biblical allusions were a powerful source of evidence in the 1800's for several reasons. First, given the importance of religion in that period, a rhetor could safely assume that his or her audience would recognize and understand the meaning of biblical allusions. An enthymeme occurs when an audience is able to "fill in" or complete part of an argument. Howard Nichols's use of biblical allusions allowed her audience to participate in completing her arguments. That is, the audience could draw the inference from the biblical allusion to the point Howard Nichols was trying to make. For example, in her allusion to the story of Ruth and Naomi in the introduction, Howard Nichols was trying to make a statement about her purpose in speaking at the convention.

Howard Nichols also made allusions to the Bible at several other places in her speech. At paragraph 18, she compared the impossible task women faced as unpropertied wives and mothers to the difficulties faced by Jewish slaves in Egypt. The passage Howard Nichols alluded to was the fifth chapter of Exodus, which told how Jewish slaves were forced to make bricks without being given straw. The Egyptians felt the Jews were not working hard enough so they demanded that the same number of bricks be made as before, but refused to provide the necessary straw as they had done previously. Howard Nichols commented:

If we are not fitted to be capable wives and mothers,--as contended by gentleman on the stand yesterday,--if we make poor brick, it is

because our brother man has stolen our straw.
 Give us back our straw, brothers,--There is
 plenty of it,--and we will make you good
 brick. Brick we must make--men say so; then
give us our straw,--we can not take it. (para
 18)

Howard Nichols was, of course, using the metaphor of the straw as an argument for getting property rights. The "brick" in the allusion is the proper fulfillment of women's responsibilities as wives and mothers. The asking for straw instead of taking it also notes that women have to have rights conferred upon them by men, because women do not vote and cannot directly claim their rights. This allusion also makes a controversial figurative analogy between women in the United States and the condition of slavery.

Other biblical allusions used in "The Responsibilities of Woman" include Howard Nichols's comment that she had made no preparation to speak, but that "if I had anything to do here, I should have the grace given me to do it" (para 1) (Matthew 10:19); "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder," (para 20) (Matthew 19:6); and "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (para 10) (Acts 10:35).

The biblical allusion as a supporting material is useful in that it relies on the strength and reverence the audience has for biblical authority. In addition, it is a way of drawing on the cultural knowledge of the audience and including them in the presentation of the argument. When a rhetor is able to use an allusion successfully, he or she has allowed the audience to participate in an active, dynamic way. Although Howard Nichols

was able successfully to use biblical allusions in her discourse, she took a serious risk in doing so. That is, biblical injunctions about women's proper role were the primary source of arguments against the woman's rights movement, not only in the early years of the cause, but until woman suffrage was finally won in 1920. Howard Nichols's choice of evidence was appropriate for her arguments, but it was dangerous because it might have reminded the audience of the general arguments against her case.

Clarina Howard Nichols also used male authorities as supporting material. She repeatedly used unidentified men as the authoritative sources for her more controversial positions. That is, she cited the comments or explanations of men whose names we never learned, and through them, made arguments that would likely have been challenged if she had been their source. For example, she relates that she asked

a man, learned and experienced in jurisprudence by a half-century's discharge of the duties of legislator, administrator, guardian, and probate judge, why the widow is denied absolute control of her third, there being no danger of creating "separate interests" when the husband is in his grave. He replied that it was to prevent a second husband from obtaining possession of the property of a first, to the defrauding of his children, which would be the result if the widow married again. (para 11)

Howard Nichols went on to explain why such an answer was an absurd excuse for defrauding a woman of her proper inheritance. If she had simply explained to her audience the reason for the law's injustice without having done so through a "learned man," she

would have appeared ridiculous rather than he. Howard Nichols used this same device in paragraph 15: "Our legislators tell us it is right to give the legal control of our earnings to the husband because 'in law' he is held responsible for our support, and is obliged to pay our debts (?) [sic], and must have our earnings to do it with." (para 16) And in paragraph 20:

I have asked learned judges why the state decrees that the father should retain the children, thus throwing upon the innocent mother the penalty which should fall upon the guilty party alone? Say they, "It is because the father has the property; it would not be just to burden the mother with the support of his children." (para 20)

Howard Nichols was able to fulfill two rhetorical functions by having unidentified men provide support for her arguments. By calling upon their expertise and authority as men, judges, and legislators, she was able to get her audience to take notice of the point she was making. In addition, she could deflect criticism away from herself by attributing the absurdity of these rationalizations to them, even though their words supported the contention she was making. Thus, her argument was supported and she provided credibility for herself by noting her conversations with men of such high status.

The primary type of evidence in "The Responsibilities of Woman" comes from Clarina Howard Nichols's own personal experiences. Traditionally, the example is a relatively weak kind of evidence because it is proof of only one case. The strength of the example as evidence, however, is its ability to vivify

difficult, dry ideas and make them real for an audience. Howard Nichols's choice in using the example so frequently was actually a good one because she dealt with complex, legal topics.

The decision to rely on personal examples as the major type of evidence was also very useful in building Howard Nichols's own credibility with her audience. One of the few legitimate sources of female expertise is the pragmatic method of learning from experience.⁸ For example, most women learn traditional female tasks like cooking, sewing, and cleaning by watching their mothers and then replicating those behaviors. This can be compared to the acceptable methods of male expertise which involve academic or scholarly sources of "knowing." During Howard Nichols's lifetime, women were excluded from rigorous academic training. By using her own experiences as the basis of her authority, Howard Nichols demonstrated that she had expertise that came from an acceptable "feminine" source. In using personal examples, she recognized the limitations of her audience and their expectations. She did not violate her role as a woman when she employed long, colorful, personal examples as she would have if she had relied on statistical data. As a result, she did not unnecessarily stir up her audience's fears about her role as a woman. This skillful use of supporting materials functioned as a mechanism in meeting the demand of her audience that she be traditionally feminine.

In addition, the use of personal examples in this speech served to support Howard Nichols's case through a particularly strong type of evidence called enactment. When Howard Nichols

told the women in her audience that educating themselves would provide them with happiness and opportunities for development, she stood as living proof of her argument. She enacted the very argument she made because she was self-taught, happy, and fulfilled. Enactment is a particularly strong type of personal evidence because it is the rhetorical form of "living proof."

Personal examples were extensive and pervasive in "The Responsibilities of Woman." Even when she cited the words of a male authority (judge, legislator or learned man), it was always through a personal conversation that she had obtained the information. Even the final type of evidence used in this speech, long stories, always came through Howard Nichols. In choosing this relatively weak type of evidence, Howard Nichols showed us that she could adapt to the needs of her audience to be feminine, but could also use the strengths of that evidence type to support her positions.

Howard Nichols frequently employed detailed personal examples. On eight different occasions, she told lengthy stories that illuminated and illustrated the legal issue that she was addressing. Although the example is usually a weak form of evidence because it is a statistic of one, Howard Nichols altered it so that it worked to her benefit. Because the problem related in the story arose from the law, Howard Nichols was able to circumvent claims that her evidence wasn't representative of most women's experiences. Because the source of the injustice she described was grounded in the law, the injustice could happen to

any woman once she married, had children, divorced, remarried, was widowed, or had an intemperate husband. Thus, Howard Nichols was able to draw upon the strength of the example, its ability to vivify, yet show its extensive applicability. The result was to stir the emotions and imaginations of her audience and make them realize that the horrors she described could happen to any of them.

Just as Howard Nichols used male authorities with whom she had personally spoken, all of the extended examples came from her own experiences. In every story she told, she was a witness to the injustice, or it had occurred to a friend or acquaintance:

I was witness on one occasion, to a wife's helping her husband. (para 2)

A gentleman said to me not long since . . . (para 7)

As a parent, I have educated myself. (para 8)

In my native town lived a single sister, of middle age. (para 11)

It is not long since a gentleman of my acquaintance . . . (para 13)

A worthy woman in the circle of my acquaintance . . . (para 15)

Let me illustate by relating one, among many incidents of the kind, which have fallen under my observation. (para 19)

I have a friend who, not long since, procured a divorce from her husband. (para 20)

In sum, Clarina Howard Nichols employed three types of supporting materials or evidence in this speech: biblical

allusion, male authorities, and personal examples. With the exception of the biblical allusions, all of the evidence came through Howard Nichols's individual experiences. This reliance on the personal experience served to increase Howard Nichols's own credibility and to keep her within the role socially prescribed by her audience. To her credit, she was able to use a traditionally weak form of evidence and strengthen it by demonstrating how the various injustices stemmed from the law, and thus, could happen to any woman.

Clarina Howard Nichols was also able to use humor and sarcasm, without offending her audience. This unique aspect of her speaking style allowed her to make her most pointed comments and also led the audience to laugh and cheer. Because she was interested in being seen as a typical woman, she limited her humor to "appropriate" topics to avoid alienating members of her audience. For example, Howard Nichols took issue with the common idea that a woman should be her husband's "helpmeet." She stated that the term had been misconstrued to mean that women should do whatever their husbands wanted, and commented: "I do not understand that we are at liberty to help men to the devil." (para 7) The audience responded with loud cheering. When arguing that women needed their own wages so they could give presents to their husbands, Howard Nichols spoke about how women enjoyed receiving gifts: "You have a wife whom you love. You present her with a dress, perhaps. And how rich you feel, that your love can give gifts! Women like to receive presents of dresses; I enjoy to have

my husband give me dresses. (Laughter)" (para 14) In a discussion of love and women's attractiveness, Howard Nichols argued that because most women lost their youthful beauty, they needed to develop other talents and take on womanly responsibilities. She said, "Surely our days of dancing and musical performance are soon over, when musical instruments of sweeter tone cry "Mother." (para 25) Again, the audience cheered heartily.

Just as Howard Nichols was able to evoke cheers, she was able to delight the audience with her skillful use of language and her ability to "turn" many familiar maxims to her own benefit. For example, Howard Nichols called upon the men in the audience to give their wives the information and training necessary to run the family business or farm in case of family emergencies. She justified this argument with a biblical allusion, claiming that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." (para 10) And when she spoke of the unjust ways children were being taken from their mothers and given to their fathers' custody in divorce cases, Howard Nichols commented that ". . . it severs what God hath joined together--the mother and her child." (para 20)

Finally, Howard Nichols made a number of potent arguments through sarcasm. After telling a heart-rending story of a woman in her town who had become a pauper through unfair inheritance laws and how this woman had been "auctioned off" to a man who could take care of her for the least money, Howard Nichols commented: "And it is for such protection that the love of

fathers, brothers, husbands, represents woman in the legislative halls of the freest people on earth? O, release to us our own, that we may protect ourselves, and we will bless you!" (para 11)

In another case, Howard Nichols compared the love of men to the love of women:

Brothers, you ask us to accept the protection of your LOVE, and the law says that is sufficient for us, whether it feeds or robs us of our bread. You admit that woman exceeds man in self-sacrificing love; her devotion to you has passed into a proverb. Yet, for all this, you refuse to intrust your interests to her love. You do not feel safe in your interests without the protection of equal laws. You refuse to trust even the mother's love with the interests of her children! How, then, do you ask of us to dispense with the protection of equal laws, and accept instead the protection of man's affection? (para 22)

Howard Nichols's use of humor was very effective with her Worcester, Massachusetts, audience, as evidenced by the reactions written into the text. Because she was typically reserved and measured in her speaking style, Howard Nichols's expressions of wit brought levity and enjoyment to her audience without creating dissension. She never berated particular individuals, she used herself as the source of her humor, she joked about elements of woman's sphere, and she played with commonly-used phrases. In no case did she violate her role as a woman.

Clarina Howard Nichols's speech entitled "The Responsibilities of Woman" is a beautifully-written, well-organized rhetorical discourse. Although her audience had fears and needed to be reassured that she was a traditional or true woman, Howard Nichols

needed to persuade her audience that unjust laws needed to be changed. Because both of these requirements had to be met for her speech to be effective, she combined her unique style with strategic choices that allowed her to be adaptive and flexible. She chose a variety of aesthetic appeals designed to delight and persuade her audience. Because she was interested in making her topic become vivid and alive, she used strategies like redefinition, description, allusion, enactment, and examples to accomplish this. She assumed that her audience was capable of understanding a complex topic and developed a rhetorical structure that helped them to make sense of what she said. She used supporting materials that were effective, but did not violate the role expected of her by the audience. She used humor in a constructive way. She did not assault her audience's sense of propriety, but adapted her arguments to their needs. Howard Nichols took steps to eliminate the sources of hostility and dissension, yet challenged her audience to correct unjust laws. She appealed to her audience's sense of right and fairness rather than to their selfishness or greed. She encouraged men to change laws and encouraged women to change their lives by educating themselves. By adapting the talents she had developed as a writer to the expectations of her audience, Clarina Howard Nichols created an original and effective rhetorical act.

Endnotes

¹ Clarina Howard Nichols, "The Responsibilities of Woman," Series of Woman's Rights Tracts (Rochester, NY: Steam Press of Curtis, Butts, and Co., 1853).

² Book of Ruth, Revised Standard Version, Bible, (Camden, New Jersey: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1952), p. 237.

³ Madeline M. Kunin, "Clarina Howard Nichols: Green Mountain Suffragette," Vermont Life, 28, No. 2, p. 14.

⁴ Jennie S. Owen, "Woman Knitted Her Way Into First Constitution of the State of Kansas," Topeka Journal, March 2, 1939, p. 9.

⁵ Kunin, "Clarina Howard Nichols," p. 15.

⁶ Letter received from T. Seymour Bassett, August 15, 1984.

⁷ Clarina Howard Nichols, To Abby Hemenway, 1881, in "The Forgotten Feminist of Kansas: The Papers of Clarina I. H. Nichols, 1854-1885--Concluded," Ed. by Joseph G. Gambone, The Kansas Historical Quarterly, Winter 1974, pp. 524-525.

⁸ Carol McMillan, Women, Reason, and Nature: Some Philosophical Problems With Feminism (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982).

CHAPTER 4

THE ORAL SPEECHES

Introduction

After her successful debut with "The Responsibilities of Woman" speech, Clarina Howard Nichols received numerous invitations to speak at conferences, club meetings, and lyceum groups. This chapter is concerned with three speeches delivered by Howard Nichols between December 3, 1852, and September 7, 1853. The three speeches to be analyzed are "Woman's Rights and Wrongs," given to the Vermont Legislature, December 3, 1852; Address to the Whole World Temperance Convention, New York City, September 3, 1853; and Address to the Woman's Rights Convention, New York City, September 7, 1853. The texts of these speeches can be found in Appendix A. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of these discourses will help to demonstrate that the rhetorical styles and strategies employed in "The Responsibilities of Woman" were not accidental, but represented choices made in responding to the dilemma faced by female rhetors.

General Backgrounds and Descriptions

Address to the Vermont Legislature

On December 3, 1852, Clarina Howard Nichols stood before a packed chamber of the Vermont legislature in Montpelier, and began speaking on the topic of women's property rights. With a trembling voice, Howard Nichols presented "Woman's Rights and Wrongs," and became the first woman ever to address the state

legislature. She received this honor after petitioning in Brattleboro, Vermont, for the passage of a law that would allow women to vote in local school district elections. Howard Nichols had been able to convince more than 200 prominent Brattleboro businessmen to sign her petition, which was then sent to the legislature's Education Committee for action. The head of the Education Committee was ardently opposed to the proposal and threatened to table the measure. To counteract this threat, a friend of Howard Nichols's got other legislators to support and pass a resolution of invitation so that she might come and "present the whole subject of Woman's Rights."¹

By the time Howard Nichols actually spoke to her audience of legislators and curious onlookers, a small debate had been raging over her scheduled appearance. The Chairman of the Education Committee, who had cast the only dissenting vote in the resolution of invitation, believed Howard Nichols would come and make herself look ridiculous. In addition, a rival newspaper editor promised to present Howard Nichols with a suit of men's clothing because of what he believed was her "scramble for the breeches."² Howard Nichols, then, faced a difficult situation: Most of the members of her audience were skeptical, many were critical and hostile, and a few were intent on ensuring her failure.

Howard Nichols did not attempt to speak on the "whole subject of Woman's Rights," nor did she address the legal changes requested in her petition for educational suffrage. Instead, she chose to speak about a topic she knew well, women's property

rights. Since Howard Nichols believed most injustices done to women arose because they lacked property rights, it is not surprising that she used her opportunity in the House chamber once again to "lay the axe at the root of the tree."

Clarina Howard Nichols used two related lines of argument in her attempt to persuade the legislators of women's need for property rights. First, she made a philosophical argument that individual control of property was an important element of the democratic system. She pointed out that the "holding of property is ranked by our republican government among inalienable rights" (para 3). She argued, in effect, that the legislators were not maintaining the ideals and standards of the republic when they failed to enact legislation giving women property rights. The second line of her analysis, that it was in the best interests of society for women to control property, was linked to the first argument through her notion of "responsibility":

. . . and the reasons for so ranking it
[property] is to be found in the necessities
and responsibilities of the human being, which
absorb the entire means created by average
energies (para 3).

Howard Nichols's main arguments were of both philosophical and pragmatic natures. The majority of the speech, however, was devoted to an explication of how having property rights would allow women to meet their social and familial responsibilities and why such legislation was advantageous to individual families and to society at large.

In recognition of the controversy surrounding her address to the legislature, Howard Nichols's tone was serious and formal. She attempted to impress upon her audience that women were responsible individuals and that the "laws should protect to married women their property" (para 9). The available text shows that Howard Nichols did not embellish her speech with personal examples or the heart-rending stories which were so prevalent in "The Responsibilities of Woman." Although the excerpts of the speech published in the New York Daily Tribune do not include any evidence for her claims, this is probably a defect of the text. Howard Nichols commented in the History of Woman Suffrage that she had "cited the statutes and decisions of courts, showing that the husband owned even the wife's clothing."³

The structure of "Woman's Rights and Wrongs" is very different from "The Responsibilities of Woman." For the Vermont legislators, Howard Nichols chose to argue her case using a simple problem-solution format. She outlined the legal inequities, stressed which solutions would resolve the problems, and explained the advantages that would result. Howard Nichols broadened the scope of the issue by linking woman's property rights to benefits for children, husbands, and even to the state. Although this structure was different from her previous discourse, it was appropriate for her audience which was accustomed to addressing issues in an analytical fashion. By drawing connections between property rights for women and financial benefits for the state, Howard Nichols preempted criticism that her perspective was overly

narrow or that she ignored other compelling state interests.

The strategies employed by Howard Nichols in the speech to the legislators reflected her efforts to change their negative attitudes about the necessity for women's property laws. A basic strategy to build identification with the audience was her separation of individual legislators from restrictive property legislation. She accomplished this through the literary device of parallelism. The laws which stripped women of their property rights were "legislation of the past," and it was "left for the legislation of a better age" to give women control of their property. She claimed that the "legislators of the past" falsely believed that all men would support their wives and children. However, she felt confident that

The legislators of the present will prove their common sense and humanity by abandoning this "legal fiction," and acting upon the reality that many men have proved themselves unable or unwilling . . . to support their families in comfort (para 7).

Ironically, Howard Nichols created a "fiction" of her own as the "legislators of the past" and the "legislators of the present" were the same men. By creating this fiction, she absolved the legislators of their responsibility for the problem, thus making it easier for them to consider her proposal.

After creating an opportunity for the legislators to right a past wrong, Howard Nichols appealed to their lofty sense of purpose by focusing on honor and justice. She employed the strategy of repetition using the word "just." Women, for

instance, had a "just cause of complaining" (para 1), about women's property laws because the existing laws "divest women of just rights of property" (para 3). She claimed that "justice demanded" that women receive property rights and that it was "both just and desirable" (para 14) that women contend with the responsibilities, as well as the security, of owning property. As she closed her speech, Howard Nichols urged changes in inheritance laws that gave a dead man's property to any foreigner "against the just claims of the wife and heirs" (para 15).

In addition to appealing to the legislators' sense of purpose, Howard Nichols appealed to their pocketbook. She tied the advantages of women's property rights to other individuals and hence the state. By benefitting women, children, and men, women's property rights would benefit the community. Howard Nichols repeatedly argued that without property rights, women would end up paupers and in poor-houses:

The laws should protect to married women their property. They have equally with men inherited personal necessities, and should not be forced by laws alienating their property rights, to choose between starvation and the poor house (para 9).

She made the connection between women's property rights and community benefits clear when she said:

For by releasing to the responsible mother means for the support and proper education of her children, the community will most effectually protect itself against the pauperism which taxes its purse and crime which jeopardds its safety (para 5).

Clarina Howard Nichols's most basic argument stood in sharp contrast to the strategies designed to build identification with her audience. Throughout her speech, she claimed that women had family responsibilities that necessitated the ownership of property. On seven different occasions, she used the word "responsible" or "responsibility" when describing women and their situations. Like her previous speech, "The Responsibilities of Woman," Howard Nichols stressed to her audience that women needed property rights in order to adequately fulfill their God-given roles. She developed this notion primarily through the use of contrast. For example, she described men as recreant, incompetent, and "using their property rights to feed their brutal appetites, sending their families to the poor-houses and prisons" (para 5). Women, on the other hand, were depicted as morally upright, conscientious citizens who worked hard to fulfill their responsibilities:

. . . many a man, in spite of the legal injection into his veins of his wife's means of subsistence, has proved dead to all claims of family, while many a wife, though "dead in law" has managed under the paralyzing conditions of her legal category to be a fountain of life to her children, and through them to the community (para 7).

After developing her basic position, Howard Nichols extended her line of reasoning to claim that women's responsibilities to their families entitled them to freedoms to manage property as they saw fit. She noted that the right to property included both

potential benefits and liabilities. She said:

In order to the full employment and wise use of property, women must be left, like men, free to husband or squander their property interests, and abide poverty or prosperity as their own foresight or management shall determine (para 14).

Claiming that women had the capacity to manage property was a very controversial idea. By advocating this position, Howard Nichols directly contradicted the values of the Vermont legislators. Her concluding remarks accusing legislators of wronging widows by giving away their property stood in sharp contrast to her earlier strategy of separating the effects of legislation from the legislators.

A fear that women's property, if released to their control, will be forced or coaxed from them by others is certainly no reason why our legislators should be guilty of giving it to others, as they do give it to the heirs of the husband (para 15).

Within the address, Howard Nichols blended strategies that both reassured and challenged her audience. She reassured the legislators that her proposal furthered their goals to do justice and save public money. At the same time, she challenged their basic understanding of the roles of women and men.

Clarina Howard Nichols's speech, "Woman's Rights and Wrongs," can be considered effective even though the legislators did not pass the educational suffrage measure that originally brought her to the state house. Since she ignored the education

question and devoted herself to the issue of women's property rights, the defeat of the education bill should not be used as a criterion to judge the speech as a success or failure. Howard Nichols wrote that "the effort brought me no reproach, no ridicule from any quarter, but instead, cordial recognition and delicate sympathy from unexpected quarters."⁴ In fact, she believed "the favorable impression created was regarded as a great triumph for woman's rights."⁵ Since there was such acrimony over the decision to allow her to speak, one might consider the respectful response she received as evidence that she did, indeed, change attitudes of at least some of the legislators. By appealing to their sense of justice, fair play, pecuniary interests, and by structuring her arguments in rational ways that were familiar to the legislators, Howard Nichols was able to win their respect.

Address to the Whole World Temperance Convention

When Clarina Howard Nichols addressed the 1853 Whole World Temperance Convention in New York City, she had no way of knowing that her speech would provide many opportunities for travel and lecturing.⁶ After hearing her speak, Horace Greeley, publisher of The New York Tribune, asked Howard Nichols to become a paid agent of the Woman's State Temperance Society. In the months of September and October of 1853, Howard Nichols and Lydia F. Fowler traveled more than 900 miles in Wisconsin and spoke to an estimated 30,000 persons regarding the evils of intemperance and the usefulness of enacting a "Maine Law in that state."⁷

The convention audience who heard Howard Nichols speak was

comprised of men and women, and a number of clergymen. Although it was more appropriate for a woman to be active in temperance reform than in woman's rights activities, Howard Nichols was aware that her audience had misgivings about her speaking role. When she addressed her listeners, she faced a unique rhetorical situation. She knew the members of her audience held ideas and attitudes similar to her own regarding temperance and its destructiveness. However, to convince them of the role she wanted women and Christian churches to play in getting temperance legislation enacted, she first had to overcome her audience's discomfort with her presence on the speaker's platform. In her opening comments, she alluded to the controversy over whether women should speak in public:

I am not unconscious, friends, that I stand as yet upon a contested platform--that my woman's foot presses ground denied to her to maintain--so you will allow me to make some reference to this point . . . You will therefore allow me in my remarks to state my positions and to maintain them as in my judgement [sic] is best (para 1).

Later in the discourse, Howard Nichols used an impassioned, emotional plea to justify her speaking presence:

And, friends, if intemperance did not invade our homes--if it did not take from us our clothing, our bread and the means for our self-development, and for the training of our children to respectability and usefulness--if it did not take the babes from our bosoms,--I would not stand here. And this, friends, although it be woman's right, I must present to you as my justification for addressing you upon this occasion (para 3).

Although she paid serious attention to the issue of female speakers, Howard Nichols later wrote that she was surprised that the "right and propriety of woman's public advocacy of temperance"⁸ was still an unsettled question.

Howard Nichols's purpose in addressing the temperance convention was to argue for passage of temperance legislation similar to a law which had been passed in Maine, as well as to show the "need of woman for its enactment" (para 1). She put forth three major contentions in her speech. First, she maintained that "woman was the greatest sufferer from intemperance" (para 2) and vividly described the ways that women were harmed by men's drunkenness. Her second argument, that Christians had a responsibility to be active in government and politics, rested upon the audience's acquiescence with her first claim. That is, because women's activism in politics and government was frowned upon as "unwomanly," the only way to justify her position was to demonstrate that women were being significantly harmed by intemperance and thus should have the opportunity to alleviate the source of that harm. Howard Nichols believed that both Christian men and women should be active in politics and government on this issue. She criticized church members' relative inactivity in regard to temperance legislation and said "it strikes me that it is not the whole duty of the Christian Church to pray and talk upon it [the Maine Law]" (para 7). In her third argument, she took a very controversial stand by

urging churches to "discipline" their congregations and claimed that clergymen should try to force members to vote in favor of temperance legislation:

No one, for a moment, can then, I think support that God himself does not take cognizance of political acts as Christian duty. They say they do not see how we could recognize the political action of our members. We do not see how we could discipline them as to the manner in which they should vote upon the question. Now, friends, what is the organization of Christianity worth, if you cannot reach a member of that body in all his actions--if you cannot reach him, and bring the force of the Church, as an organization, to bear upon every individual member, in his actions in any department in life? What is that organization worth (para 7)?

Unlike her speech to the Vermont Legislature, Howard Nichols's tone was personal and "preachy." She repeatedly referred to her audience as "brothers," "sisters," and "friends." In spite of this friendly manner, she strongly criticized the audience for not fulfilling what she saw as their Christian duty. Her preachy tone was a potential risk because assuming the rhetorical style of a clergyman was seen as an even greater repudiation of the feminine role than was merely speaking in public.

Howard Nichols employed a problem-solution structure in her address to the Whole World Temperance Convention. Although she cited several legal difficulties women faced including the lack of a legal existence, the lack of property rights, and those child custody laws which gave custody of minor children to incompetent fathers, the temperance legislation she advocated would not have

resolved any of these problems. She said:

Woman is the greatest sufferer because she belongs and is bound hand and foot, and given to the protection of her husband. I say that woman is the greatest sufferer, because the laws of the land have bound her hand and foot, and committed her soul and body to the protection of her husband . . . It is because the mother of humanity cannot hold in her own hand the bread she earns to feed her babes and children . . . It is because the babes she rears are given to the custody of the drunken husband (para 3).

Regardless of her broad analysis of the problem, Howard Nichols explicitly limited her proposed solution to the issue of temperance. Because she provided such a broad sketch of how women were harmed in society, one can assume that Howard Nichols wanted her audience to expand their activism beyond temperance reform to woman's rights. The problem-solution structure of this discourse was unlike the one used in the Vermont Legislature address because Howard Nichols encouraged churches to not just give verbal support for the Maine Law, but to take on the functions of a morality police force. Not surprisingly, she neglected to mention just how the Church was to "enforce it [discipline] against every man who votes against the Maine Law" (para 7).

The supporting materials used in this speech were quite similar to those used in "The Responsibilities of Woman." For instance, she told a long story about a friend of hers in a stagecoach who met a man with a small baby. Howard Nichols was able to make the audience laugh and applaud with her tale of the man's pathetic attempts to care for the tiny infant by feeding it

cakes. The stories were similar to the ones used in "The Responsibilities of Woman" speech. In addition, she repeated her tendency to use unnamed men as sources of evidence. In this speech, she "conversed with some of our clergy, who are among the foremost friends of the Maine Law" (para 6).

The rhetorical strategies used by Clarina Howard Nichols in her address to the Whole World Temperance Convention fall into two groups. They are either representative of her previously-used strategies or specifically adapted to the needs of her temperance audience. The representative strategies primarily consisted of linguistic devices and argumentative positions that were repeated from her earlier speeches. For example, Howard Nichols continued to portray herself to her audience as a typical, feminine woman. She addressed herself to "womanly" concerns by outlining the grievances women had in fulfilling their roles as mothers. Some of Howard Nichols's most impassioned pleas came when she described the suffering borne by women who could not, by law, retain custody of their minor children. Her example of the tiny infant who was being fed a "pocket full of cakes" by its inept father and her belief that enactment of the Maine Law would "restore the sweet harmonies of domestic life" (para 1) is illustrative of her interest in women's concerns. Her use of dramatic, emotional appeals tended to reinforce her image as a common woman.

Howard Nichols employed a number of linguistic devices like parallelism and metaphors in making aesthetic appeals to her audience. Her metaphoric use of phrases like women "being bound

hand and foot" (para 3), or their positions as the "mother-fountain of humanity" (para 5), and children being allowed to "drink the milk of human kindness that God has stored in the breast of woman" (para 5) all served to persuade the audience in vivid, colorful ways. She created a unique nautical analogy when she justified the necessity of women speakers. She said, "Man cannot row the boat of humanity alone, for when he does so, it goes round and round in a circle, until at length his arm tires, and he, with all his craft on board, is engulfed" (para 4). A final strategy that was utilized in other speeches was her claim that women's suffering stemmed not from the vicissitudes of individual circumstances, but rather, were grounded in the applications of the law. To the extent that the law was responsible for women's harrowing and traumatic situations, all women (and their children) were at risk of facing similar difficulties.

While Howard Nichols did use similar rhetorical strategies in her speech to the temperance convention, she also adapted and reformulated certain ideas so that they were more pertinent to her specific audience of reformers. Her reworking of the "responsibilities" argument is a case in point. In her previous speeches, Clarina Howard Nichols maintained that women had responsibilities as wives and mothers that could be better met if they were given legal benefits such as property rights and the like. Never did she argue that women were in any way derelict in their duties. Instead, she argued that in spite of their legal

and social handicaps, women still met their obligations and raised children who became fine citizens. The legal rights Howard Nichols lobbied for would simply give women an opportunity to do better jobs of raising their families. Unfortunately, the responsibilities argument did not apply so neatly to the temperance reformers, so Howard Nichols had to reformulate the strategy to accurately reflect the movement and her perspectives on it. In this case, she maintained that the reformers were delinquent in their duty as Christians. Like women, they had responsibilities, but were not meeting those obligations. She criticized clergymen for not encouraging the parishioner's political action and parishioners for not acting on their own. She noted that ministers were offering prayers and making sermons on the issue of temperance, but she believed this was not nearly enough. In her perspective, God "took cognizance of political acts as Christian duty" (para 6). This adaptation of the responsibilities argument put her in the position of criticizing and attacking the audience she wanted to persuade, thus creating the potential for dissension and disagreement. This put her credibility in jeopardy. She no longer was a peer of the audience, a "friend," but was a superior and a critic.

Even though Howard Nichols adapted her responsibilities argument and posited that Christian temperance reformers were not meeting their basic obligations, she advocated a solution similar to the ones she made to woman's rights advocates--political action. She encouraged clergymen to recognize and encourage their

members' activism on the question of temperance. She challenged them to enforce a "point of discipline" against all men who voted against the Maine Law. Howard Nichols did not indicate how clergymen were to find out if their male parishioners had voted against the law, nor did she provide any suggestions of exactly what the church should do to those wayward voters. She encouraged lay members not to "wink at sin" and urged them to carry out the principles of the Maine Law by active participation in the movement and in government positions. Howard Nichols recognized that her audience might disagree with her arguments and find her "ultra," but she maintained her superiority by claiming that she might be "in advance upon you on this point" (para 7).

Howard Nichols's "Address to the Whole World Temperance Convention" challenged and impressed her listeners. The audience interrupted her speech with applause on five different occasions, all during the first half of her discourse. She challenged the audience later in the speech with her pointed criticisms and threatened her own image as a typical, feminine woman by asserting her right to criticize church leaders. Not only did she jeopardize her own credibility, but she risked alienating her audience and discouraging their future activism. Regardless, some members of the audience found her speech stirring. In her Reminiscences, she remarked that after her speech she had received "earnest and repeated solicitations"⁹ from men and women to speak and travel for their organizations. It was not until after she was approached by Horace Greely, and had received the approval

of her husband, that Howard Nichols consented to travel across the midwest and speak in support of state legislation similar to the Maine Law.

Address to the Woman's Rights Convention

Four days after her address to the Whole World Temperance Convention, Howard Nichols gave a 20-minute speech at the Woman's Rights Convention, also held in New York City. In this speech, she discussed a number of issues including woman suffrage, women's property rights, temperance, child custody, inheritance laws, and divorce legislation. The number of topics she concerned herself with was reminiscent of "The Responsibilities of Woman" speech given two years earlier. With the exception of woman suffrage, the issues were exactly the same in both speeches. Howard Nichols had distanced herself from the topic of women voting in "The Responsibilities of Woman," but by 1853, she saw the value of woman suffrage and was comfortable discussing it in public.¹⁰

Howard Nichols had three main lines of argument in her speech to the New York Woman's Rights Convention. First, she argued that women could participate in the electoral process by voting and still retain their womanly characteristics. She noted that women were shareholders in many business endeavors and were able to vote on questions in those companies without losing their womanly virtues. Her second line of analysis was that society would benefit if women were allowed to vote. She maintained that, if they had the right, women would vote in temperance legislation and would purify politics with their presence. Howard Nichols's third

argument dealt with the topic of woman's responsibilities and how fulfilling those obligations were hindered by restrictive property, child custody, divorce, and inheritance legislation. The speech was thus a mix of old and new arguments and reflected Howard Nichols's growing sophistication in the woman's rights movement.

When Howard Nichols addressed her audience, her tone was warm, conversational, direct, and humorous. Her purpose for speaking was to entertain and enlighten her listeners on her views of several issues, rather than to make explicit calls for political action or for specific legislation.

The structure of this speech was topical in nature and the issues addressed were very similar to "The Responsibilities of Woman." Howard Nichols referred to woman's property rights, the guardianship of children, the injustices done to women in cases of remarriage, and the effect of laws on widows. However, because she had only 20 minutes to speak, she did not have an opportunity to develop the complex wheel-like structure that was used in "The Responsibilities of Woman."

Howard Nichols used many of the same types of supporting materials in the New York speech as she did in her earlier discourses. She again described conversations she had with unnamed male authorities to supplement her positions. Those men continued to be unable to explain to Howard Nichols (and to the audience) the reasoning behind legislation that restricted women's fulfillment of their familial responsibilities. She said, "I

have conversed with judges and legislators, and tried to learn a reason for these things, but failed to find it" (para 9). As she had done before, Howard Nichols was also able to support her contentions with one long, heart-rending story about a wealthy family in Vermont. In this story, the father had taken one of the female children away from the mother and hired a "vile Frenchman" to care for her. The child ended up being cruelly mistreated. The mother was finally able to win custody of this girl and a second daughter, but the court decided to award custody of a young son to the "unworthy father." Supporting materials used in this discourse that were employed in other speeches included analogies, examples, and two similar jokes. In many ways, the Address to the Woman's Rights Convention was a miniaturized version of the earlier "Responsibilities of Woman" speech. She took a "piece" of the earlier discourse, added several examples, one long story, two jokes and gave a new speech.

Clarina Howard Nichols used four strategies in her speech to the woman's rights convention including the strategy of portraying herself as a typical, feminine woman; the strategy of arguing for rights based on women's sense of responsibility; a strategy designed to link her to the "new" thinking about woman suffrage; and the strategic use of wit and humor. Howard Nichols strove to align herself with typical women in her address to the New York Convention. Her discussion of women's ability to vote as stockholders and still be feminine once again illustrated her concern with the issue of femininity. In addition, she repeated

common ideas about women's potential influence on the political process. She maintained that if women had the right to vote, they would be in favor of temperance laws and other moral reforms. She refuted the argument that "the purity of her nature would be sullied by the base contact into which the exercise of political rights would bring her" (para 4). Instead, Howard Nichols claimed that the voting booth would be "cleaned up" by women's very presence.

A second common strategy used by Howard Nichols was to build identification with her audience by portraying women as responsible, morally competent individuals. Her discussion of the various ways women were harmed by restrictive legislation was a continuation of her oft-used responsibilities argument.

The third and most interesting strategy used in the "Address to the Woman's Rights Convention" was Howard Nichols's justification for woman suffrage. When she started her public advocacy of woman's rights in 1847, Howard Nichols believed that it was improper for women to ask for voting rights. She came to believe that women ought to be able to vote in school district elections and started a petition to that end in 1852. When Howard Nichols requested property rights for women, she always justified her plea by claiming that women had equal responsibilities with men and would be better wives and mothers if they had control over their wages and property. She used this same justification when arguing for educational reform for women. In this speech, Howard Nichols again argued that she "was deprived of the power of

protecting myself and my children, because I do not possess the power which ought to belong to me as a mother" (para 2). However, she preceded this comment with a new justification for having the right to vote.

Now, I will state my reason for desiring to vote--my reason for maintaining that women should have the right to vote; and it is this, that she may have a due control over her own moral, intellectual, and social interests (para 2).

In none of the other speeches had Howard Nichols made so forceful a claim that women needed rights for themselves, apart from their relationships with men and children.

The final strategy employed by Howard Nichols was to put the audience at ease through her use of humor. A good example of her quick wit and unflappable adaptability can be seen in her disarming comments to disruptors in the audience. A group of individuals had begun heckling Howard Nichols in the middle of her speech just as she started discussing women's property rights. To the great surprise of the rest of her audience, Howard Nichols did not ignore the hecklers but addressed them directly and "redefined" their behavior:

As I have only twenty minutes to speak, may I beg that you will be good enough to spare your plaudits. I will better occupy my time in explaining my views, than in receiving your demonstrations of applause (para 7).

The rest of the audience was delighted with Howard Nichols's handling of the incident and broke into laughter and applause.

She continued her discourse and the hecklers remained silent for the rest of the speech.¹¹

In sum, the "Address to the Woman's Rights Convention" was a unique mixture of old and new strategies. Howard Nichols took portions of a successful speech she had given to a similar audience two years previously and reworked it for her new presentation. The discussion of voting rights was significant because of Howard Nichols's earlier public disavowal of woman suffrage. That she justified woman suffrage on the grounds of women needing rights for themselves demonstrated the kinds of transformations that Howard Nichols had undergone, herself.

Conclusions

The three discourses examined in this chapter were presented to audiences that had vastly different needs and expectations of Howard Nichols. These differences have a direct bearing on the conclusions that can be drawn about the speeches. First, Howard Nichols spoke to the Vermont Legislature. The legislators expected to see a "mannish" woman make a spectacle of herself with calls for educational suffrage for women. Instead, Howard Nichols represented the epitome of gentle, feminine gracefulness and broadened her discussion to the need for women's property rights. The audience at the temperance convention, like the Vermont Legislature, was still debating the propriety of female speakers. In that case, Howard Nichols portrayed herself as a typical woman, but one who was willing to lecture publicly and to criticize the

audience for not meeting their Christian obligations to enact temperance legislation. The audience at the woman's rights convention had already settled the issue over whether women should speak in public. As a result, they were treated to a "classic" Howard Nichols speech and got to hear her ideas on woman suffrage. Because these audiences and their expectations of Howard Nichols were so different, the conclusions that can be drawn from the speeches are necessarily narrow. The two conclusions that can be reached, however, have to do with what differentiates the discourses and what unifies them as a group.

The variations among the elements of tone, persona, and purpose demonstrated that Howard Nichols was capable of adapting her speeches to the specifications of her listeners. It reflected her ability to analyze the audience and change her materials to their needs and situations. The three speeches showed that she could portray herself as either a subordinate, a peer, or a superior to her audiences. Her tone ranged from a formal and impersonal speaking style to one that was warm, humorous, and conversational. Her purposes for speaking were uniquely tied to the different audiences she addressed. For the Vermont Legislature, she wanted to show the need for women's property rights. For the temperance convention, she wanted to show women's need for enactment of the Maine Law. For the woman's rights convention, she wanted to illuminate her ideas on the pressing issues in the woman's rights movement. The differences in tone, persona, and purpose reflected good audience analysis and

adaptability rather than an eclectic speaking style.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from the three speeches has to do with what is typical or similar among them. Two of the rhetorical strategies and two types of supporting materials employed by Clarina Howard Nichols connect the discourses into a coherent group. All three speeches are pervaded by Howard Nichols's portrait of herself as a typical woman interested in "womanly" concerns, her calls for legal rights based upon women's responsibilities, and her use of heart-rending stories and unnamed male authorities as sources of evidence. The two strategies served to build her own credibility with the audiences and to make her pleas for woman's rights seem reasonable and worthy of consideration. Howard Nichols's attempts to appear as a typical, feminine woman reflected her understanding of, and solution to, the problems female rhetors faced. The speech she gave to the New York Woman's Rights Convention contained the fewest examples of Howard Nichols's credibility-building strategies. This audience was also the least concerned of the three with the question of whether women should speak in public.

The second strategy that was used in all three discourses was the argument that women should have legal rights in order to better fulfill their social and familial responsibilities. This strategy served to build the credibility of her constituents--women. Howard Nichols always tied her call for rights or legislative action to women's demonstrated responsibility to their families. Her depiction of women as

morally upright, selfless, and interested only in the welfare of their families was designed to cast women in the best possible light. Howard Nichols never argued for political rights in the sense of getting legal privileges, but instead advocated rights for women as a means of undoing past wrongs. In her speech to the Whole World Temperance Convention, Howard Nichols used this strategy to show why women needed the Maine Law to be enacted, but then changed the focus of the argument when she applied it to the temperance reformers. Because she was unable to establish the basic credibility of the temperance activists in that particular case, she ended up strongly criticizing her audience for delinquency in fulfilling their Christian duty.

The two types of supporting materials that united the three speeches were long, emotional stories and unnamed male authorities. These served to build identification with the audience and better enhance Howard Nichols's credibility. The audience perceived that stories or anecdotes were evidence types appropriate for a female speaker. The audience automatically assumed that her male authorities were credible simply because they were men. Like the strategies she used, these types of evidence reflected her understanding of what would move and persuade her audience.

In comparing these three speeches to "The Responsibilities of Woman," one can see a trend emerging. The repetition of the strategies to build her own credibility and to demonstrate the responsibility of her constituents is evident across all four

discourses. These strategies help provide evidence that what Clarina Howard Nichols did in "The Responsibilities of Woman" was not accidental, but represented choices she made in responding to the dilemma faced by women speakers.

Endnotes

¹ Clarina Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences by Clarina I. Howard Nichols," in Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda J. Gage (Eds.), History of Woman Suffrage, V. 1 (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1882), p. 173.

² Ibid., p. 173.

³ Ibid., p. 173.

⁴ Ibid., p. 174.

⁵ Ibid., p. 174.

⁶ The Syracuse Journal wrote of her speech given in that city on November 19, 1853: "But what we wish to say of her at this time is that on Sunday evening she gave the best and most effective Temperance address, at the City Hall, probably ever delivered in this city. She is a grand reasoner and a fine story teller; and it was altogether such an address as only a woman can give. Within the past six weeks in company of Mrs. L.N. Fowler, she has travelled 900 miles in Wisconsin and delivered 43 temperance addresses in favor of the Maine Law . She is certainly one of the most entertaining, effective and instructive speakers of our country, and one of the best logicians. She is as sound in logic as happy in illustration."

⁷ Clarina Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences," p. 178.

⁸ Ibid., p. 179.

⁹ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁰ See Ellen Carol DuBois, Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America 1848-1869, p. 42(n).

¹¹ "Woman's Rights Convention," New-York Daily Times, September 8, 1853, p. 1, col. 2: "Some persons in the gallery, who came for the purpose of interrupting the proceedings, continued making great noise. Mrs. N. requested them to desist, as her twenty minutes could be better occupied than receiving their demonstrations of applause. Laughter."

CHAPTER 5
THE WRITTEN SPEECHES

Introduction

Between the time Clarina Howard Nichols left Vermont for Kansas in 1854 and moved to Pomo, California, in 1871, she regularly campaigned and spoke in favor of the Woman's Rights Movement. In 1859, she participated in the Kansas Constitutional Convention and campaigned for the Constitution's ratification soon thereafter. Howard Nichols travelled throughout Wisconsin and Ohio during the winter of 1860-1861, where she argued for equal political and legal rights for women. When the Civil War broke out, Howard Nichols moved to Washington, D.C., and worked in the Army's quartermaster department. Howard Nichols returned to Kansas in 1866 where she farmed and wrote for local newspapers. In 1867, the Kansas Legislature approved a proposed constitutional amendment granting woman suffrage and put the issue before the voters. The state was inundated with woman's rights leaders including Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell. Howard Nichols canvassed the northeastern Kansas counties and wrote a series of editorials in support of the proposed constitutional amendment. Because her health was beginning to fail, the unsuccessful 1867 Kansas Campaign for Woman Suffrage marked the last time Howard Nichols spoke publicly for the cause of woman's rights. In December of 1871, Howard Nichols moved to Pomo, California, believing that the change in climate

would improve her health.

Although Howard Nichols no longer participated by travelling or speaking for the Woman's Rights Movement, she continued to write letters, editorials, and speeches in its behalf. One of the ways that Howard Nichols was able to maintain her connections to the movement and remain active in it was through a series of written speeches that were read by others at woman's rights conventions. Far from being unique, this manner of communicating was common in the latter years of the movement.¹ Because of her poor health and because the conventions were far away, Howard Nichols sent her written speeches to different woman's rights leaders so they might be presented at the proceedings. In this chapter, I will analyze a group of 12 speeches written by Howard Nichols for presentation at women's rights conventions held between 1863 and 1885. This chapter will focus on the rhetorical patterns and trends among the written speeches and will compare them to the rhetorical strategies which typified Howard Nichols's oral speeches. The analysis will demonstrate that the written speeches have a number of rhetorical similarities, making them cohere as a group, but these characteristics vary greatly from Howard Nichols's oral speeches. Copies of the speeches can be found in Appendix B.

General History and Background

With one exception, all of the written speeches were delivered at annual conventions of the National Woman Suffrage Association and were presented during the final 12 years of Howard

Nichols's life. The exception was the speech written for presentation at the Women's National Loyal League Convention, held during the Civil War on May 14, 1863. The audiences to which Howard Nichols addressed her written remarks, then, remained essentially homogeneous. The National Woman Suffrage Association was the first national woman's rights organization in the country, and was presided over by women such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Although the focus of the organization was to win the right of elective franchise for women, all the prominent feminist issues of the day were debated and discussed at convention meetings. The topics of Howard Nichols's speeches written for the NWSA conventions emphasized her own political agenda, attaining rights for married women, as well as focusing on the NWSA's agenda, which was winning woman suffrage. As in her oral presentations, Howard Nichols wrote about subsidiary issues related to married women: the impact of divorce laws, free love, problems in the marriage relationship, religious interpretations of proper relations between men and women, homestead laws, women's property laws, polygamy, and Mormonism.

Analysis of the Written Speeches

Howard Nichols's ability to adapt her rhetorical styles and strategies to specific audiences was a major component of her successful public speaking career. In like fashion, her ability to adapt rhetorical strategies to fit the constraints of the written speech format makes them distinctive and allows them to be analyzed as a group. The similarities among the speeches included

Howard Nichols's persona of an elder spokeswoman, the rhetorical tones she used that were designed to cheer and counsel members of the conventions and to rebut the claims of woman's rights opponents, her use of legal citations and named male authorities as supporting materials, her discussions of suffrage, the role of men and women in the marriage relationship, her emphasis on the political education of women, and her use of the responsibilities argument. This cluster of characteristics is typical among the written speeches, but are unique when compared to her earlier oral speeches. These differences can be attributed to the homogeneity of the audiences who heard the written speeches and the heterogeneity of the audiences who heard Howard Nichols speak in person. The constraints placed on Howard Nichols by the method of presentation in the written speeches was also a factor. For example, because she knew that the woman reading the written speech at a convention would introduce her and explain her qualifications to the audience, Howard Nichols spent very little time developing her own ethos or clarifying her authority in the introductions. Instead, she moved directly into the discussion of her topic. In addition, the written speeches were much shorter than those she gave herself. Although the length of the written speeches increased when Howard Nichols wrote about a controversial topic, they reflected her recognition of the need for brevity. These were necessary alterations because Howard Nichols faced a very different type of persuasive situation.

The first set of characteristics that typified the group of

written speeches was Howard Nichols's persona and tone. Howard Nichols took on the persona of an elder stateswoman in the discourses and alternated between two different behaviors in that role. In many of the written speeches, she cheered on the audience by encouraging them to persevere in their struggle for woman suffrage and not to see their losses as permanent setbacks. In the other speeches, Howard Nichols strongly denied and rebutted the claims and arguments of opponents of the movement. In both of these scenarios, she cast herself as an aging leader who had years of experience in furthering the cause of woman's rights. Her tone in the speeches, then, ranged from positive, upbeat, wise self-assuredness when supporting the efforts of the audience to angry, cynical, even harsh denial when rebutting the claims of woman's rights opponents. Where, in her oral speeches, Howard Nichols's words were measured and cautious, the written speeches were typified by both robust enthusiasm and strong denial. She wrote in one speech: "Your call to the loyal women of the nation meets my hearty response . . . No sacrifice of right, no conservation of wrong should be the rally cry of mothers."² In another speech she urged the audience to take direct action: "Let us petition and protest and keep their sin against women . . . before them, till the unjust judge 'wearied with our importunity' or ashamed of their injustice . . . seek legitimate rest in a gracious consent."³ And in a speech which was read at the 1876 NWSA convention and at the July 4, 1876, Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, she illuminated the failure of our country's

forefathers to live up to their ideal of democracy and freedom for all people. She concluded her impassioned case for woman suffrage in that speech with the demand "Give us liberty. We are mothers, wives, and daughters of freemen."⁴

Howard Nichols's written discourses were not always upbeat and urging on supporters to the "ultimate triumph."⁵ She wrote a number of speeches in order to deny the arguments of leading anti-suffragists. In one case, she provided a long, sarcastic refutation of a Baptist preacher's assessment of women's proper relationship with men.⁶ In another case, she justified her hot denial of the claim that free love was an idea supported by woman's rights activists with the statement: "the advocates of woman's enfranchisement might rest in the assured success of this work, but for the implication that we assent to charges which we do not repel."⁷ Howard Nichols repeatedly used strong language to enliven the refutations of her written discourses. Her oft-used description of the legal relationship between men and women within marriage was that of women having to succumb to the will of despots. Howard Nichols's emphasis on counseling and cheering the convention audiences as well as providing them with arguments to rebut the claims of their opponents aided her in creating the persona of an experienced elder stateswoman.

The second trend or pattern that is evident in the written speeches is the way that Howard Nichols used supporting materials. Consistent with her role of an elder stateswoman, she relied on her own authority and experience as proof of her arguments. In

addition, she identified and took issue with a number of men and cited legal cases and precedents to substantiate her claims. In the Loyal League speech, Howard Nichols confidently stated her opinion on the roles women were playing in the Civil War:

I have been feeling for months that their activities, in the crisis which is upon us, should not be limited to the scraping of lint and concocting of delicacies for our brave and suffering soldiers. Women, equally with men, should address themselves to the removing of the wicked cause of all this terrible sacrifice of life and its loving, peaceful issues.⁸

She continued to speak with her own authority in a later speech: "I believe I speak for nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand of the advocates of woman suffrage, when I assert that we are not asking for the abolition of civil marriage . . . but for such freedom in the marriage relation."⁹

Howard Nichols's reliance on herself as an authority was limited to those speeches when she attempted to cheer, counsel and advise the delegates at the woman's rights convention. When she wrote about a controversial issue or attacked the claims of opponents she supported her arguments with the names of her detractors, her authorities, and used legal citations to build her case. She referred specifically to a U.S. District Judge,¹⁰ Senator George F. Edmunds,¹¹ Reverend E.B. Hurlburt,¹² Judge Henry Dutton, Chief Justice Zephania Swift, Chief Justice Tapping Reeve, and Chancellor Reuben Hyde Walworth.¹³ In her speech to the 1873 National Woman Suffrage Association convention, Howard

Nichols cited three legal cases to demonstrate the error in reasoning in an article published in the New York Tribune. So concerned was Howard Nichols about fully supporting her arguments in these instances that in one excellently reasoned speech where she wrote from her sickbed, she cautioned that her own comments "must be brief and suggestive rather than logical and conclusive."¹⁴ The conscientious use of named authorities and her reliance on legal citations to help build her case were two kinds of supporting materials that were used frequently in the written speeches. They demonstrated that Howard Nichols was able to differentiate between the effectiveness of different evidence types and could distinguish when their use was appropriate.

Another set of characteristics that typified the group of written speeches had to do with the kinds of arguments Howard Nichols made to the convention audiences: She repeatedly emphasized the importance of attaining woman suffrage and she spoke about the unequal relationship between men and women within marriage. Although she saw the issues as integrally related, these two topics roughly approximated the bifurcated role she played in her persona as an elder stateswoman. That is, the passage of woman suffrage was the stated purpose and raison d'etre for the National Woman Suffrage Association. In her role as counselor, advisor and cheerleader for the conventions, she quite naturally focused on the issue of woman suffrage. However, when she played the role of champion for the cause and refuted charges made by anti-woman's rights activists, she tended to stress men

and women's relationships, primarily their disparate power within marriage, rather than suffrage.

Howard Nichols strongly supported the right of women to vote in her comments to the National Woman Suffrage Association conventions. This support had not always been the case, however. In the early part of Howard Nichols's career, she followed the thinking of most of America and believed that it was improper for women to have the right to vote. Four years after her debut in the woman's rights movement, though, she came to understand that having the vote would provide women with additional avenues for changing unjust laws. It was with this understanding that Howard Nichols lent her support to the woman suffrage cause. In her oral speeches, she purposefully evaded the subject of women voting. Twenty-five years later, the written speeches showed the extent to which she had grown in political sophistication and had changed her perspective. In nine of the twelve speeches, Howard Nichols referred positively to woman's enfranchisement or made explicit calls for woman's right to vote. In her sharply-worded speech to the 1876 Centennial Exposition, she illuminated the benefits attained if woman suffrage was passed and predicted the problems if the effort failed:

We ask enfranchisement in the abiding faith that with our cooperative efforts free government would attain to higher averages of intelligence and virtue; with an innate conviction, that the sequestration of rights in the homes of the republic makes them baneful nurseries of the monopolies, rings, and fraudulent practices that are threatening the national integrity; and that so long as

the fathers sequester the rights of the mothers and train their sons to exercise, and the daughters to submit to the exactions of usurped powers, our government offices will be dens of thieves and the national honor trail in the dust.¹⁵

Over the years, Clarina Howard Nichols changed her position in respect to woman suffrage, yet her rationale for wanting the vote was in keeping with her general philosophy of woman's rights. That is, she believed that by having the right to vote, women would be enfranchised and could correct legal injustices. Her emphasis was on overcoming wrongs done to women rather than on attaining voting rights as a political privilege. In this respect, she viewed suffrage as the means for women to overcome an array of legal disabilities. Howard Nichols believed that the immediate concerns of women's lives were more important than their lack of political privileges. She claimed that:

The need for our reform originated, not in the disfranchisement of women, but in the wrongs growing out of the suppression of the wife's equal personal and property rights in the marriage relation. A candid presentation of the fundamental injustice is the true policy in our efforts for enfranchisement.¹⁶

The argument Howard Nichols made about suffrage correcting inequities suffered by women was precisely the same rationale she had used when appealing for woman's property rights in the beginning of her career. While her overall public support of woman suffrage was a modification of her original beliefs, the justification she cited was an argument in keeping with her

philosophical perspective.

Consistent with her belief that enfranchisement would allow activists to redress legal and practical problems faced by women, she emphasized the inequities of women within marriage. In seven of the twelve written speeches, Howard Nichols dealt directly with the problems of marriage, and argued that woman suffrage would help ameliorate these problems. She asserted that the most extreme of the problems, divorce, was attributable to the lack of rights for women:

There is no doubt that the increase of divorce is due to the combined pressure of autocratic rights in the marriage relation and the aristocracy of sex in government upon the increasing intelligence and conscious moral responsibility of women, who, seeing more clearly are feeling more deeply, that in sequestering the rights of any class of its citizens government is nursing a despotism fruitful of danger to the home and country.¹⁷

Howard Nichols believed that the problems between married men and women were one of the primary wrongs caused by women's disfranchisement, and her strong language reflected this position. She referred to the power of men over women as the "poison of despotism,"¹⁸ and "a tyrannical use of power, which exercised by husbands, fathers, and brothers, is infinitely more intolerable than the despotic acts of a foreign ruler."¹⁹ In a speech in 1873, she called the wife's subjection to her husband "a despotism embalmed in the ceremonies of freedom."²⁰ In another speech, she described marriage as "a personal bankruptcy to the wife,"²¹ and asked the audience to "purge civil marriage of its contempt of

justice."²²

Another trend common to the group of written speeches was Howard Nichols's emphasis on the political education of women. Her comments on this topic usually came as part of her efforts to cheer convention audiences after some defeat. In May of 1881, she wrote:

That our work should be well-done, is of immeasurably more consequence than that it should be done soon. In this view of the subject I see no cause for regret that our demands for the ballot have met rebuffs and postponements, since the educational preparation for its exercise--which is the happy result of the protracted struggle for the ballot--is an invaluable voucher for its intelligent use when won.²³

Four years later she noted that, as a result of activism in the woman's rights struggle, women were "rapidly developing a higher education for themselves than any so generously devised for them on the old plans of limited womanhood."²⁴ Howard Nichols was not merely being coy and offering education as a "consolation prize" to disheartened woman suffragists. Rather, she knew from experience that any education for women which was more than ornamental was a very special, rare gift. She had lived through the time when women were denied access to many high schools, all universities, and had to rely on the generosity of fathers and brothers if they hoped to attain any kind of "higher" education. Howard Nichols's commitment to women's education was also evident in her speech to Loyal League Convention, held during the Civil War. She claimed that women should put meaningful efforts into

ending the war. She predicted that, through their efforts, women would "profit by the lessons being taught at such a fearful cost."²⁵ The repetitive theme of women's political education in the written discourses indicated the number of defeats encountered by the woman's suffrage movement as well as the importance of the topic for Howard Nichols. It showed that she believed the vote was not an end unto itself, but was just the beginning of women's enfranchisement and necessitated "intelligent use when won."²⁶

The final pattern that was typical of the written speeches was Howard Nichols's use of the responsibilities theme. Throughout the written discourses, she pleaded with her convention audiences to be steadfast in meeting their political, familial, social, and civic obligations.²⁷ In an extension of this familiar argument, she made scathing attacks on state and federal governments for not fulfilling the lofty ideals upon which the government was built. Her emphasis on holding various political and judicial office-holders accountable for their sins against women was an oft-repeated argument used in the discourses. In 1877, she proclaimed that the national government "became responsible for all the injustice and oppression which has made woman's record in this Republic an example of hopeless struggle."²⁸ She argued that state and federal governments "are so many despotisms, their will being the law by which we are governed without our consent and against our protests."²⁹ Some of Howard Nichols's most pointed remarks were made at the 1876 Centennial Exposition. Rather than lauding the efforts of the

founding fathers on the country's 100th birthday, she vociferously attacked them:

With singular inconsistency almost their first act, while it secured to one-half the people of the body politic the right to tax and govern themselves, subjected the other half to the very oppression which had culminated in the rebellion of the colonies.³⁰

And

As if left ignobly to illustrate the truths of their noble declarations, no sooner did the enfranchised class enter upon the exercise of their usurped powers than they proceeded to alienate from the mothers of humanity rights declared to be inseparable from humanity itself!³¹

Later in the speech she said that "the sorest trials and most appreciable failures of the government our fathers bequeathed to us, have been the direct and inevitable results of their departures from the principles they enunciated."³²

Howard Nichols's angry attacks on the founding fathers represented the degree of her dismay over what she saw as the abdication of governmental responsibilities. Just as Howard Nichols believed women needed legal rights in order to meet their family and social obligations, she believed the government had to live up to its ideals as a protector of freedom and justice as a precondition for governing. The inconsistent application of its values was an indication that the government was not fulfilling its responsibilities. Although such a clear example of Howard Nichols's wrath was atypical, the application of the

responsibilities theme to the federal and state governments was merely an extension of Howard Nichols's familiar argument.

The patterns or trends that typified the group of written speeches demonstrated that Clarina Howard Nichols saw her function in the woman's rights movement as counseling and cheering the activists who attended the conventions and defending the cause from the attacks of adversaries. These two roles came together within the persona of an elder stateswoman and were reflected in her choice of tone, supporting materials, language use, and argument. They further demonstrated that Howard Nichols remained a careful observer of the rhetorical obstacles posed by her audiences and speaking situations. She continued to analyze the situations and adapt her style and strategies in efforts to persuade the listeners to accept her political perspectives.

Comparison of Written and Oral Speeches

The analysis of the written speeches indicated that Clarina Howard Nichols replicated several rhetorical patterns and trends in her addresses to the National Woman Suffrage Association. In comparing the trends evident in the written speeches to the patterns that were in the oral speeches, one discovers notable similarities and differences. Both types of Howard Nichols's discourses examined the legal inequities faced by women and the various issues surrounding the cause of woman's rights. Both were given to audiences that contained at least some woman's rights activists. The rhetorical patterns that are common to both groups of discourses are Howard Nichols's use of language strategies, her

concern with matters that affected women's practical lives, and her continuation of the responsibilities theme.

Howard Nichols was adept at using a number of language strategies to enliven, enrich, and make vivid the arguments she presented in her oral speeches. This practice was continued in the written speeches and is apparent in her use of repetition, metaphors, and analogies. The strategy of repetition was employed best in her speech to the NWSA on the 30th anniversary of the first National Woman's Rights Convention where Howard Nichols gave her "Responsibilities of Woman" speech. In the anniversary speech, she asserted that the gains of the woman's rights movement would never be turned back:

And now, thirty years later, so great has this "fuss" become, that neither liquor rings nor political rings, nor marriage rings, nor ecclesiastical rings, can ring the new era in woman's life out, and the old era in again.³³

Another language strategy that was employed in both types of discourses was the metaphor. In her remarks to the Centennial Exposition, Howard Nichols referred to the "yoke" thrust upon the necks of women by men, claimed that marriage laws "convert the marriage altar into an executioner's block," and referred to the "matrimonial crypt."³⁴ In the January 16, 1873 speech, she claimed the issue of free love was not washed "white as wool."³⁵ She cautioned woman's rights activists to fight the temptation "to drop the laboring oar and fall into the wake of the movement."³⁶ She predicted that activists were "planting the moral lever that

will overturn the great fundamental wrong."³⁷ She argued that prostitution was the "bitter fruit of the personal subjection of the wife and mother to the passional demands of the husband."³⁸ The inability of the founding fathers to live up to their ideals was likened to being "blind as a bat in the daylight" and had been "hatching crocodiles from the beginning."³⁹ Howard Nichols's use of the metaphor was a device designed to enliven the written and oral speeches.

The third language strategy employed by Clarina Howard Nichols in both the written and oral speeches was her use of the analogy. The most obvious example of this strategy was the repeated comparison between a "despot" and the behavior of men toward their wives. She believed the unbridled power given to men within the marriage relationship was like the intolerable actions of a tyrannical ruler. In similar fashion, her use of this analogy implied that the women of the country should rise up against the legal justification for their husband's rule just as would the citizens of a country actually ruled by a despot would. Howard Nichols made other comparisons in the written speeches including a very strong literal analogy between women's legal condition and the laws upholding slavery: "The civil institutions of marriage in nine-tenths of these United States, is, in its letter, the counterpart of what black slavery was, excepting the power to sell."⁴⁰ Howard Nichols continued the theme of woman's legal condition being like slavery in her May 25, 1877 address. There she compared Frederick Douglass's "color line" to the women

at the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention:

Thirty years ago a handful of women, standing as Douglass stood, on a line that sets humanity at cross purposes with itself, pledged themselves in spirit and faith of conscious unity with God, to work out the legal and political equality of woman.⁴¹

The idea of a line set up to restrict women from full social and political participation was labelled the "dead line" and referred to the legal situation women found themselves in, known as femme covert, or being "dead in the law." For Howard Nichols, marriage was recognized as the "dead line of personal and property rights to women."⁴² The comparison of the dead line for women to the color line for blacks was echoed in other speeches: "They established for disfranchised woman a 'dead line', by retaining the English common law of marriage."⁴³ Howard Nichols's use of the analogic comparison was useful in both the written and oral speeches because it helped create relationships between ideas and situations that had a strong impact on her audiences.

Another rhetorical pattern common to both groups of discourses was Howard Nichols's consistent interest in the practical matters of women's lives. In the oral speeches, she emphasized women's economic well-being and tried to see that women had the legal rights necessary to meet their familial and social obligations. Her interest in property rights, divorce laws, child custody matters, and inheritance laws were examples of this focus. By the time Howard Nichols penned the written speeches, many of the reforms she had lobbied for earlier in her life had been

attained. Her interest in improving women's practical lives was narrowed in the written speeches to her emphasis on political education and the relationship between men and women who were married.

Howard Nichols advocacy of women's political education was clearly a continuation of her beliefs that women should educate themselves in whatever ways possible. In her "Responsibilities of Woman" speech, she recognized that avenues for women's academic education were limited and claimed that "the world in which we live and act . . . is the best school for woman as well as man. Practical life furnishes the best discipline for our powers."⁴⁴ She went on to note that women's physical beauty was a transient characteristic and therefore encouraged women to learn and educate themselves as best they could. In the written speeches, Howard Nichols urged the woman's rights audiences to take their lessons from the defeats that they had encountered, noting that their losses were also transitional. Thus, her positive encouragement for the audiences to learn from their mistakes should be viewed as a continuation of her emphasis on women's practical lives.

For Clarina Howard Nichols, the issues of marriage and divorce were another extension of her belief that woman's rights should speak to the everyday needs of women. Even though she believed women were fully capable of exercising full political and social duties, their responsibilities as wives and mothers remained a central concern of hers. Thus, her emphasis on marriage and divorce in the written speeches can be seen as a

rhetorical pattern continued from the oral speeches. In 1880, she wrote:

We will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel, we will keep our home spheres bright and train the children that we bear to be temperate and pure, only take from us the legal disabilities that have made us weak to resist, and men strong to oppress . . . 'Only let us'--the women of the nation--'be called' on the roll of enfranchised citizens.⁴⁵

Comments such as this demonstrate that, in spite of her new advocacy of suffrage and her increasingly radical tone, Howard Nichols's interests remained sharply focused on women's economic situations and their roles as wives and mothers.

The final rhetorical pattern common to both the oral and written speeches was Howard Nichols's responsibilities argument. The speech "The Responsibilities of Woman" remains the most clearly enunciated explication of her ideas regarding this issue. In her other oral speeches, particularly her address to the Whole World Temperance Convention, Howard Nichols altered the argument in order to criticize the temperance activists for not living up to what she saw as their Christian obligations. In the written speeches, she once again altered the argument to criticize the founding fathers of the country for not meeting the lofty ideals upon which the government was based. The responsibilities argument underwent a great deal of change since its debut at the 1851 Worcester convention. Howard Nichols's theme changed from being a conservative justification for her calls for woman's rights to the basis for vociferous attacks on governmental

inconsistencies. Nevertheless, it was a clear thematic pattern that can be traced through both the oral and written discourses.

Just as there are a number of similarities between Clarina Howard Nichols's written and oral speeches, there are also notable differences. One can view the distinctions between the two groups of discourses in terms of those trends or characteristics in the oral speeches that Howard Nichols did not continue in the written speeches, as well as those trends that were evident only in the written speeches. The rhetorical patterns that were not repeated in the written speeches were her portrayal of herself as a typical, feminine woman, the wheel-like structure, and her use of humor. The trend that was begun in the written discourses was her strong advocacy of woman suffrage.

Clarina Howard Nichols responded to the rhetorical obstacles created by the written speeches in significantly different ways than she responded to the obstacles created by the oral presentations. The primary difference was dropping the emphasis on her femininity. The audiences at her oral speeches expected that Howard Nichols would be a masculine, unsexed woman because she spoke to mixed groups of men and women. As a public speaker, she violated the norms which dictated that women were to be domestic, submissive, and non-authoritative. In response to these fears and expectations on the part of her audience, Howard Nichols went to great lengths to establish that she was a traditionally feminine or true woman. She accomplished this by telling the audiences that she was a wife and mother, by taking a womanly role

in her speeches, and by choosing rhetorical strategies that did not violate the audience's sense of propriety.

In contrast to the oral discourses, Howard Nichols's persona, tone, and choice of supporting materials indicated that she did not feel compelled to justify her womanhood for these audiences. The depiction of herself as a wife and mother changed dramatically in the written speeches to a persona of an elder stateswoman. Although her interest in the marriage relationship was particularly strong in the written speeches, her feminine role as a moral leader and supporter of her family was transformed into a more traditionally masculine one of an advisor and champion for the movement. Her angry, sarcastic tone also indicated that Howard Nichols was no longer concerned with appearing to be a traditional woman. Her use of supporting materials demonstrated that her primary interest was in being clear and logical as a communicator, rather than in trying to avoid controversy. Howard Nichols made a number of clear references to herself in the written speeches, including discussions of her health. She no longer used the long examples or heart-rending stories of people she knew personally to support her arguments. The evidence that she did employ consisted of opinions based upon her own experience and authority, named men, and clear legal citations. These three types of supporting materials provided clear proof that Clarina Howard Nichols was far less interested in assuaging her audience's questions of her womanhood than when she presented her oral speeches.

A second difference in the two groups of speeches is their structure. The complex, wheel-like structure so prominent in "The Responsibilities of Woman" was dropped in the written discourses. The wheel-like structure was an organizational style that grew out of Howard Nichols's need to employ supporting materials that were appropriate for the image of a traditional woman that she wanted to maintain. But because Howard Nichols was no longer concerned with proving her femininity, her speech structure, like her other rhetorical strategies, was transformed. The structure of the written discourses were very simple and very direct. They tended to be topical in nature, and her points were made without great elaboration. It was much more concise for her to say "Judge Henry Dutton" than "a respected jurist with whom I spoke," as was common in the oral speeches. Howard Nichols stopped using the beautiful but lengthy wheel-like format in the written discourses in order to hold the audience's attention at the NWSA conventions.

The final rhetorical technique that existed in the oral speeches but not in the written ones was Howard Nichols's use of humor. The jokes and plays on words that were so prevalent in the oral speeches were omitted in the later texts. Again, this change reflected the need for brevity and directness in speeches written to be read by others at conventions with full agendas.

These changes in speaking style can almost totally be attributed to the different speaking situations that Clarina Howard Nichols faced. She knew that the audiences who would hear her written speeches would be familiar with her work. Unlike the

early woman's rights conventions that she attended, the later ones were composed primarily of supporters of the cause rather than curious onlookers and hecklers. Not only had the audiences become more familiar with her ideas, they had also become more accepting of women speakers. The need to demonstrate one's femininity was still very real for female rhetors in the 1880's, but the stigma associated with speaking in public had diminished since the 1850's. The rhetorical trends that were discontinued in the written speeches reflected Howard Nichols's noted reputation as a woman's rights activist and her adaptation to different rhetorical obstacles.

The written speeches differed from the oral speeches, not only in those rhetorical patterns that Howard Nichols discontinued, but also in her growing advocacy of woman suffrage. As Howard Nichols's work in the movement continued over the years, she moved from disapproving to cautious support to full endorsement of the suffrage issue. She began to see and describe the woman's suffrage movement as a kind of holy battle that, with perseverance and God's help, could only be won. In 1878 she claimed: "We have broken the lines of our opponents at all points, and got possession of inside positions which assure the whole world of our ultimate triumph."⁴⁶ Two years later she noted that a new generation of activists would take the place of the old guard: "The leaders in the Suffrage movement may all die--two to one will spring from the ranks to bear aloft the glorious banner of a free womanhood . . . neither illness nor

distance can weaken my love for our cause and its faithful armor-bearers--Heaven bless us all!"⁴⁷ Clarina Howard Nichols's advocacy of woman suffrage continued unabated until she died. Four days before her death she wrote one final, brief speech to the National Woman Suffrage Association: "My last words in your (our) good work for humanity through its author is, 'God is with us--there can be no failure, and no defeat outside ourselves that will not roll up the floodwood and rush away every obstruction,'"⁴⁸ Howard Nichols's support of woman's right to vote constituted a dramatic philosophical shift in her career which is evident in the different treatment of this issue in the written and oral discourses.

Conclusions

Based upon the analysis of rhetorical patterns discovered in the written speeches, five conclusions can be drawn: 1) the language strategies remained a consistent rhetorical factor in both groups of discourses; 2) the theme of responsibilities was reiterated from the written speeches, but was adapted in order to criticize the government for its ineptness and inability to live up to its ideals; 3) Howard Nichols's interest in the practical concerns of women's lives remained as an issue of importance for her; 4) issues about her femininity were overemphasized in the oral speeches, but were not raised in the written ones; and 5) Howard Nichols's advocacy of woman's suffrage reflected a significant change in her activism, but was tied to her concern over the everyday lives of women and children.

Howard Nichols used a wide variety of language strategies in the written and oral discourses. These techniques were employed to serve the same functions, namely to illuminate, to vivify, and to make clear her ideas on woman's rights. They indicate the extent of Howard Nichols's flexibility as a rhetor and her capacity for persuading audiences using both written and oral mediums. The richness and diversity of her aesthetic strategies demonstrate that she was a master of the language and could adapt to differing audiences and rhetorical obstacles.

Howard Nichols's interest in the practical concerns of women's lives remained in sharp focus in the written and oral speeches. Although she seemed to be addressing herself to a dizzying array of woman's rights issues, they were all connected by Howard Nichols's belief that the laws should work to redress the wrongs perpetrated against women. She endorsed the woman suffrage issue later in her career because she came to see it as a means to help women gain control over their own lives in ways beyond vote casting.

The familiar theme of woman's responsibilities was continued in the written speeches, but was primarily adapted as a way to criticize the government. In her perspective women needed certain legislative and legal redress as a way of better meeting their responsibilities as wives and mothers. In the written speeches, however, the argument was adapted and modified so that Howard Nichols could chastize the founding fathers for not living up to the promises of the Revolution.

The issue of Howard Nichols's femininity was almost totally dropped in the written speeches after being strongly emphasized in the oral speeches. In the written speeches, she spoke as if it were of no concern whatsoever. This dramatic change can be explained in part by the different speaking situations faced by Howard Nichols as well as her long years in the movement which helped her to establish her credibility as a traditional, feminine woman. A final explanation might be the state of Howard Nichols's health at the time she penned the written speeches. On six different occasions, she referred to her ill health and spoke very frankly about her impending death.⁴⁹ It may well have been that because of her poor health and her long tour of duty in the woman's rights movement, she no longer had the energy nor saw the necessity for emphasizing her femininity.

The final conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis of the written and oral discourses concerns Howard Nichols's calls for woman suffrage in the written speeches. Her startling reversal on this issue can be explained by her increasing political sophistication as she got older. She saw that by having the right to vote, women could more directly control the issues that affected their everyday lives. Her reversal may also have been a reflection of the changing rhetorical situation. Just as she no longer felt compelled to emphasize her femininity, she may have felt the "impropriety" of women voting was an anachronism of earlier times. To be sure, woman suffrage became the focus of the entire woman's rights movement in the latter half of the 19th

century. To have continued in her belief that it was improper for women to vote would have put in her opposition to her friends and coworkers in the movement. For whatever reason that she changed her perspective, Clarina Howard Nichols's advocacy of woman suffrage remained constant over the last twelve years of her life.

The five conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis of the written and oral speeches reflect Howard Nichols's dogged commitment to some woman's rights issues and themes and her ability to adapt her styles and strategies to fit changing rhetorical situations. In the final chapter, I will analyze the conclusions drawn about Howard Nichols's career as an orator and a female rhetor, and will offer suggestions for further research.

Endnotes

- ¹ Miriam Gurko, The Ladies of Seneca Falls: The Birth of the Woman's Rights Movement (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 160.
- ² Clarina Howard Nichols to the Women's National Loyal League Convention, May 4, 1863, p. 1.
- ³ Clarina Howard Nichols to the National Woman Suffrage Association, May 25-26, 1877, p. 2.
- ⁴ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, July 19, 1876, P. 2.
- ⁵ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, July 19, 1878, p. 1.
- ⁶ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, May 7-9, 1879, pp. 2-4.
- ⁷ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, January 16-17, 1873.
- ⁸ Clarina Howard Nichols to the Women's National Loyal League Convention, May 4, 1863, p. 1.
- ⁹ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, January 16-17, 1873.
- ¹⁰ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, May 26-27, 1881.
- ¹¹ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, March 4-7, 1884.
- ¹² Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, May 7-9, 1879.
- ¹³ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, January 16-17, 1873.
- ¹⁴ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, May 7-9, 1879.
- ¹⁵ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, July 19, 1876, pp. 2-3.
- ¹⁶ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, May 26-27, 1881, p. 1.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p. 2.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 2.
- ¹⁹ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, July 19, 1876.
- ²⁰ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, January 16-17, 1873.
- ²¹ Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, January 21-22, 1880.

- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, May 26-27, 1881, p.
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- 24 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, March 4-7, 1884, p.
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- 25 Clarina Howard Nichols to the National Loyal League
Convention, May 4, 1863, p. 1.
- 26 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA May 26-27, 1881, p. 1.
- 27 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, January 16-17, 1873,
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- 28 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, May 25-26, 1877, pp.
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- 29 Ibid., p. 1.
- 30 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, July 19, 1876, p. 1.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid., p. 2.
- 33 Clarina Howard Nichols to the Massachusetts Woman
Suffrage Association, October 20, 1880, p. 1.
- 34 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, July 19, 1876.
- 35 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, January 16-17, 1873,
p. 1.
- 36 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, May 26-27, 1881, p.
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- 37 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, May 7-9, 1879, p. 1.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, March 4-7, 1884, p.
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- 40 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, January 16, 1873, p.
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- 41 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, May 25-26, 1877, p.
1.
- 42 Ibid., p. 2.

- 43 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, July 19, 1876.
- 44 Clarina Howard Nichols, "The Responsibilities of Woman," Series of Woman's Rights Tracts (Rochester, NY: Steam Press of Curtis, Butts, and Co., 1853).
- 45 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, May 25-26, 1880, p. 1.
- 46 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, July 19, 1878, p. 1.
- 47 Clarina Howard Nichols to the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association, October 20, 1880, p. 1.
- 48 Clarina Howard Nichols to the NWSA, January 20, 1885, p. 1.
- 49 See, for example, the written speeches dated May 7-9, 1879, October 20, 1880, May 26-27, 1881, and January 20, 1885.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

This research project was undertaken in order to answer two major questions about the rhetorical styles and strategies of Clarina Howard Nichols. First, in what ways was Howard Nichols able to overcome the suspicions and hostilities of her audiences in order to persuade them of her woman's rights positions? Second, was Clarina Howard Nichols able to meet the contradictory demands of her audiences to be both logical and traditionally feminine? Close textual analyses of the oral and written speeches were made in order to identify the rhetorical patterns and strategies that were typically employed by Howard Nichols.

In answer to the first question posed by the research, the analyses demonstrated that Clarina Howard Nichols used a variety of strategies in order to put her audiences at ease and overcome their hostility. Her emphasis on femininity, her nonverbal communication, her theme of responsibilities, and her use of humor were all strategies used to move the audience's attention away from her violations of social norms and her authoritative stance, which were inherent in the public speaking situation.

Howard Nichols emphasized her femininity through her speaking tone, her choice of supporting materials, her organization of the discourses, her interest in the practical concerns of women's lives, and her reminders to the audience that she was a wife and mother. She also demonstrated to her audiences that she was a nonthreatening woman through several nonverbal methods including

her maintenance of a "disarming image of domesticity."¹ Her fondness for knitting in public brought Howard Nichols the kind of attention that was especially useful in overcoming the audience's suspicions that she was a masculine or unsexed woman. The "Address to the Vermont Legislators" provides a very clear example of exaggerated hostility and shows that Howard Nichols could easily portray herself as traditionally feminine in order to help dissipate that hostility. In the speech to the legislators, Howard Nichols's voice faltered and she clutched the speaking platform as if she were about to faint. Finally she was able to pull herself together again and finish the speech with a flourish. Howard Nichols's description of this event prompted one writer to surmise that it was a performance or a put-on.² In addition to what might have been "staged" nonverbal techniques, Howard Nichols always dressed in a feminine, conservative manner. One newspaper writer commented: "She . . . was altogether the most Womanly speaker at the Convention."³ Although she was strongly in favor of women wearing the Bloomer costume, she was keenly aware of the ridicule it brought the women in the movement.

Another way that Howard Nichols helped to allay the fears and hostilities of her audiences was through the development of her trademark responsibilities theme. She made calls for woman's rights reforms on the basis of allowing women to better fulfill their social and familial responsibilities. This was a comforting argument for her listeners because it indicated that she was not interested in encouraging women to abdicate their roles as wives

and mothers, but, rather, to strengthen their ability to meet their obligations. These arguments were cautious and measured, even conservative, when compared to other calls for woman's rights based on the inherent humanness of women.

A final important strategy employed by Howard Nichols to decrease audience hostility was with her gentle sense of humor. By making her listeners laugh, she was able to create identification with them so they could be more comfortable with her role as a speaker. She relied on self-effacing humor and plays on words, rather than getting laughs at the expense of others.

Howard Nichols relied upon a number of rhetorical strategies in her oral presentations to decrease the hostility of her audiences. However, these techniques were practically nonexistent in the written discourses. The audiences who heard the written speeches read by other women consisted of homogeneous groups of committed woman's rights activists. Therefore, they were probably not considered "hostile" by Howard Nichols and did not require such careful, defensive techniques. In the oral discourses, she reinforced her ethos by accentuating her role as a typical, traditional woman and employing strategies that put her audiences at ease. In the written speeches, she took on the persona of an elder stateswoman in an effort to fit the values of those particular audiences. Howard Nichols overcame the suspicions and hostilities of her audiences by being aware of the values to which they ascribed and adapting her strategies to fit them.

The second question posed by the research was to determine if Howard Nichols was able to meet the contradictory demands placed on female rhetors to be both logical and feminine. Based upon the analyses of the oral and written speeches, it appears that she was able to meet these demands and be persuasive. The oral speeches provide the clearest examples of how Howard Nichols overcame the obstacles. In those speeches, she accentuated her feminine characteristics, while arguing in a clear, discursive fashion. The written speeches neither affirm nor negate this conclusion. However, they are particularly illustrative of Howard Nichols's logical abilities. The written speeches demonstrate that when it was no longer necessary to prove her femininity to a skeptical audience, Howard Nichols felt free to take on the conventionally masculine roles of counselor and champion. This conclusion must be qualified by noting the limited number of speeches upon which it is based. Four oral discourses is a small number from which to draw a conclusion. However, due to the limited number of extant speech texts, they are the only available primary data. The strong rhetorical similarities of the oral speech texts and commentaries from observers provide some evidence that Howard Nichols's strategies in other speaking situations were comparable. Her capacity to be both logical and feminine was lauded by the Syracuse Journal in 1853:

But what we wish to say of her at this time is that on Sunday evening she gave the best and most effective Temperance Address, at the City Hall, probably ever delivered in this city. She is a grand reasoner and a fine story

teller; and it was altogether such an address as only a woman can give She is certainly one of the most entertaining, effective and instructive speakers of our country and one of the best logicians. She⁴ is as sound in logic as happy in illustration.

Endnotes

¹ Blanche G. Hersh, The Slavery of Sex: Feminist Abolitionists in America (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), p. 160.

² "Woman's Rights Convention," New-York Daily Tribune, October 17, 1851, pp. 7-8.

³ Letter received from T. Seymour Bassett, August 15, 1984.

⁴ Syracuse Journal, November 19th, 1853.

APPENDIX A

"The Responsibilities of Woman"
 Address to the Woman's Rights Convention
 October 15, 1851

1. My friends, I have made no preparation to address you. I left home, feeling that, if I had anything to do here, I should have the grace given me to do it; or if there should be any branch of the subject not sufficiently presented, I would present it. And now, friends, in following so many speakers, who have so well occupied the ground, I will come as a gleaner, and be as a Ruth among my fellow-laborers.

2. I commenced life with the most refined notions of woman's sphere. My pride of womanhood lay within this nice sphere. I know not how it was,--perhaps because I am of mountain growth,--but I could, even then, see over the barriers of that sphere, and see that, however easy it might be for me to keep within it, as a daughter, a great majority of women were outside its boundaries; driven thither by their own, or invited by the necessities and interests of those they loved. I saw our farmers' wives,--women esteemed for every womanly virtue,--impelled by emergencies, helping their husbands in labors excluded from the modern woman's sphere. I was witness, on one occasion, to a wife's helping her husband--who was ill and of feeble strength, and too poor to hire--to pile the logs, preparatory to clearing the ground that was to grow their daily bread; and my sympathies, which recognized in her act the self-sacrificing love of woman, forbade that I should judge her out of her sphere. For I felt in my heart that, if I were a wife and loved my husband, I, too, would help him when he needed help, even if it were to roll logs; and what true-hearted woman would not do the same?

3. But, friends, it is only since I have met the varied responsibilities of life, that I have comprehended woman's sphere; and I have come to regard it as lying within the whole circumference of humanity. If, as is claimed by the most ultra opponents of the wife's legal individuality, claimed as a conclusive argument in favor of her legal nonentity, the interests of the parties are identical, then I claim, as a legitimate conclusion, that their spheres are also identical. For interests determine duties, and duties are the landmarks of spheres. Wherever a man may rightfully go, it is proper that woman should go, and share his responsibilities. Wherever my husband goes, thither would I follow him, if to the battle-field. No, I would not follow him there; I would hold him back by his coat-skirts, and say, "Husband, this is wrong. What will you gain by war? It will cost as much money to fight for a bag of gold, or a lot of land, as it will to pay the difference; and if you fight, our harvests are wasted, our hearths made desolate, our homes filled with sorrow, and vice and immorality roll back upon us from the fields of human slaughter." This is the way I would follow my husband where he cannot rightfully go.

4. But I may not dwell longer on woman's sphere. I shall say very little of woman's rights; but I would lay the axe at the root of the tree. I would impress upon you woman's responsibilities, and the means fitly to discharge them before Heaven.
5. I stand before you, a wife, a mother, a sister, a daughter; filling every relation that is given to woman to fill. And by the token that I have a husband, a father and brothers, whom I revere for their manliness, and love for their tenderness, I may speak to you with confidence, and say, I respect manhood. I love it when it aspires to the high destiny which God has opened to it. And it is because I have confidence in manhood, that I am here to press upon it the claims of womanhood. My first claim for woman is the means of education, that she may understand and be able to meet her responsibilities.
6. We are told very much of "Woman's Mission." Well, every mission supposes a missionary. Every missionary whom God sends out, every being who is called of God to labor in the vineyard of humanity, recognizes his call before the world does. Not the world--not even God's chosen people--recognized the mission of his Son, till he had proclaimed that mission, and sealed it with his dying testimony. And the world has not yet fully recognized the saving power of the mission of Jesus Christ. Now, if woman has a mission, she must first feel the struggle of the missionary in her own soul, and reveal it to her brother man, before the world will comprehend her claims, and accept her mission. Let her, then, say to man, "Here, God has committed to me the little tender infant to be developed in body and mind to the maturity of manhood, womanhood, and I am ignorant of the means for accomplishing either. Give me knowledge, instruction, that I may develop its powers, prevent disease, and teach it the laws of its mental and physical organism." It is you, fathers, husbands, who are responsible for this instruction; your happiness is equally involved with ours. Yourselves must reap the harvest of our ignorance or knowledge. If we suffer, you suffer also; both must suffer or rejoice in our mutual offspring.
7. I have introduced this subject of woman's responsibilities, that I might, if possible, impress upon you a conviction of the expediency and duty of yielding our right to the means that will enable us to be the helpers of men, in the true sense of helpers. A gentleman said to me, not long since, "I like your woman's rights, since I find it is the right of women to be good for something and help their husbands." Now, I do not understand the term helpmeet, as applied to woman, to imply all that has come to be regarded as within its signification. I do not understand that we are at liberty to help men to the devil. (Loud cheering.) I believe it is our mission to help them heavenward, to the full development and right enjoyment of their being.

8. I would say, in reference to the rights of woman, it has come to be forgotten that, as the mother of the race, her rights are the rights of men also, the rights of her sons. As a mother, I may speak to you, freemen, fathers, of the rights of my sons--of every mother's sons--to the most perfect and vigorous development of their energies which the mother can secure to them by the application and through the use of all her God-given powers of body or of mind. It is in behalf of our sons, the future men of the republic, as well as for our daughters, its future mothers, that we claim the full development of our energies by education, and legal protection in the control of all the issues and profits of ourselves, called property.
9. As a parent, I have educated myself with reference to the wants of my children, that if, by the bereavements of life, I am left their sole parent, I can train them to be good and useful citizens. Such bereavement has left me the sole parent of sons by a first marriage. And how do the laws of the state protect the right of these sons to their mother's fostering care? The laws say that, having married again, I am a legal nonentity, and cannot "give bonds" for the faithful discharge of my maternal duties; therefore I shall not be their guardian. Having, in the first instance, robbed me of the property qualification for giving bonds, alienating my right to the control of my own earnings, the state makes its own injustice the ground for defrauding myself and children of the mutual benefits of our God-ordained relations; and others, destitute of every qualification and motive which my mother's love ensures to them, may "give bonds" and become the legal guardians of my children!
10. I address myself to you, fathers, I appeal to every man who has lived a half-century, if the mother is not the most faithful guardian of her children's interests? If you were going on a long journey, to be absent for years, in the prosecution of business, or in the army or navy, would you exclude your wives from the care and guardianship of your children? Would you place them and the means for their support in any other hands than the mother's? If you would, you have married beneath yourselves. (Cheers.) Then I ask you how it happens that, when you die, your estates are cut up, and your children, and the means for their support, consigned to others' guardianship, by laws which yourselves have made or sworn to defend. Do you reply that women are not qualified by education for the business transactions involved in such guardianship? It is for this I ask that they may be educated. Yourselves must educate your wives in the conduct of your business. My friends, love is the best teacher in the world. Fathers, husbands, you do not know how fast you can teach, nor what apt scholars you will find in your wives and daughters, if, with loving confidences, you call them to your aid, and teach them those things in which they can aid you, and acquire the knowledge, which is "power," to benefit those they love. Would it not soothe your sick bed, would it not pluck thorns from your dying pillow,

to confide in your wife that she could conduct the business on which your family relies for support, and, in case of your death, keep your children together, and educate them to go out into the world with habits of self-reliance and self-dependence? And do you know that, in withholding from your companions the knowledge and inducements which would fit them thus to share your cares, and relieve you in the emergencies of business, you deny them the richest rewards of affection? for "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Do you know that they would only cling the closer to you in the stern conflicts of life, if they were thus taught that you do not undervalue their devotion and despise their ability? Call woman to your side in the loving confidence of equal interests and equal responsibilities, and she will never fail you.

11. But I would return to woman's responsibilities, and the laws that alienate her means to discharge them. And here let me call your attention to my position, that the law which alienates the wife's right to the control of her own property, her own earnings, lies at the foundation of all her social and legal wrongs. I have already shown you how the alienation of this right defrauds her of the legal guardianship of her children, in case of the father's death. I need not tell you, who see it every day in the wretched family of the drunkard, that it defrauds her of the means of discharging her responsibilities to her children and to society during the husband's life, when he proves recreant to his obligations, and consumes her earnings in the indulgence of idle and sinful habits. I know it is claimed by many, as a reason why this law should not be disturbed, that it is only the wives of reckless and improvident husbands who suffer under its operation. But, friends, I stand here prepared to show that, as an unjust law of general application, it is even more fruitful of suffering to the wives of what are called good husbands,—husbands who love and honor their wives while living, but, dying, leave them and their maternal sympathies to the dissecting-knife of the law. I refer you to the legal provision for the widow. The law gives her the use only of one third of the estate which they have accumulated by their joint industry. I speak of the real estate; for, in the majority of estates, the personal property is expended in paying the debts and meeting the expenses of settlement. Now, I appeal to any man here, whose estate is sufficient to support either or both in comfort, and give them Christian burial, and yet is so limited that the use of one third of it will support neither, whether his wife's interests are equally protected with his own, by the laws which "settle" his estate in the event of his dying first. Let me tell you a story to illustrate the "support" which, it is claimed, compensates the wife for the alienation of her earnings to the control of the husband. In my native town lived a single sister, of middle age. She had accumulated something, for she was capable in all the handicrafts pursued by women of her class. She married a worthy man, poor in this world's goods, and whose children were all settled in homes of their own. She applied her means, and, by the persevering use of her faculties,

they secured a snug home, valued at some five hundred dollars, he doing what his feeble health permitted towards the common interest. In the course of years he died, and two thirds of that estate was divided among his grown-up children; one third remaining to her. No, she could only have the use of one third, and must keep it in good repair,--the law said so! The use of less than two hundred dollars in a homestead, on condition of "keeping it in good repair," was the legal pittance of this poor woman, to whom, with the infirmities of age, had come the desolation of utter bereavement! The old lady patched and toiled, beautiful in her scrupulous cleanliness. The neighbors remembered her, and many a choice bit found its way to her table. At length she was found in her bed paralyzed; and never, to the day of her death,--three years,--could she lift her hand or make known the simplest want of her nature; and yet her countenance was agonized with the appeals of a clear and sound intellect. And now, friends, how did the laws support and protect this poor widow? I will tell you. They set her up at auction, and struck her off to the man who had a heart to keep her at the cheapest rate! Three years she enjoyed the pauper's support, then died; and when the decent forms of a pauper's burial were over, that third was divided--as had been the other two thirds--among her husband's "well-to-do" children. (Great sensation.) And is it for such protection that the love of fathers, brothers, husbands, "represents" woman in the legislative halls of the freest people on earth? O, release to us our own, that we may protect ourselves, and we will bless you! If this old lady had died first, the laws would have protected her husband in appropriating the entire estate to his comfort or his pleasure! I asked a man, learned and experienced in jurisprudence by a half-century's discharge of the duties of legislator, administrator, guardian and probate judge, why the widow is denied absolute control of her third, there being no danger of creating "separate interests" when the husband is in his grave. He replied that it was to prevent a second husband from obtaining possession of the property of a first, to the defrauding of his children, which would be the result if the widow married again. Here, the law giving the control of the wife's earnings to the husband is made legal reason for cutting her off at his death with a pittance, so paltry, that, if too infirm to eke out a support by labor, she becomes a pauper! For if the law did not give the wife's earnings to the control and possession of a first husband, it would have no such excuse for excluding the second husband, or for defrauding herself, and her children by a subsequent marriage, of her earnings in the estate of the first husband. But having legalized the husband's claim to the wife's earnings, by a law of universal application, our legislators have come to legislate for widows on the ground that they have no property rights in the estates which have swallowed up their entire earnings! We ask for equal property rights, by the repeal of the laws which divert the earnings of the wife from herself and her heirs.

12. O men! in the enjoyment of well-secured property rights, you

beautify your snug homesteads, and say within your hearts, "Here I may sit under my own vine and fig-tree; here have I made the home of my old age." And it never occurs to you that no such blissful feeling of security finds rest in the bosom of your wives. The wife of a small householder reflects that if her husband should be taken from her by death, that home must be divided, and a corner in the kitchen, a corner in the garret, and a "privilege" in the cellar, be set off to her use, and she called, in legal phrase, an "incumbrance!" (Great sensation.) Or if she chooses the alternative of renting her fractional accommodations, and removing to other quarters, her sweet home-associations--all that is left of her wedded love--are riven. The fireside that had been hallowed by family endearments, the chair vacant to other eyes, but to hers occupied by the loved husband still, all are desecrated by the law that drives her from the home which she had toiled and sacrificed to win for herself and loved ones, and she goes out to die under a vine and a fig-tree strange to her affections and, it may be, as in the case before mentioned, to find them wither away like Jonah's gourd, in absolute pauperism!

13. But I will tell you a story illustrating how women view these things. It is not long since a gentleman of my acquaintance, who had often been heard to give his wife credit for having contributed equally to his success in laying up a property, was admonished by disease of the propriety of making a "will." He called his wife to him, and addressed her thus: "My dear, I have been thinking that the care of a third of my estate will be a burden to you, and that it will be better for you to have an annuity equal to your personal wants, and divide the rest among the children. The boys will supply you, if you should, from any unforeseen circumstance, need more. You can trust our boys to do what is right." "O yes, my dear," replied the wife, "we have excellent boys. You entrust to them the care of your business; and I could let them act as my agents in the care of my thirds. And I think, husband, that will be better. For there is this to be considered: We have other children, and differences obtain in their circumstances. You have seen these things, and, when one and another needed, you have opened your purse and given them help. When you are gone, there may still occur these opportunities for aiding them, and I should be glad to have it in my power to do as you have done. Besides, I have sometimes thought you had not done so well by the girls; and it would be very grateful to my feelings to make up the difference from my share of what our mutual efforts have accumulated."
14. Now, brothers, I appeal to you, whether you do not as much enjoy conferring benefits as receiving them? You have a wife whom you love. You present her with a dress, perhaps. And how rich you feel, that your love can give gifts! Women like to receive presents of dresses; I enjoy to have my husband give me dresses. (Laughter.) And women like to give presents to their husbands--a pair of slippers, or something of that sort. But they have no

money of their own, and their thought is, "If I give my husband this, he will say to himself, It's of no account; it all comes out of my pocket in the end!" That is the feeling which rankles in the hearts of wives, whose provident husbands do not dream that they are not better content with gifts than their rights. We like, all of us, to give good gifts to those we love; but we do not want our husbands to give us something to give back to them. We wish to feel, and have them feel, that our own good right hands have won for them the gift prompted by our affection; and that we are conferring, from our own resources, the same pleasure and happiness which they confer on us by benefits given. (Great cheering.)

15. But I had not exhausted the wrongs growing out of this alienation of the wife's right to her earnings. There is a law in Vermont--and I think it obtains in its leading features in most, if not all, the states of the Union--giving to the widow, whose husband dies childless (she may or may not be the mother of children by a former marriage), a certain portion of the estate, and the remaining portion to his heirs. Till the autumn of 1850, a Vermont widow, in such cases, had only one half the estate, however small; the other half was set off to her husband's heirs, if he had any; but, if he had none, the state put it in its own treasury, leaving the widow to a pauper's fate, unless her own energies could eke out a living by economy and hard toil! A worthy woman in the circle of my acquaintance, whose property at marriage paid for a homestead worth five hundred dollars, saw this law divide a half of it to the brothers and sisters of her husband at his death, and herself is left, in her old age, to subsist on the remaining half! In 1850, this law was so amended that the widow can have the whole property, if it be not more than one thousand dollars, and the half of any sum over that amount; the other half going to the husband's family; or, if he happen not to leave any fiftieth cousin Tom, Dick or Harry, in the Old World or the New, she may have it all! Our legislators tell us it is right to give the legal control of our earnings to the husband, because "in law" he is held responsible for our support, and is obliged to pay our debts (?), and must have our earnings to do it with! Ah, I answer, but why don't the state give us some security, then, for support during our life; or if it looses the husband from all obligation to see that we are supported after he is in his grave, why, like a just and shrewd business agent, does it not release to us the "consideration" of that support--our earnings in the property which he leaves at his death?
16. The law taking from the wife the control of her earnings is a fruitful source of divorces. To regain control of her earnings for the support of her children, many a woman feels compelled to sue for a divorce.
17. I am here in the hope that I can say something for the benefit of those who must suffer, because they cannot speak and show that

they have wrongs to be redressed. It would ill become us, who are protected by love, or shielded by circumstances, to hold our peace while our sisters and their dependent children are mutilated in their hopes and their entire powers of existence, by wrongs against which we can protest till the legislators of the land shall hear and heed.

18. I was speaking of woman's self-created resources as necessary means for the discharge of her duties. Created free agents that we might render to God an acceptable and voluntary service, our Maker holds each human being accountable for the discharge of individual, personal responsibilities. Man, under his present disabilities, cannot come up to the full measure of his own responsibilities; much less can he discharge his own and woman's too. Hence, in taking from woman any of the means which God has given her ability to acquire, he takes from her the means which God has given her for the discharge of her own duties, and thereby adds to the burden of his own undischarged responsibilities. In taking from us our means of self-development, men expect us to discharge our duties, even as the Jews were expected to make brick without straw. If we are not fitted to be capable wives and mothers,--as contended by a gentleman on the stand yesterday,--if we make poor brick, it is because our brother man has stolen our straw. Give us back our straw, brothers,--there is plenty of it,--and we will make you good brick. Brick we must make--men say so; then give us our straw,--we cannot take it. We are suffering; the race is suffering from the ill-performance of our duties. We claim that man has proved himself incompetent to be the judge of our needs. His laws concerning our interests show that his intelligence fails to prescribe means and conditions for the discharge of our duties. We are the best judge of the duties, as well as the qualifications, appropriate to our own department of labor; and should hold in our own hands, in our own right, means for acquiring the one and comprehending the other.
19. I have spoken of woman's legal disabilities as wife and mother; and adverted to the law which diverts from the wife the control of her own earnings, as a fruitful source of divorces. Increasing facilities for divorce are regarded by a majority of Christian men as significant of increasing immorality, and tending to weaken the sanctity of the marriage relation. But an examination of legislative proceedings will show that sympathy for suffering woman is the real source of these increasing facilities; and I am frank to say, that I consider man's growing consciousness of the wrongs to which wives and their helpless children are subject, by the laws which put it in the power of the husband and father to wrest from them the very necessities of life, consuming their sole means of support,--the earnings of the mother,--as heralding a good time coming, when every woman, as well as every man, "may sit under her own vine." Let me illustrate by relating one, among many incidents of the kind, which have fallen under my observation. In travelling, some eighteen years ago, across the

Green Mountains from Albany, a gentleman requested my interest in behalf of a young woman, whose history he gave me before placing her under my care, as a fellow-passenger. Said he, She was born here; is an orphan and the mother of two young children, with no means of support but her earnings. She was a capable girl, and has been an irreproachable wife. From a love of the social glass, her husband in a few years became a drunkard and a brute; neglected his business, and expended their entire living. She struggled bravely, but in vain. At length, just before the birth of her youngest child, he pawned the clothing which she had provided for herself and babes, sold her only bed, and drove her into the streets to seek from charity aid in her hour of trial. After her recovery, she went to service, keeping her children with her. But he pursued her from place to place annoying her employers, collecting her wages by process of law, and taking possession of every garment not on her own or children's persons. Under these circumstances, and by the help of friends who pitied her sorrows, she, with her hatless and shoeless children, was flying from their "legal protector," half clothed, to New Hampshire, where friends were waiting to give her employment in a factory, till a year's residence should enable her to procure a divorce! Now, friends, if under New York laws this poor woman had enjoyed legal control of her own earnings, she might have retained her first home, supported her children, and happy as a mother, endured hopefully the burden of unrequited affection, instead of flying to New Hampshire to regain possession of her alienated property rights, by the aid of "divorce facilities."

20. But, alas! not yet have I exhausted that fountain of wrongs growing out of the alienation of the wife's property rights. It gives to children criminals for guardians, at the same time that it severs what God hath joined together--the mother and her child! By the laws of all these United States, the father is in all cases the legal guardian of the child, in preference to the mother; hence, in cases of divorce for the criminal conduct of the father, the children are confided, by the natural operation of the laws, to the guardianship of the criminal party. I have a friend who, not long since, procured a divorce from her husband--a libertine and a drunkard,--and by the power of law he wrested from her their only child, a son of tender age. Think of this, fathers, mother! It is a sad thing to sever the marriage relation when it has become a curse--a demoralizing (?) thing; but what is it to sever the relation between mother and child, when that relation is a blessing to both, and to society? What is it to commit the tender boy to the training of a drunken and licentious father? The state appoints guardians for children physically orphaned; and much more should it appoint guardians for children morally orphaned. When it uses its power to imprison and hang the man, it is surely responsible for the moral training of the boy! But to return. I have asked learned judges why the state decrees that the father should retain the children, thus throwing upon the innocent mother the penalty which should fall upon the guilty party only? Say

they, "It is because the father has the property; it would not be just (?) to burden the mother with the support of his children." O justice, how art thou perverted! Here again, is the unrighteous alienation of the wife's earnings made the reason for robbing the suffering mother of all that is left to her of a miserable marriage--her children! I appeal to Christian men and women, who would preserve the marriage relation inviolate, by discouraging increased divorce facilities, if prevention of the necessity be not the better and more hopeful course,--prevention by releasing to the wife means for the independent discharge of her duties as a mother. And I appeal to all present, whether, sacred as they hold the marriage relation, Christian men have not proved to the world that there is a something regarded by them as even more sacred--the loaf! The most scrupulous piety cites Bible authority for severing the marriage tie; but when has piety or benevolence put forth its hand to divide to helpless and dependent woman an equal share of the estate which she has toiled for, suffered for, in behalf of her babes, as she would never have done for herself--only to be robbed of both? If the ground of the divorce be the husband's infidelity, the law allows him to retain the children and whole estate; it being left with the court to divide to the wife (in answer to her prayer to that effect) a pittance called alimony, to keep starvation at bay. If the babe at her breast is decreed to her from its helplessness, it is, at her request, formally laid before the court; and the court has no power even to decree a corresponding pittance for its support. The law leaves her one hope of bread for her old age which should not be forgotten--if he dies first, she is entitled to dower! But let the wife's infidelity be the ground of divorce, and the laws send her out into the world, childless, without alimony, and cut off from her right of dower; and property which came by her remains his forever! What a contrast! He, the brutal husband, sits in the criminal's bench to draw a premium, be rid of an incumbrance; for what cares he for the severing of a tie that had ceased to bind him to his wife, that perhaps divided between him and a more coveted companion! If we are the weaker sex, O, give us, we pray you, equal protection with the stronger sex!

21. Now, my friends, you will bear me witness that I have said nothing about woman's right to vote or make laws. I have great respect for manhood. I wish to be able to continue to respect it. And when I listen to Fourth-of-July orations and the loud cannon, and reflect that these are tributes of admiration paid to our fathers because they compelled freedom for themselves and sons from the hand of oppression and power, I look forward with greater admiration on their sons who, in the good time coming, will have won for themselves the unappropriated glory of having given justice to the physically weak; to those who could not, if they would, and would not, if they could, compel it from the hands of fathers, brothers, husbands and sons! I labor in hope; for I have faith that when men come to value their own rights, as means of human happiness, rather than of paltry gain, they will feel

themselves more honored in releasing than in retaining the "inalienable rights" of woman.

22. Brothers, you ask us to accept the protection of your LOVE, and the law says that is sufficient for us, whether it feeds or robs us of our bread. You admit that woman exceeds man in self-sacrificing love; her devotion to you has passed into a proverb. Yet, for all this, you refuse to entrust your interests to her love. You do not feel safe in your interests without the protection of equal laws. You refuse to trust even the mother's love with the interests of her children! How, then, do you ask of us--you, who will not trust your interests to the love of a mother, wife, daughter, or sister--why do you ask of us to dispense with the protection of equal laws, and accept instead the protection of man's affection?
23. I would offer, in conclusion, a few thoughts on education. I would say to my sisters, lest they be discouraged under existing disabilities from attempting it,--we can educate ourselves. It may be that you hesitate, from a supposed inferiority of intellect. Now, I have never troubled myself to establish woman's intellectual equality. The inequality of educational facilities forbids us to sustain such a position by facts. But I have long since disposed of this question to my own satisfaction, and perhaps my conclusion will inspire you with confidence to attempt equal--I would hope superior--attainments, for man falls short of the intelligence within reach of his powers. We all believe that the Creator is both omniscient and omnipotent, wise and able to adapt means to the ends He had in view. We hold ourselves created to sustain certain relations as intelligent beings, and that God has endowed us with capabilities equal to the discharge of the duties involved in these relations. Now, let us survey woman's responsibilities within the narrowest sphere to which any common-sense man would limit her offices. As a mother, her powers mould and develop humanity, intellectual, moral and physical. Next to God woman is the creator of the race as it is and as it shall be. I ask, then, Has God created woman man's inferior? If so, He has been false to His wisdom, false to His power, in creating an inferior being for a superior work! But if it be true, as all admit, that woman's responsibilities are equal to man's, I claim that God has endowed her with equal powers for their discharge.
24. And how shall we develop these powers? My sister, for your encouragement, I will refer to my own experiences in this matter. I claim to be self-educated. Beyond a single year's instruction in a high school for young men and women, I have enjoyed no public educational facilities but the common school which our Green Mountain state opens to all her sons and daughters. Prevented by circumstances from availing myself of the discipline of a classical school of the highest order, and nerved by faith in my ability to achieve equal attainments with my brother man, I

resorted to books and the study of human nature, with direct reference to the practical application of my influence and my acquirements to my woman's work,--the development of the immortal spirit for the accomplishment of human destiny. And my own experience is, that the world in which we live and act, and by which we are impressed, is the best school for woman as well as man. Practical life furnishes the best discipline for our powers. It qualifies us to take life as we find it, and leave it better than we found it. I have been accustomed to look within my own heart to learn the springs of human action. By it I have read woman, read man; and the result has been a fixed resolution, an indomitable courage to do with my might what my hands find to do for God and humanity. And in doing, I have best learned my ability to accomplish, my capacity to enjoy. In the light of experience, I would say to you, my sisters, the first thing is to apply ourselves to the intelligent discharge of present duties, diligently searching out and applying all knowledge that will qualify us for higher and extended usefulness. Be always learners, and don't forget to teach. As individuals, as mothers, we must first achieve a knowledge of the laws of our physical and mental organisms; for these are the material which we work upon and the instruments by which we work; and, to do our work well, we must understand and be able to apply both. Then we need to understand the tenure of our domestic and social relations,--the laws by which we are linked to our kind. But I cannot leave this subject without briefly calling your attention to another phase of education.

25. Early in life, my attention was called to examine the value of beauty and accomplishments as permanent grounds of affection. I could not believe that God had created so many homely women, and suffered all to lose their beauty in the very maturity of their powers, and yet made it our duty to spend our best efforts in trying to look pretty. We all desire to be loved; and can it be that we have no more lasting claims to admiration than that beauty and those accomplishments which serve us only in the spring-time of life? Surely our days of dancing and musical performance are soon over, when musical instruments of sweeter tone cry "Mother." (Loud cheers) What, then, shall we do for admiration when stricken in years? Has not God endowed us with some lasting hold upon the affections? My sister, I can only find lasting charms in that thorough culture of the mind and heart which will enable us to win upon man's higher and better nature. If you have beauty and accomplishments, these address themselves to man's lower nature--his passions; and when age has robbed you of the one, and him of the other, you are left unloved and unlovely! Cultivate, then, your powers of mind and heart, that you may become necessary to his better and undying sympathies. Aid him in all the earnest work of life; and secure his aid in your self-development for noble purposes, by impressing upon him that you are in earnest. Sell your jewelry, if need be, abate your expenditures for show; and appropriate your means, and time spent in idle visiting, to

the culture of your souls. Then will his soul respond to your worth, and the ties that bind you endure through time, and make you companions in eternity!

26. Let the daughters be trained for their responsibilities; and though you may say, "We do not know whom they will marry, whether a lawyer, a doctor, or farmer," if you educate them for practical life, by giving them general useful knowledge, their husbands can teach them the details of their mutual business interest, as easily as the new responsibilities of maternity will teach them the ways and means of being qualified to discharge its duties.
27. Educate your daughters for practical life, and you have endowed them better than if you had given them fortunes. When a young girl of fourteen, I said to my father, Give me education, instead of a "setting out in the world," if you can give me but one. If I marry, and am poor in this world's goods, I can educate my children myself. If my husband should be unfortunate, the sheriff can take his goods; but no creditor can attach the capital invested here. (Touching her forehead.) (loud cheers) And friends, my education has not been only bread, but an inexhaustible fund of enjoyment, in all the past of my life.

Address to Vermont Legislature
December 3, 1852

Mrs. Nichols, the able and dignified editor of the Windham County Democrat, recently appeared before the Legislature of Vermont and made a speech setting forth the Political Rights and Wrongs of Woman, as she understands them, and suggesting Legislative remedies. The following is a synopsis of her positions:

WOMAN'S PROPERTY RIGHTS

Existing property laws, as they affect the interests and happiness of married women, are a just cause of complaining among themselves, and equally opposed to the true interests of all who have claims on them for support or training.

They are open to criticism. 1st. Because they divest women of just rights of property. 2d. Because they have so guarded released property rights, that they are not available for such application and use as the interests and happiness of the holders demand.

The holding of property is ranked by our republican governments among inalienable rights, and the reasons for so ranking it is to be found in the necessities and responsibilities of the human being, which absorb the entire means created by average energies--in their proper and honorable discharge.

In the marriage relation, as proved by actual life, the responsibilities of the parties are equal, though dissimilar; and if the father prove recreant or incompetent, the support and training of the children naturally devolve upon the mother; thus establishing beyond question, her equal right to hold and control means.

Not only does justice demand that this right be conceded to her, but the best interests of society require it. For by releasing to the responsible mother means for the support and proper education of her children, the community will most effectually protect itself against the pauperism which taxes its purse and the crime which jeopardds its safety, through the husbands and fathers who use their property rights to feed their brutal appetites, sending their families to the poor-houses and prisons.

The legislation of the past declares that a strong man needs not only his own property and earnings, but that of his wife and minor children also, to meet the physical and educational demands of the family: it is left for the legislation of a better age--God grant it be the present--to declare with an equal responsibility physically weaker women should have control of her own property and earnings.

The legislators of the past, acting upon the supposition that all husbands have the wit and the will to support their wives and children, gave to all husbands the entire property and earnings. The legislators of the present will prove their common sense and humanity by abandoning this "legal fiction," and acting upon the reality that many men have proved themselves unable or unwilling, with all these aids, to support their families in comfort; while women, not a few, have supported their children and trained them for useful life with only her own earnings; that many a man, in spite of the legal injection into his veins of his wife's means of subsistence, has proved dead to all the claims of family, while many a wife, though "dead in law" has managed under the paralyzing conditions of her legal category to be a fountain of life to her children, and through them to the community.

The necessities and responsibilities of men and single women are the basis on which republican Governments have secured to them independent rights. It is not pretended that marriage deprives woman of her necessities, they are inherent in her nature--but it trebles her responsibilities and proportionally increases her necessity for property and all its advantages.

The laws should protect to married women their property. They have equally with men inherited personal necessities, and should not be forced by laws alienating their property rights, to choose between starvation and the poor house.

Laws protecting property to the married women will tend to ameliorate her condition as a widow. The laws of the State secure to its widows the use of only one third of the real estate, even though it be a trifle too small to save helpless age from charity or the poor house. The husband can will away from his wife all the personal property, and in small estates it takes it all to pay the expense of settlement. Property held in her own right may save the widow from the poor house.

Another benefit which will result from securing to married women their property, real, personal and mixed, and its use--is the equalization of property: it will be more equally and justly distributed in the settlement of estates, the children of the mother heiring from her what herself heirs from her parents, or had acquired by her own labor. And again, it would benefit the husband by benefiting the family. Fathers would aid their daughters, as they do their sons, when circumstances invite such aid, if those daughters could legally hold the capital so invested and its use, against the debts and heirs of the husband.

The law we now have, securing only real estate to the wife, prevents her from availing herself of its full benefits. She cannot farm it, for she cannot own stock and materials necessary; she cannot invest its proceeds, or change it to capital in more

lucrative business--or business more suited to her capacity and needs.

Again, while a few women inherit real estate, a great majority of women who marry have personal property, heired or acquired by their labor. Laws securing to them real, personal and mixed property, therefore, under conditions which allow them its full and free use, will be a general benefit, whereas the securing to them real estate only is partial in its benefits, as in its application.

It is both just and desirable that, with the security which property gives, women should have its responsibilities and liabilities. In order to the full employment and wise use of property, women must be left, like men, free to husband or squander their property interests, and abide poverty or prosperity as their own foresight or management shall determine. Ability to make means to answer to the ends desired is needed in the business concerns on which themselves and families depend for support, and only the practical knowledge which is allowed or forced upon them by its responsibilities can develop this ability.

A fear that women's property, if released to their control, will be forced or coaxed from them by others is certainly no reason why our legislators should be guilty of giving it to others, as they do give it to the heirs of the husband, or to any foreigner, if he choose so to make his will--against the just claims of the wife and heirs.

Address to Whole World Temperance Convention
September 3, 1853

Mrs. C.J. [sic] Nichols, Editor of the Wyndham Free Soil Democrat [sic], was then introduced to the audience amid loud applause.

I am not (said she) unconscious, friends, that I stand as yet upon a contested platform--that my woman's foot presses ground denied to her to maintain--so you will allow me to make some reference to this point. There are subjects which it is not relevant to allude to upon this platform; but, friends, in presenting to you the necessity for the Maine Law, I must show you the deep and great need of woman for its enactment. I cannot present to you woman's claim to the Maine Law, to restore the sweet harmonies of domestic life, without presenting to you the discord which intemperance has made upon the heart strings of women and children. You will therefore allow me in my remarks to state my positions and to maintain them as in my judgement is best.

It has been a common remark, and one which is entertained both by church members and members of the State, that woman is the greatest sufferer from intemperance--woman, who is not herself convicted of the crime of intemperance--who is not herself given to intemperance--as a class, woman is the greatest sufferer. Yet few have [I] found who have asked why,--why does woman, who is not herself the victim of vice, suffer more than man, who is?

Here, my friends is the point to which I wish to call your attention. Woman is the greatest sufferer, because she belongs and is bound hand and foot, and given to the protection of her husband. I say that woman is the greatest sufferer, because the laws of the land have bound her hand and foot, and committed her soul and body to the protection of her husband; and when he fails to protect her through imbecility, misjudgment, misfortune, or intemperance, she suffers. It is because the mother of humanity cannot hold in her own hand the bread she earns to feed her babes and children--it is because of the crimes of her inebriate husband, if he be one, that she suffers. It is because the babes that she rears are given to the custody of the drunken husband. And, friends, if intemperance did not invade our homes--if it did not take from us our clothing, our bread and the means for our self-development, and for the training of our children to respectability and usefulness--if it did not take the babes from our bosoms,--I would not stand here. [Applause]

And this, friends, although it be woman's right, I must present to you as my justification for addressing you upon this occasion. I feel, friends, that man cannot row the boat of humanity alone, for when he does so, it goes round and round in a circle, until at length his arm tires, and he, with all his craft on board, is engulfed. It seems to be that the great cause of humanity is

very much in the position of a little child, of whom I will state a little anecdote in illustration. A friend of mine, a few weeks ago, taking a journey in a stagecoach met in it a man with a little infant in his arms--an infant of months--in the arms of the father. My friend was extremely interested in that child, and was filled with wonder and many apprehensions, for the reason that this father should be carrying that infant a long journey in his arms, and no mother with it. She fancied that the mother was dead. How could she think anything else? She inquired of him, "Where is the baby's mother?" Said he, "She would not come along with us," when husband and wife disagree they must separate. She said, "And you take the little babe?" "Yes," said he. He had the right and the power. Said my friend, "When the child is hungry, can you feed it?" "Oh yes," answered he, "I can feed it, for I have here a pocket full of cakes." After a man has gone through the world into every department of life--into the Legislature--and has been engaged in all the social improvements carried out for humanity--a pocket full of cakes--and humanity is dyspeptic, and all the intelligence and the morality of the country has been fed upon cakes from a man's pocket. [Laughter and applause] It is dyspeptic; and what we now ask is that it may be restored to the mother--fountain of humanity, and drink the milk of human kindness that God has stored in the breast of woman. [Applause]

In my remarks this morning, I wish to bear particularly upon the responsibilities of Christians in this government and upon the responsibility of Church members and the Church of Christ. As a member of a Christian Church, I appeal to my brethren and sisters with a heart full of love and yearning that they may meet me upon this ground, that I may find a response in their souls which will give me courage to move onward in the course of self-denial and duty in this cause. I know that churches of different denominations act with different power upon the great reforms of the day. The Churches of which I am a member act in their separate capacities. The churches are independent bodies, and act separately,--the church cannot control the action of another church. I speak of the Baptist denomination, and it is so with many other bodies of Christians. I have noticed with a great deal of pleasure that as this movement has progressed, the churches have come up and passed resolutions endorsing the Maine Law and pledging themselves to give their influence and their power to the work. But it strikes me that it is not the whole duty of the Christian Church to pray and talk upon it. I have conversed with some of our clergy, who are among the foremost friends of the Maine Law--who have given us sermon upon sermon, line upon line, and precept upon precept, which they nobly dared to do; yet I have not found the first one of them--and I say it with a sad heart--who will recommend political action, and who will recommend that the Church should take cognizance of the political action of its members upon this question. You may think me ultra; but first carry it the the throne of God--stand before the bar of the Almighty--and then can you convince me, my friends, when I say

that the Church should take cognizance of the political action of its members? No one, for a moment, can then, I think support that God himself does not take cognizance of political acts as Christian duty. They say they do not see how we could recognize the political action of our members. We do not see how we could discipline them as to the manner in which they should vote upon the question. Now, friends, what is the organization of Christianity worth, if you cannot reach a member of that body in all his actions--if you cannot reach him, and bring the force of the Church, as an organization, to bear upon every individual member, in his action in any department in life? What is that organization worth?

I think that much of the embarrassment upon this point arises from the association of the past. In the past, a man might drink rum and sell rum, and be a good Christian, but you must recollect there were days of darkness. Perhaps when God winked at sin and ignorance, then his Church might; but now there is no sin or ignorance to be winked at, and you will understand that now we are responsible to God for our ability and all our influence; and by-the-bye, if we are responsible to use all our influence for God, we are under obligation to acquire all the influence we can for the same high and holy purpose--the Church as a body, as well as the individual members. In the past we have given all that we had to the good work. We have pledged ourselves to the Almighty, that we will be one with humanity, and give our life and all our efforts for the salvation from wrong done and wrong doing. We have made the application just as far as we could see the wrong done, and we have come up to the work, and given ourselves to it unreservedly; but in the course of time--for we know that he that runs shall read--light shall break in our path, and we shall see more room for truth, and unless the Church comes up as a body, and every individual member of it, and gives the whole to God, they are failing in Christ and not doing their duty. If the Church has more knowledge and more light upon the evils of intemperance today--if the Church knows as well as the individual member knows that the voice of everyman fixes upon us the sin of intemperance, or goes to carry it from the land, then his Church is responsible to come up to this: point of discipline, and enforce it against every man who votes against the Maine Law. I may be in advance upon you on this point, but I doubt whether there is one in this assembly who will not endorse this principle. If this be so, then you are bound by every consideration, as Christians and as human beings, to carry out these principles--for when will principles become of use to the world until they are made practical? The Church has more to do in this matter than this, or rather they are more deeply interested than to the extent I have stated. Nearly two-thirds of our Church are made up of women, and woman is the greatest sufferer from intemperance. I have for more than thirty years been a member of a Christian Church; I joined it in my childhood, and side and side I have sat with aged women who have been obliged to procure divorces from drunken husbands. The fair

orator concluded her remarks by calling upon her hearers to sustain the principles of the Maine Law.

Address to the Woman's Rights Convention,
New York City, September 6-7, 1853

Mrs. C. J. H. Nichols, editress of the Windham County Democrat being introduced, spoke thus:--To establish woman's right to vote should not, it might naturally be supposed, be a matter of so much difficulty, when we consider the extent to which, in matters of weighty importance, that right has been conceded to her. In our country we have many private corporations, banks, stock companies, railroad companies, manufacturing companies, in which women are shareholders, and thus have the right, which none dispute, to vote upon questions affecting the interests of those companies. The same is the case in the Bank of England, that great money institution, which could, with a breath, shake every European throne. There, women, as share holders, have an equal right to vote with men. In the East India Company, which holds in its hands the destinies of the millions of Hindostan, woman's pecuniary interest gives her a like control with man over these countless human beings. Inasmuch, then, as woman, where her pecuniary interests are concerned, has found a way that is admitted to be womanly enough of expressing her feelings on those great questions which involve her moral, intellectual, and social as well as her commercial interests.

Now, I will state my reason for desiring to vote--my reason for maintaining that women should have the right to vote; and it is this, that she may have a due control over her own moral, intellectual, and social interests. I want to have this power, because in not having it, I am deprived of the power of protecting myself and my children, because I do not possess the power which ought to belong to me as a mother.

It is an undisputed fact that, if women were allowed to vote, the best measures for the good of the community would be carried. As it is, when a petition goes up to a legislature, the signatures are reckoned, and it is said, "so many are voters, and so many are women." No one denies that, if women had votes on temperance laws, and such moral reforms, the majority of women would be in favor of them. Friends, I want the right to vote so that my name, when it appears on a petition, may be reckoned as that of a voter, whether or not I exercise the franchise.

Through the affections of the mother men have controlled the actions of woman. Woman stands before you, with all the wants of man, and also with all the capability of man to provide for these wants; but the present laws have disowned the capacity of woman from her necessities. From woman all the sphere for the development of her capacities has been taken away; by law and custom she is regarded as dead, she has been legally executed. It is said woman should not go to the polls--she would meet rowdies, the purity of her nature would be sullied by the base contact into

which the exercise of political rights would bring her. I maintain, on the contrary, that her going there would have a good effect, and instead of her purity being soiled by the place, the place would receive a purification from her presence. How is it in all the walks where woman now meets man? Whether is she lowered, or he raised by the contact? In the railroad car, the steamboat, are not the rudeness of man's nature laid aside when woman enters? Do not courtesy and refinement enter with her, and sanctify the place while she remains? No; the argument is a fallacy, and what it urges as an objection, would really be a strong recommendation. I think I have shown it is not good for men and women to be alone.

(Cheers, apparently ironical, and meant to create a disturbance, here interrupted the speaker.)

As I have only twenty minutes to speak, may I beg that you will be good enough to spare your plaudits. I will better occupy my time in explaining my views, than in receiving your demonstrations of applause.

Woman's property is given by the laws to her husband; her children belong to, and can be claimed by, their father, however brutal and degraded the father may have become. Man takes from her her right in property--her right over her own earnings, and offspring and services, and then, to compensate her for the robbery, enacts that she shall be held under no obligation to support her children. Women are not permitted to be, are not, by the law, regarded as fit to be, the guardian of their children, after the death of their husbands; if there be any person to offer opposition to their being so, the guardianship is taken from them. But when a wife dies, the husband becomes, as a matter of course, the legal guardian of the children. If a woman marries a second time, she has no power to support her children by a former marriage. Let her bring to her second husband a dower ever so princely, and she cannot claim support for her offspring by her former marriage; nay, the second husband can, if he choose, demand a compensation for supporting them.

As widows, too, the law bears heavily on women. If her children have property, she is adjudged unworthy of their guardianship; and although the decree of God has made her the true and natural guardian of her children, she is obliged to pay from her scanty means to be constituted so by the law.

I have conversed with judges and legislators, and tried to learn a reason for these things, but failed to find it. A nobleman once gave me what he probably thought was a good one. 'Women,' he said to me 'cannot earn as much as men!' We say they should be allowed to earn as much. They have the ability, and the means should not be shut out from them. I have heard of another man who held woman's industrial ability at a low rate. 'His wife, he said,

'had never been able to do anything but attend to her children.'
'How many have you?' he was asked; and the answer was--'Nine.'
Nine children to attend to!--nine children cared for!--and she could do nothing more, the wife of this most reasonable man. Now, which is of more importance to the community, the property which that reasonable husband made, or the nine children whom that mother brought, with affectionate and tender toll, through the perils of infancy and youth, until they were men and women? Which was of more importance to this land--the property which the father of George Washington amassed, or the George Washington whom a noble mother gave to his country? The name of Washington, his glorious deeds, and the enduring benefits he secured for us, still remain, and will, long after the estates of Washington have passed from his name for ever!

In the state of Vermont, a wife sought a divorce from her husband on the ground of his intemperance. They were persons moving among our highest circles--wealthy people; and the wife knew that she could, through the aid of her friends and relations, with the influence and sympathy of the community, obtain a divorce, and a support for her children. The father carried away into Canada one child, a little girl, and paid three hundred dollars to a low, vile Frenchman, that he might keep her from her mother and friends. Three times her almost heart-broken mother went in search of her; twice in vain, but, the third time, she was found. So badly had the poor child been treated in the vile hands in which her father had placed her, that, when recovered, she was almost insensible; and when, by her mother's nursing care, her intelligence was at length restored, her joy at seeing her mother was so violent, that it was feared its excess might prove fatal. The cause came into Court, and the judge decided that the two daughters should be given to their mother, but that the custody of the son should be given to the father. She was acquitted of the least impropriety or indiscretion; yet, though the obscenity and profanity of her husband in his own family was shocking; and it was in the last degree painful to that high minded woman to see her son brought up under the charge of such a man, the law decided that the unworthy father was the more proper guardian for the boy!

In the Green Mountain State a great many sermons have lately been preached on the text, 'Wives submit yourselves to your husbands.' The remaining words, 'in the Lord,' are generally omitted; so that the text is made to appeal like an injunction that the wives should submit to their husbands, whether they were in the Lord or in the devil. And the best of all is, that we are told that, although we should be submissive, we could change our husbands from devils into angels.

APPENDIX B

Women's National Loyal League Convention
New York, New York
May 14, 1863

My Dear Miss Anthony,

Your call to the loyal women of the nation meets my hearty response. I have been feeling for months that their activities, in the crisis which is upon us, should not be limited to the scraping of lint and concocting of delicacies for our brave and suffering soldiers. Women, equally with men, should address themselves to the removing of the wicked cause of all this terrible sacrifice of life and its loving, peaceful issues. It is their privilege to profit by the lessons being taught at such a fearful cost. And discerning clearly the mistakes of the past, it is their duty to apply themselves cheerfully and perseveringly to the eradication of every wrong and the restoration of every right, as affecting directly or indirectly the progress of the peace toward the divine standard of human intelligence and goodness. No sacrifice of right, no conservation of wrong, should be the rally-call of mothers whose sons must vindicate the one and expiate the other in blood! Negro slavery is but one of the protean forms of disfranchised humanity. Class legislation is the one great fountain of national and domestic antagonisms. Every ignoring of inherent rights, every transfer of inherent interest, from the first organization of communities, has been the license of power to robbery and murder, itself the embodiment of a thievish and murderous selfishness.

That the disenfranchisement of the women of '76 destroyed the moral guarantee of a pure republic, or that their enfranchisement would early have broken the chains of the slave, I may not now discuss. Yet it may be well to note that ever since freedom and slavery joined issue in this Government, the women of the free States have been a conceded majority, almost a unit, against slavery, as if verifying the declaration of God in the garden, "I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman." Every legal invasion of rights, forming a precedent and source of infinite series of resultant wrongs, makes it the duty of woman to persist in demanding the right, that she may abate the wrong--and woman is constitutionally disabled from rushing to her country's rescue. Robbery and arson invade her home; and though man is powerless to protect, she may not save it by appeals to the ballot-box.

A hundred thousand loyal voters of Illinois are grappling with the traitors of the South. If the hundred thousand loyal women left in their homes had been armed with ballots, copperhead treason would not have wrested the influence of that State to the aid and comfort of the rebellion. If the women of Iowa had been legally empowered to meet treason at home, the wasteful expense of canvassing distant battlefields for the soldiers' votes might have

been saved. And it would have been easier for these women to vote than to pay their proportion of the tax incurred. Yankee thrift and shrewdness would have been vindicated if Connecticut had provided for the enfranchisement of her women by constitutional amendment, instead of wasting her money and butting her dignity against judicial vetoes in legislating for the absent soldiers' vote.

This war is adding a vast army of widows and orphans to this already large class of unrepresented humanity. Shall the women who have been judged worthy and capable to discharge the duties of both parents to their children, be longer denied the legal and political rights held necessary to the successful discharge of a part even of these duties by men? With these few hasty suggestions, and an earnest prayer for the highest wisdom and purest love to guide and vitalize your deliberations, sisters, I bid you farewell.

C.I.H. Nichols

National Woman Suffrage Association Convention
 Washington, D.C.
 January 16-17, 1873

Dear Susan:

The spirit moves me to speak through you to my dear old co-laborers in convention assembled. I would congratulate them that in the justice of our cause is an inherent force, gradually ridding it of all false issues, and bearing down all opposition. With this comfortable outlook, the advocates of woman's enfranchisement might rest in the assured success of this work, but for the implication that we assent to charges which we do not repel.

Our opponents, from the New York Tribune in the East, to the knaves of clubs and diamonds in the West, charge that "free-love" is the "shibboleth" of the advocates of equal rights for women. With polygamous, free-love in Utah tolerated by our National Government, under successive administrations; with the "social evil" licensed in city after city, through male suffrage, and in defiance of the earnest protests of woman suffragists in all sections of the country, our opponents seem oblivious of the terrible fact that the responsibility of a demoralized public sentiment rests with the governments which, by tolerating and licensing these manufactories and resorts of licentiousness, have encouraged the demand and protected the supply.

Separated from its vile uses, the term free-love is still a misnomer, and though it might be washed "white as wool," it would involve uncalled for martyrdom, failing as it does to express the idea implied in our demand for equal legal rights, which is properly free marriage. A free government supposes all the institutions under it to be free. Under our government, marriage alone is an exception. As a civil relation it does not rise to the dignity and uses of a free institution, however, near it may approximate thereto in those exceptional cases in which the husband is innocent of using the despotic power with which the law endows him.

Civil law imposes upon the wife personal subjection to the will of her husband, and secures to that will absolute and tyrannical efficiency. It is a despotism embalmed in the ceremonies of freedom. As it stands to-day,--tried by common and statute law in our courts--the civil institutions of marriage in nine-tenths of these United States, is, in its letter, the counterpart of what black slavery was, excepting the power to sell. And the slave wife, equally irresponsible, and as often less as more considerate of her needs.

I believe I speak for nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand

of the advocates of woman suffrage, when I assert that we are not asking for the abolition of civil marriage, nor for Mosaic divorce facilities, but for such freedom in the marriage relation as equally of rights is competent to secure. Women, it should be remembered, are not responsible for existing divorce laws. Our male legislators, improving upon Moses to the extent of transferring the divorce power from the husband to the courts, and allowing the wife an equal right of appeal, still persist in regarding divorce as the remedy for a "hardness of heart," which, in nine cases in ten, would never have obtained had men been trained by equal laws to respect the rights of women--in all their human relations--to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," as set forth in our fathers' declaration of rights. And I do most emphatically deny that the divine idea of marriage can be realized in a relation in which one party is endowed with irresponsible power and the other is a legal nonentity.

Self-government, the right and duty of every human being, is impossible, separated from self-ownership. And civil marriage, in abrogating her right of self-ownership, legalized outrages upon the wife's person which--perpetrated by any man not her husband--are declared crimes, and punishable by fines, imprisonment, and, in most countries of Christendom, death! Such, in brief, is the legal relation of husband and wife. And it is a sad commentary on the civilization of the nineteenth century that Christian women, for protesting against its despotic provisions alone, are met by honorable men with the shameful cry of "free-love," "prostitution," "husband-murder," and the like.

Self-ownership, or the right of personal freedom, as enjoyed by all male "good citizens," in all their legal relations, marriage included, is a woman's rights, is Bible Christianity, and should not be forfeited by marriage in the wife's case more than in the husband's.

The New York Tribune denied that the wife "is legally divested of self-ownership," (and) asked, "What is the law? Who enacted it? Where is it written?" and charged that the resolution of your convention of 1871, demanding self-ownership, was a demand for legalized free-love.

Not to my knowledge has the Tribune been answered and I reply: "It is English common law--by which law our courts are ruled in their decisions." Being an unwritten law, it is not found in our statute books, and can be learned only from Law Digests and reported decisions of our own and English courts. In Judge [Henry] Dutton's revision of Chief Justice [Zephaniah] Swift's "Digest of the Laws of Connecticut," the power of the husband is thus briefly stated: "The husband has power and dominion over his wife; as he is responsible for her actions, he may control, regulate, and restrain her conduct, keep her by force within the bounds of duty, and under due subjection and subordination." The

published report of the case of Shaw vs. Shaw, by the Supreme Court of Connecticut, (in 1845) illustrates the criminal uses of the legal subjection and subordination of the wife.

Chief Justice [Tapping] Reeve says: "It seems without cause, the husband may seize upon her person and bring her home." The husband's ownership of the wife's person nullifies her "right of private judgment in matters of conscience," and robs her of the right of an American citizen, to "worship God according to the dictates of her conscience." In the case of Lawrence vs. Lawrence, Chancellor [Reuben Hyde] Walworth, in his decision says: "Although it was an act of great unkindness and of unreasonable oppression on the part of the husband to use his marital power in separating his wife from the church of which she was a member, I have no hesitation in saying that she mistook her duty in not submitting to the oppressor."

In conclusion let me say, if I have spoken over earnestly to the public questioning, it is due in part to its apparent obtuseness in understanding "what these women want," and in part to the consciousness that neither men, who are better than their laws, nor women, who see the wrongs they inflict on both men and women, in the tenderest relations of life, can afford silence on the marriage question, when it is being used by the opponents of woman's enfranchisement and the advocates of free-love, to bring suspicion and disaster upon our demand.

Yours affectionately,
C.I.H. Nichols

National Woman Suffrage Convention
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
July 19, 1876

July 4, 1776, our revolutionary fathers--in convention assembled--declared their independence of their mother country; solemnly asserted the divine right of self-government and its relation to constituted authority. With liberty their shibboleth, the colonies triumphed in their long and fierce struggle with the mother country, and established an independent government. They adopted a "bill of rights" embodying their ideal of a free government.

With singular inconsistency almost their first act, while it secured to one-half the people of the body politic the right to tax and govern themselves, subjected the other half to the very oppression which had culminated in the rebellion of the colonies, "taxation without representation," and the inflictions of an authority to which they had not given their consent. The constitutional provision which enfranchised the male population of the new State and secured to it self-governing rights, disfranchised its women, and eventuated in a tyrannical use of power, which exercised by husbands, fathers, and brothers, is infinitely more intolerable than the despotic acts of a foreign ruler.

As if left ignobly to illustrate the truths of their noble declarations, no sooner did the enfranchised class enter upon the exercise of their usurped powers than they proceeded to alienate from the mothers of humanity rights declared to be inseparable from humanity itself! Had they thrust the British yoke from the necks of their wives and daughters as indignantly as they thrust it from their own, the legal subjection of the women of today would not stand out as it now does--the reproach of our republican government. As if sons did not follow the condition of the mothers--as if daughters had no claim to the birthright of the fathers--they established for disfranchised woman a "dead line," by retaining the English common law of marriage, which, unlike that of less liberal European governments, converts the marriage altar into an executioner's block and recognized woman as a wife only when so denuded of personal rights that in legal phrase she is said to be "dead in law!"

More considerate in the matter of forms than the highwayman who kills that he may rob the unresisting dead, our gallant fathers executed women who must need cross the line of human happiness--legally; and administered their estate; and decreed the disposition of their defunct personalities in legislative halls; only omitting to provide for the matrimonial crypt the fitting epitaph: "Here lies the relict of American freedom--taxed to pauperism, loved to death!"

With all the modification of the last quarter of a century, our English law of marriage still invests the husband with a sovereignty almost despotic over his wife. It secures to him her personal service and savings, and the control and custody of her person as against herself. Having thus reduced the wife to a dead pauper owing service to her husband, our shrewd forefathers, to secure the bond, confiscated her natural obligations as a child and a mother. Whether married or single, only inability excuses a son from the legal support of indigent and infirm parents.

The married daughter, in the discharge of her wifely duties, may tenderly care and toil for her husband's infirm parents, or his children and grandchildren by a prior marriage, while her own parents, or children by a prior marriage--legally divested of any claim on her or the husband who absorbs her personal services and earnings--are sent to the poorhouse, or pine in bitter privation; except with consent of her husband, she can give neither her personal care nor the avails of her industry, for their benefit. So, to be a wife, woman ceases, in law, to be anything else--yields up the ghost of a legal existence! That she escapes the extreme penalty of her legal bonds in any case is due to the fact that the majority of men, married or single, are notably better than their laws.

Our fathers taught the quality and initiated the form of free government. But it was left to their posterity to learn from the discipline of experience, that truths, old as the eternities, are forever revealing new phases to render possible more perfect interpretations; and to accumulate unanswerable reasons for their extended application. That the sorest trials and most appreciable failures of the government our fathers bequeathed to us, have been the direct and inevitable results of their departures from the principles they enunciated, is so patent to all christendom, that free government itself has won from our mistakes material to revolutionize the world--lessons that compel despotisms to change their base and constitutional monarchies to make broader the phylacteries of popular rights.

Is it not meet then, that on this one-hundredth anniversary of American independence the daughters of revolutionary sires should appeal to the sons to fulfill what the fathers promised but failed to perform--should appeal to them as the constituted executors of the father's will, to give full practical effect to the self-evident truths, that "taxation without representation is tyranny"--that "governments derive their just powers from consent of the governed"? With an evident common interest in all the affairs of which government properly or improperly takes cognizance, we claim enfranchisement on the broad ground of human right, having proved the justice of our claim by the injustice which has resulted to us and ours through our disfranchisement.

We ask enfranchisement in the abiding faith that with our cooperative efforts free government would attain to higher averages of intelligence and virtue; with an innate conviction, that the sequestration of rights in the homes of the republic makes them baneful nurseries of the monopolies, rings, and fraudulent practices that are threatening the national integrity; and that so long as the fathers sequester the rights of the mothers and train their sons to exercise, and the daughters to submit to the exactions of usurped powers, our government offices will be dens of thieves and the national honor trail in the dust; and honest men come out from the fiery ordeals of faithful service, denuded of the confidence and respect justly their due. Give us liberty. We are mothers, wives, and daughters of freemen.

C.I.H. Nichols

National Woman Suffrage Association Convention
New York, New York
May 25-26, 1877

Dear Susan--

When thirty years ago Frederick Douglass--standing on the "color line" that set his black blood at cross purposes with his white blood--exclaimed, "one with God is a majority," he was assured beyond a doubt or a fear, of the extinction of Southern slavery and the recognition of the slave as a man and a brother, entitled to equal rights of citizenship. He wrought in the strength of that conviction as only those can who work with God. And now I seem to see him--standing on a dais of mingled hues--with exultant reverence, saying to us, "One with God is a majority," adding a lowered and slightly sarcastic tone--"and \$10,000 per annum with a responsible position in the National Government."

Thirty years ago a handful of women, standing as Douglass stood, on a line that sets humanity at cross purposes with itself, pledged themselves in spirit and faith of conscious unity with God, to work out the legal and political equality of woman. And in that faith they cheerfully accepted reproach and utilized failure and defeat as a preparatory discipline for so glorious a success. Step by step they won the vantage ground on which to-day a host is rallying for the final conflict.

To the women of this Republic our governments--State and National--are so many despotisms, their will being the law by which we are governed without our consent and against our protests.

All history proves that the unrepresented has always been a misrepresented class.

Under the three-fifths rule which made slaves a basis of representation in Congress, the National Government bound itself to the support of slavery with all its evils. When slavery suicided, that Government found it necessary for the protection of the freedmen in their individual, personal rights to enforce their enfranchisement by a Constitutional amendment.

To-day the women of this Republic appeal to the National Government to purge itself of contempt of freedom in the person of woman, and to secure to them by Constitutional amendment, the inherent rights of self-government--and we base our appeal on its responsibility as endorsing and sustaining the States in their treatment of us as a subject and servile class.

In accepting as republican, a form of government in which one half the people of a State organize and make laws governing and taxing

the whole without consent of the disfranchised half--our National Government became responsible for all the injustice and oppression which has made woman's record in this Republic an example of hopeless struggle, or of patient adjustment to burdens heavier and more numerous than those to secure immunity from which our revolutionary sires sacrificed the best blood and treasure of the nation. And while it is true, as Senator Sargent remarked in the presentation of our petitions to the Senate of the United States in January last,--that we "should not be left to the herculean task of applying to the States in detail," it would be impolitic and retard our cause to neglect urging upon both State and National Governments, the duty of repealing distinctions which work injustice to us, and through us, to our children.

Our National and State Governments recognize marriage as the dead line of personal and property rights to woman. A wife cannot preempt or homestead government land or receive letters patent. A subsequent husband of the widow of a preemptor or homesteader, who deceased before securing his title, takes out letters patent in his own right and neither the wife nor her fatherless children have any claim on the same during his life. And if she decease before her husband, such children are paupers on his or others' bounty.

Let us then petition and protest, and keep their sin against women and the tenderest human relations ever before them, till the unjust judge, "wearied with our importunity," or ashamed of their injustice, the governments, State and National, seek legitimate rest in a gracious consent. Yours in the faith of an enfranchised womanhood.

C.I.H. Nichols

National Woman Suffrage Association Convention*
Rochester, New York
July 19, 1878

Dear Susan:

If a general report or summing up would be made, it will be seen that, putting one section with another, the 'powers that be' have justified our demand for equal, legal and political rights, by conceding in whole or in part, that is by laws of general or special application for the removal of disabilities--what we ask.

We have broken the lines of our opponents at all points, and got possession of inside positions which assure the whole world of our ultimate triumph.

C.I.H. Nichols

*Extract

National Woman Suffrage Association Convention
St. Louis, Missouri
May 7-9, 1879

Dear Mrs. Minor:

Your invitation to confer with friends in Convention at St. Louis, May 9th, found me ill in bed where I have lain since the last of December, with doubtful prospect of recovery for useful activities. Still my thoughts are with you and the cause to which I have given the best and unstinted efforts of my life. I can write but little and that little must be brief and suggestive rather than logical and conclusive.

Our workers have reached bed-rock; they are dealing with "bottom facts,"--facts on which they have planted the moral lever that will surely overturn the great fundamental wrong and deal summarily with man's inhumanity to woman.

Woman's enfranchisement involves the reconstruction of the sexual relation upon the basis of divine law. Without this, any remedy for the "social evil" is only a "scotching of the snake." Without woman's enfranchisement, divorce as a remedy for "the hardness of men's hearts," will become the rule and marriage the exception--and without lessening the domestic evil. That evil is the bitter fruit of the personal subjection of the wife and mother to the passional demands of the husband as taught by the Church and enforced by the State. It has filled our cemeteries with infant graves--the imperfect fruit of overtaxed maternal and sexual organisms.

The toleration of sexual excesses as the marital prerogative--like polygamy protected by law--tears down the revolting features of licentiousness outside the marriage relation and fosters the demand for brothels with "regulations" insuring men who frequent them against the disease which God has affixed as a penalty for this crowning sin against nature.

Much has been said by religious presses opposed to woman's enfranchisement, about the heresey of the 9th Resolution adopted by the late Rochester Convention. I regretted--not the adoption of the resolution--but the omission of illustrating facts, and to supply these I beg leave to introduce the following brief extracts from a published sermon delivered March, 1877, by Rev. E. B. Hurlburt, now of Chicago, in the First Baptist Church of San Francisco, on the relation of Husband and Wife.

The first position, viz: - "So intimate and sacred is the marital relation, that all other human relations must be sacrificed to it." As if in the divine wisdom and economy all human relations are not in accord,--as if the relation of the mother to her child, in its pre-natal and helpless post-natal conditions, do not take

precedence of marital prerogative.

EXTRACT 2

"The principle objection to the Episcopal marriage service raised by the self-willed woman of the period is, that it requires her to obey her husband. But this objection is levelled equally against the requirement of the word of God, and furthermore, the additional promise to honor and love him can only be kept in the spirit of obedience. This obligation is founded upon the fact that he is her husband, and if she cannot reverence him for what he is in himself, still she must reverence him for the position which he holds. And, again, she must render this submissive reverence to her husband's headship 'as unto the Lord,' 'as is fit in the Lord.' She reverences him not simply as a man, but as her own husband, behind whom stands the Lord himself. It is the Lord who has made him husband, and the honor with which she regards him, though himself personally not deserving it, is in reality an honoring of the Lord. Many a Christian woman, actuated by this motive, has been most tenderly submissive, dutiful and patient, as towards the most unreasonable and despotic of husbands--inspired by the remembrance that it was a service rendered unto Christ. Let the wife, then, reverence her husband for what he is in himself, for his loving and noble qualities; but if these qualities do not belong to him, then let her reverence him for the sake of his office--simply because he is her husband,--and in either event let her reverence him, because in doing so she is honoring the Lord and Savior."

Which, let me ask, is preferable, the Catholic worship of the Virgin Mary and Priestly absolution and indulgences, or this Protestant doctrine that puts "the Lord behind," "the most unreasonable and despotic of husbands to enforce his authority?" The Bible says, "ye cannot serve two masters." Are God and man in such happy unity, that in obeying an "unbelieving, unreasonable and despotic husband," a wife is rendering service unto Christ,--"is in reality honoring the Lord?" Did Christ, "the seed of the woman" die to save her from sin, and rise again to subject her to its hateful service,--rise to "stand behind" the most unreasonable of husbands and pluck honors for his thorn-pierced brow from the tenderly submissive victim of such tyranny?

Rev. Mr. Hurlburt enforces as Bible doctrine, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," and adds, "It is not a question of practical moment to those who are already married. If you are joined in wedlock to one who is not a Christian, it is too late now to find a remedy. Your marriage is valid in the eye of the law and in the eye of God."

If the Lord has made husbands of these unbelieving, unreasonable and despotic men, as Mr. H., says, the Lord has invalidated his own expressed will. If the Lord has not made the unequal match,

then the misguided pair have succeeded in making that valid in the eye of God which according to Mr. H., is contrary to His command. What a God! alas! it is such interpretations of Scripture which as Rev. Mr. Ijams of the Presbyterian faith, says in another connection,--"have made an Ingersoll possible," and I might add, as necessary in the moral world as a cyclone or electrical explosion in the physical. Mr. H., says further: "It may not be discourteous to remind these wives of some of the Scripture teachings on this subject. It is to be supposed that none of them have forgotten where they came from originally. "And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." And the design of this creation was that she might be a helpmeet for him.

It was this same woman, likewise, the mother of mankind, who first partook "of that forbidden tree," whose mortal taste brought death into the world, and all our woe. And for this transgression the penalty pronounced upon her was, "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." In view of these facts the apostle is constrained to write. "The man is the image of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man." "I suffer not a woman to usurp authority over the man. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." In keeping with all this how frequently do we read in the New Testament such injunctions as these: "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."

"The self-willed woman of the period" remembers some Bible which Rev. Mr. H., and some of his confreres seem to ignore. She remembers reverently, that in the divine fatherhood and human motherhood of Christ, God preferred woman before man as co-workers with him in the re-construction of rebel humanity. She remembers gratefully, that true to His original design of "good" through woman's creation, and to insure against her complicity with evil in the future, God put woman at enmity with the serpent and promised that "the seed of the woman" should bruise his head.

She remembers further, that woman was, when both were innocent--formerly declared co-possessor and co-sovereign with man of all the earth and everything in it, on it and above it, because it was "not good" that "the man should be alone" in the responsibility. She denies that Adam, Eve and the serpent combined had power to repeal creative law or change creative

design. God's laws being conceived in infinite wisdom, are as unchangeable as himself, and subject neither to amendment or reconsideration in the divine mind. Under the rule of reconstruction through Christ, in whom "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, bond nor free" this self-willed woman claims her original equal rights under the divine patent, and through her help, good may result where failure and human degradation have been the outcome of man's efforts to possess and govern the earth alone.

But I am not writing a theological essay. If I were I might speak in detail of Apostolic lessons of submission to "the powers that be," including slaveholders and despotic husbands, as belonging to a gospel of expediency which under the pressure of 19th century moral and intellectual culture, is being rapidly eliminated from the Christian Church and Pulpit. I might speak of that "curse," might tell that thirty years ago first class New England clergymen objected to the use of anaesthetics to assuage the pains of childbirth, even debated it in ministerial meeting--as a sacriligious interference with the curse! and I might predict that in another thirty years clergymen who are enforcing the duty of submission to an authority which they admit is a curse to woman, will be as dumb to the "roll call" of marital prerogative, as their predecessors now are to the question of scientific evasion of suffering.

True, God said to Eve of her husband, "he shall rule over thee," and he has done it. He also said to the Serpent of the "seed of the woman," "thou shalt bruise his heel," and the Serpent has done it. If the first is a command authorizing the husband to rule over the wife, then (the language used being the same) the last is a command of God authorizing the Serpent to work his wicked will on the human race, the very crime for which is arraigned by the Almighty. God simply announced these results as in the role of evils inaugurated through disobedience to divine law; and leaving man to his arrogance God comforted the woman with the promise of Christ the Saviour.

C.I.H. Nichols

National Woman Suffrage Association Convention
 Washington, D.C.
 January 21-22, 1880

Dear Mrs. Stanton:

In petitioning Congress to submit to the States a constitutional amendment enfranchising women, we should not neglect to press upon it the duty of eliminating from its own laws every unjust discrimination against them.

The Constitution gives Congress "power to make all needful rules and regulations respecting the Territory or other property belonging to the United States."

Under this provision of the Constitution, Congress enacted laws and adopted rules that excluded women from all pre-emptory rights in the public domain. Some years since--influenced perhaps by Oregon (?) which, as a premium on immigration, offered to single women, and to married women in their own right and without abatement of the husband's pre-emption, 160 (320) acres of its unoccupied lands--Congress so amended its homestead and pre-empt laws, that unmarried women can pre-empt land, and make themselves homes on the national domain, on the same terms as men. But married women are still incompetent, under the laws of Congress to acquire and possess homes. Has Congress ever asked itself, "why this discriminating injustice to a class of women which, more than any other, deserves its protection?" A class whose long-suffering patient toil and privations, have made possible the subduing of its vast areas of wilderness to the manifold uses of a thrifty, intelligent and self-governing people? Even the alien is lured to our shores by the promise of a Government patent to the homestead his labor can win.

Congress is prohibited by the Constitution from taking private property for public uses without just compensation, and is given no right to sequester such property to the use and possession of private individuals. Why then should Congress condemn a woman's property right in earnings to the sole use and control of her husband? Why refuse to recognize her services as an improver of the public domain, by an issue of its patents to husband and wife jointly--said improvements being the result of their joint efforts?

Marriage is not a crime that its commission should subject her to the convict penalty of unpaid labor. And if it were treason against the integrity of the Union, she might expect from the leniency of Congress, removal of her disabilities and reinstatement in her sequestered earnings.

Civil marriage, which can properly take note only of exterior

conditions, must, like all other civil institutions, respond to the pressure of the moral and intellectual development of the masses. And he has small claim to statesmanship who expects that any class of persons in a republic maintaining free schools, free churches, and the doctrine of individual sovereignty, will long tacitly submit to the laws and usages in direct conflict with the fundamental principles of self-government. All history, our own history, notably, disproves such a possibility.

It is a natural sequence of increasing knowledge and appreciation of rights, as guarantees of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," that men and women of pure lives and honest convictions, who see in the increase of divorce facilities only increased repugnance of marital proprietorship, should seek to purge civil marriage of its contempt of justice. And when this is done--when women like men can contract marriage without a surrender of their natural right to the control of their persons, earnings and custody of children; when marriage ceases to be personal bankruptcy to the wife, there will be less need, and fewer calls for divorce. And when custom--under equal laws--shall have exorcised a domineering spirit in the one, and an irritating sense of subject conditions in the other, the married pair will oftener [sic] prove the beautiful possibility of a "united head" of the family. Equality of rights attaches to the individual "by the Grace of God," in every human relation and the only remedy adequate to the threatened integrity of marriage, and in dignity as a divine institution--will be found in the civil and social recognition of the equality of husband and wife.

C.I.H. Nichols

National Woman Suffrage Association Convention
Indianapolis, Indiana
May 25-26, 1880

Dear Friends:

We will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel, we will keep our home spheres bright and train the children that we bear to be temperate and pure, only take from us the legal disabilities that have made us weak to resist, and men strong to oppress. We will rise in the might of our love and the power of a divine purpose and break the bonds of pauperism and crime that are a reproach to any people and a disgrace to our vaunted Republican freedom. "Only let us"--the women of the nation,--"be called" on the roll of enfranchised citizens.

C.I.H. Nichols

Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association Convention
 Worcester, Massachusetts
 October 20, 1880

Dear Friends, in Convention assembled:--

The historical event you are met to commemorate is too full of significance as inaugurating in my life a fuller and pronounced cooperation with the gathering forces of the "Woman's Rights" movement,--so-called,--ever to be other than gratefully remembered. On that occasion, for the first time, I was loosed from my dependence upon the pen. Inspired from without by the intelligent attention of a crowd of enfranchised men, and urged from within by the irrepressible conflict of duties, responsibilities and legal disabilities--my straitened [sic] soul broke the seal from my lips, forgetful of the Mrs. Grundys everywhere, and of the half dozen newspaper reporters before me,--mindful only of the opportunity then and there to plead with enfranchised man for justice to disfranchised woman.

Years before I had arraigned a beloved uncle, who had often been a member of the State Legislature, for not procuring a repeal of the obnoxious laws concerning wife, widow and mother. He replied,--"I proposed to leading members in my first session, to change these laws, but they only laughed at me, asked if I was going to turn 'lady's man,' and said it would be time enough to change the laws 'when the women made a fuss.' I rejoiced in my heart of hearts on that memorable occasion, that I could help to inaugurate that "fuss" that would henceforth justify every man disposed to relieve us from legalized oppression,--not only justify but force men, for their honor's sake, to let oppressed Woman help make laws by which she and her children are governed." [sic]

And now, thirty years later, so great has this "fuss" become, that neither liquor rings nor political rings, nor marriage rings, nor ecclesiastical rings, can ring the new era in woman's life out, and the old era in again. Both men and women have outgrown the social, industrial and political usages of thirty years ago. The leaders in the Suffrage movement may all die--two to one will spring from the ranks to bear aloft the glorious banner of a free womanhood. Differences as to ways and means will now and then, as in all human associations, agitate the surface of affairs, but the deep underlying love of humanity for humanity's sake, which is the life and sinew of our cause, will restore the disturbed equilibrium.

Physical weakness forbids me to say more, as it has prevented me from saying well the little I have attempted. But neither illness nor distance can weaken my love for our cause and its faithful armor-bearers--Heaven bless us all!

National Woman Suffrage Association Convention
Boston, Massachusetts
May 26-27, 1881

Dear Susan.--

I have been too ill to prepare a greeting worthy of the anniversary meeting in Boston on the 26th and 27th, but I cannot forbear an attempt to convey through you an expression of my earnest sympathy and unfaltering trust in the generous purpose and wise conduct of its deliberations in behalf of a disfranchised humanity. Regarding suffrage as a means and enfranchisement as the object of our movement, it seems to me of paramount importance to secure every advantage in the direction of the latter as making success in either direction more available for a speedy result. To illustrate the distinction I have in mind, I cite the case of freedmen on the one side, with their right of suffrage--a comparatively bare possession--and on the other, the womanhood of the country gathering rich outlying fruits of enfranchisement without the right of suffrage. The full enfranchisement of both these classes of citizens has from the first been a question of time and effort, the desired result depending upon the education of all classes in a thorough knowledge and appreciation of human rights and duties in their relations to each other and to the individual.

That our work should be well done, is of immeasurably more consequence than that it should be done soon. In this view of the subject I see no cause for regret that our demands for the ballot have met rebuffs and postponements, since the educational preparation for its exercise--which is the happy result of the protracted struggle for the ballot--is an invaluable voucher for its intelligent use when won. If, because in some directions accomplished results seem disproportioned to the efforts put forth, we are tempted to drop the laboring oar and fall into the wake of the movement, let the reflection that it is in God's years, not our short lives, that the sum of human effort shall attain to its grandest results, inspire us with a self-forgetful energy worthy the servitors of a Christian civilization. In our own soul-growth we are sure of a rich reward.

The subject to which I would ask of the convention a careful and earnest attention, is the civil law of marriage which from present appearances our opponents are disposed to force upon us as a controlling issue in our movement.

You have probably noticed the appointment of a commission of eminent men, selected from prominent centers in the middle and eastern states--to inquire into and suggest a remedial treatment for the alarming increase of divorce--an important and truly worthy subject for benevolent investigation. Not having seen the

names of the gentlemen selected for this work associated with any reform in the interest of women; and there being no woman's name associated with them in an inquiry which most concerns women--three-fourths of the divorces, as charged, being obtained by women; and believing that the appointment of such commission emanates from a class of men, who have persistently opposed our demand for equal rights; first on the ground of "free love" and a "loose morality," and now, that it "makes women discontented with the conditions and sphere for which God and nature designed them" and threatens to destroy the divine institution of marriage, I would submit for the consideration of the convention--a commission of women associated with a minority of men, if desirable, as counsel--appointees of the convention or its executive committee--to collect facts and statistics clearly and impartially setting forth the causes and prevention of divorce. There is no doubt that the increase of divorce is due to the combined pressure of autocratic rights in the marriage relation and the aristocracy of sex in government upon the increasing intelligence and conscious moral responsibility of women, who, seeing more clearly are feeling more deeply, that in sequestering the rights of any class of its citizens government is nursing a despotism fruitful of danger to the home and the country.

The inquiry proposed is a legitimate one. The need for our reform originated, not in the disfranchisement of women, but in the wrongs growing out of the suppression of the wife's equal personal and property rights in the marriage relation. A candid presentation of the fundamental injustice is the true policy in our efforts for enfranchisement.

In discussing the legal disabilities of the wife, widow and mother, with one of the purest and noblest of New England's sons,--a United States District Judge--having frankly admitted the wrongs of which I complained and the justice of my claim for equal rights in these relations he remarked in conclusion: "The reform which you ask is fundamental and would destroy the harmony of the statutes. I have consulted with leading members of the bar, my brother judges, and we cannot as yet see any way to right the wrongs of which you complain, that will not destroy the harmony of the statutes."

The relation between the sexes being the primal relation in which all other human relations have their origins, the poison of despotism here is infused through the vitals of the nation till its best men have come to regard the harmony of statutes founded in injustice as better entitled to the guardian care than "the righteousness which exalteth a nation." Woman, more clear-sighted, from being the victim of this injustice owes it to man equally as to herself, to meet the commission of eminent men with the overwhelming logic of facts and statistics every where ready to her call vindicating the necessity, purity and patriotism of the movement for woman's enfranchisement.

National Woman Suffrage Association Convention
Rochester, New York
March 4-7, 1884

Dear Friends:

In reading numerous plans and suggestions for the "higher education of women," I have been forcibly reminded of a story I once read of a baby-girl who blossomed into young womanhood while her ambitious mother was wholly absorbed in devising an elaborate system for her education. From my stand-point of observation it looks as though women, in their struggle for rights versus wrongs, are rapidly developing a higher education for themselves than any so generously devised for them on the old plans of limited womanhood. Pope says:

"Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring;
'Tis shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
But drinking largely sobers us again."

Women love sobriety. In our pleas for constitutional rights, we frankly deny the authority of expediency in all matters touching the moral life and development of the nation or the citizen. Our government, in its initiatory appeal to natural or divine law for its right to be, acknowledged the supremacy of such law in the abstract, but has, alas! ignored it whenever seeming expediency counseled its evasion. And in this course we find the political weakness which hesitates and compromises when prompt action in the line of truth and justice offers the only safe and permanent solution. And it is a significant fact, that expediency (Sojourner Truth's "Weasel," in the Constitution), has been hatching crocodiles from the beginning. The revolution that secured our independence as a people, bound that independence with the galling chains of slavery, which avenged itself in a civil war costing thousands of millions of dollars, and life of incomputable value, with suffering and sorrow for which no afterthought of justice can ever atone. The miserable expediency which hesitates and compromises, is now paying the same costly tribute to popular vices that demoralize the citizen, pauper the home and threaten the National life--and, blind as a bat in daylight, disfranchises the innocent and gives to the guilty a controlling voice in public affairs. And this is named statesmanship!

Women plead for the protection of acknowledged rights, and our political Gamaliels snub us as incompetents placed by the supreme ruler of the universe in perpetual tutelage, and justify their wholesale robbery of our property, personal and mother rights, as theirs by divine right of guardianship. And while indebted to the inspiration and leadership of women for the efficiency of the

benevolent reforms of the age, they deny that the sex is endowed with adequate reasoning powers for self-government. Nevertheless, duty to our brother man, to ourselves and humanity, urges that we let our rushlight shine, and, keeping step to truth, justice and love, hasten the noon-day glory of universal benevolence—for not one of the great social moral questions of the day, affecting the happiness of a whole people, can ever be permanently settled without the light of woman's intellect and the transfusing of her mother heart and her vote. God's promise is to and through woman to all the nations of the earth.

I think, considering the patience with which we have listened to details of our general incapacity for political questions, I will not be outraging the amenities if, in this connection, I confess that the moral and intellectual shortsightedness of men schooled in the science of government and practice in courts and legislation, touching practical questions in those lines, is simply amazing. The treatment of the Utah question, a matter of vital importance to women, is a case in point. Senator [George F.] Edmunds, who took the Congressional leadership in legislating for the suppression of polygamy, and whose first bill has failed to accomplish the good hoped from it, has prepared a supplementary bill by which he proposes to increase the efficiency of the first, mainly, as I understand it, by suppressing Woman Suffrage in that Territory. In his supplementary bill he objects to the government of the Territory by a commission, which virtually disfranchises all its citizens—that "it is revolutionary and deprives the innocent as well as the guilty of all voice in public affairs," and adds, "Nothing but the direst necessity could justify such a step." As this objection to the commission is the exact measure of his provision for the suppression of Woman Suffrage in the territory, we can most cordially adopt it as our objection to the latter, and further, challenge the need that justifies his provision for the suppression of Woman Suffrage in the Territory.

In the first place as it is polygamy that is on trial, not Woman Suffrage, the dire need for its suppression should be a polygamous character, which would limit its application to Mormon citizens, but he does not propose to suppress the male Mormon vote, from which we might infer that said vote held within itself some redeeming quality which the Mormon woman's vote lacks; and yet the objection to the latter has been that it is controlled by the males in the interest of polygamous Mormonism. Hence the conclusion is inevitable that the votes of Mormon men and women are alike open to objection, alike entitled to "a voice in public affairs." Second, where shall we look for the dire necessity that counsels the suppression of the gentile woman's vote, which is solid versus polygamy? That it would give womanly impressment to just and wholesome laws?

I must say that this supplementary provision for the suppression of polygamy looks on examination like a mistake in terms--a

statesmanship that pulls up the wheat and leaves the tares. In discussing the question in the New York Independent he expresses the belief that polygamy is to be overcome "by processes" apparently slow and by means that will gather into the opposition to it all the non-polygamous Mormons," and that it is quite clear to his mind that the suppression of polygamy will be just as far off with the government of the Territory in the hands of a commission as it is now, if not further; for it will only serve to solidify and intensify a class feeling of the Mormons, and tend to draw to the support of the hierarchy and polygamists the whole body of the Mormon people. "On the whole," he says, "I have the best reason for believing that, if we go calmly and steadily forward, preserving our self-possession, we shall eradicate the evil of polygamy in that Territory."

I have only time to call attention to two features of this remarkable plan of the Senator's: First, the recommendation of "slow processes" in a warfare with vigilant, energetic and well-organized schemes of immigration and colonization of ignorant, superstitious proselytes, not amenable to intelligent argument. The second, his dependence for means to accomplish his purpose upon recruits from the ranks of the enemy. A general in the field, facing the enemy's camp, who should promulgate such a plan would be relieved of his commission as a lunatic. I can see no motive for the Senator's gratuitous thrust at Woman Suffrage in Utah but a hope of arresting the Woman Suffrage movement and defeating its recognition by Congress in the admission of the territories to State rights.

Our dear Wendel Phillips has gone from us. It was he who said, "You must speak now, Mrs. Nichols," and led me to the Worcester desk for my debut thirty-two years ago. At first my heart cried out at the loss, and that it was just now! But more and more I see that now is the accepted time. His life is being emphasized by his death to revive and sow broadcast his burning words and glorious example of unswerving integrity and wise forethought in the highways and byways inaccessible to them in the long past by reason of prejudice, and lost sight of in the newer and exciting scenes of later years. Such a man was given to teach the grand possibilities of human love and devotion.

I am watching your movements hopefully. Remember, if in a good cause we don't get all we expect, we're sure to get a good deal of advantage we didn't expect.

Yours lovingly,

Clarina I. H. Nichols

Woman Suffrage Association Convention
Washington, D.C.
January 20, 1885

Dear Susan:

I am very sick of acute bronchitis. I am not utterly hopeless of rallying for a few weeks or months longer; but my friends think I have little expectation of many days. My last words in your (our) good work for humanity through its author is, "God is with us--there can be no failure, and no defeat outside ourselves that will not roll up the floodwood and rush away every obstruction."

"Farewell! farewell!" if forever (but I have hope yet). Remember my granddaughter when I am gone, and don't forget my loved ones.

Clarina I.H. Nichols

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