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CHRISTIAN LADY RHETORICA: AMERICANIZATION OF MARIAN RHETORIC  
IN EARLY AMERICAN SENTIMENTAL AND SEDUCTION NOVELS

by

STEPHANIE LASZIK

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in English  
Department of Literature and Languages  
Ann Beebe, Ph. D., Committee Chair

College of Arts and Sciences

The University of Texas at Tyler

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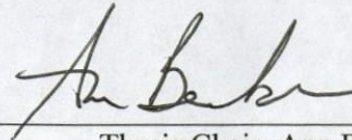
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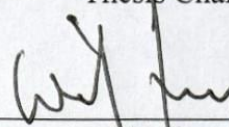
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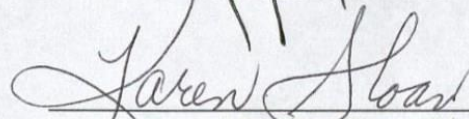
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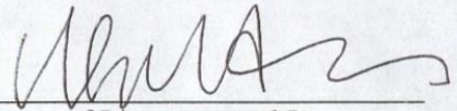
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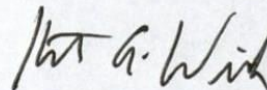
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Abstract

CHRISTIAN LADY RHETORICA:  
THE AMERICANIZATION OF MARIAN SPEECH IN EARLY AMERICAN  
SENTIMENTAL AND SEDUCTION NOVELS AS CULTURAL RHETORIC

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In the larger scope of religious feminine iconography, the Virgin Mary stands out as a vessel of cultural rhetoric. As medieval studies in religion, culture, and language indicate, the Virgin Mary's biblical speeches, combined with her image as a mother and follower of God, create a unique opportunity for authors of fiction to explore the Marian manifestations in their characters. This project illuminates the occurrences of Marian Rhetoric as they are found in American sentimental and seduction novels as tools for cultural change.

The American sentimental and seduction novels discussed in this project, show a need for the cultural commentary that only Marian rhetoric had the ability to address.

Close analysis of Marian characters and their relationships with language highlight Marian's rhetoric's role in the eventual construction of American Catholic identity.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Iconography of female idols pre-dates Christianity and can be approached with regard to each individual female's influence on the culture in which they are situated. The similarities between Isis, Ishtar, Asherah, Esther, and the Virgin Mary indicate a cultural response and need for feminine iconography as a vessel for cultural change. Isis, goddess of Egyptian religion and mother of Horace, has maintained influence as an image of the ideal mother beyond Ancient Egyptian culture and the Greco-Roman world into present-day pagan religions and goddess cult formations. One direct correlation between Isis and the Virgin Mary is seen in the popular depiction of Isis suckling her son Horace.

According to scholar Rowena Loverance, the correlation between the image of Isis and Horace and the fifth-century introduction of similar Marian images began the use of a "single quintessential motif" of motherhood (117). Early statues depicting Isis and Horus are early cultural agents for the depiction of women and mothers and are carried from antiquity to the mother figures of the early American period as is seen in Figure 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 included in Appendix A. Similarly, other earlier goddess cults influenced Christian belief and practice surrounding the veneration of Mary via iconography. The similarities between Marian iconography and other goddess cults in no way implies that the beliefs and practices are identical between any two figures. Rather, these similarities

allude to the similar underlying motivations for cultural change and feminine figures acting as cultural agents for change.

The aforementioned religious goddesses, as the similar names point out, are mutually inclusive of many similar depictions although notable differences exist. One such difference in the iconography of the veneration of Mary and that of other goddess cults can be found in the practice of symbolizing the goddess Asherah with a pelvic triangle. In his text *Did God Have a Wife?: Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, William G. Dever discusses the ever-changing role of Asherah in goddess cult following. One way in which the author evaluates images of Asherah, unlike the depictions of Mary, is in regards to modern Jewish practices and the iconography of Esther. Likewise, Dever makes a correlation between the practices of making triangular Hamentaschen cookies on the holiday of Purim is a survival of the ancient cult of Asherah (rather than being symbols of Hamen's hat, as the name and later Jewish lore would have it). The holiday of Purim is associated with the book of Esther in the Hebrew Bible; while Esther is depicted as a human in the biblical story, her name seems related to Ishtar, and it is possible that the book of Esther is a later story that was created as a way of reinterpreting the original significance of the holiday, to make it conform to Jewish monotheism (Dever 109). While iconographic similarities exist among the goddess cults mentioned, there are no mutually exclusive relationships between any two indicating that any of the goddesses be reconciled as a mere reiteration of another. Thus, the Virgin Mary, while possibly sharing many iconic traits with these other religious women, is

unique in her image and function as a vessel for cultural rhetoric. While telling of the connection between goddesses iconography, the correlation between Esther and Asherah is one that is not shared with Marian cult practice.

The transmission of Marian veneration transcends religious belief and in the rawest form can be acknowledged as a vehicle for engaging in and continuing a conversation about the role of Mary as a figure for change in a particular cultural setting. While the religious ownership of Marian iconography is most easily understood and recognized, images of the Virgin Mother also resonate in terms of the secular necessity of imagining women, specifically women in current cultural situations. In relation to the context of early American social demands for a better understanding of women's roles, historian Monica L. Mercado notes that "depictions of women illustrated battles over religious literacy and women's influences in nineteenth-century America" (2). Mercado's evaluation of print culture and religious influence indicate a desire to utilize feminine images as tools for teaching and reinforcing behavior, but at the same time unintentionally empowering the roles of certain feminine images.

One reason the Virgin Mary presents a unique opportunity for cultural change is rooted in the duality of her existence and remembrance over time. Cheryl Glenn notes that "provocative secondary accounts assure us that many rhetorical women existed, but all too often only the vibrations of their intellectual endeavors remain, their primary words having been lost, ignored, or destroyed" (175). This statement, when considering the duality of the Virgin Mary, uncovers the need for women of early American literature

to renew Mary as a rhetorical figure and not solely as the icon of the body and maternity. One particular view on masculinity and femininity in rhetorical history is further explored by Glenn when she says that “some Christians considered her the Holy Spirit of the Holy Trinity, while others equated her with wisdom of Sophia” (78). This dual identity, again addressed in regards to the Virgin Mary, indicates a competitive cultural understanding of what imaginings of the Virgin Mary were meant to represent and teach a particular culture. The eventual departure from Marian veneration in the image of Mary as the Christian Lady Rhetorica was the onset of Marian cult behavior revolving primarily around the body, rather than the language that had once been associated with Mary, and “just as worship of Mary was adjusted according to contemporary medieval mores, so were religious writings, scripture, and canon law (re)aligned, according to mores, both Christian and misogynistic” (78). As these trends in reimagining the Virgin began at what would be the close of the medieval period, the attempted revival of a Christian Lady Rhetorica in literature explored by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) and Susanna Rowson (1762-1824) would come about under similar societal pressures by the Church and male population. Meanwhile the belief was maintained that “The glorification of Mary, patron saint of childbirth, coredemptrix, perfect mother of Jesus, shines no favor on actual women, who remained subjected to their human imperfection” (Glenn 85). Although women could never be considered an equivalent to Mary, the nature of sentimental and seduction novels as tools or guides for young women allowed the

readership of the novels by Stowe and Rowson to imitate the Mother of Christ in the women that filled their stories.

The presence of Marian rhetoric in early American literature, specifically the sentimental and seduction novels from 1794 to 1852 by female authors, indicates an opportunity for literary works to mold the culture in which they exist. Therefore, the occurrence of Marian rhetoric in the literature of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century America indicates the power of Marian cult mentality and behavior to act as an agent for change upon the larger American culture in which the authors are writing their texts. Cultural rhetoric, as it is defined by Ivo Strecker and Stephen Tyler in 2009, concludes that “rhetoric allows us to turn fact into fiction and fiction into fact...and by means of rhetoric we conjure up those ideas, values, moral rules, and laws that constitute the basis of culture” (5). The cultural influence of Marian rhetoric engrained in Stowe and Rowson’s novels indicates a direct challenge to the cultural perception of the Virgin Mary, and therefore the function of all women as more than bodily entities.

The presence of Marian veneration in American literature represents a unique contribution to the study of cultural rhetoric. By concentrating on the intent, textuality, and effects of Marian rhetoric in early American novels, the cultural significance of the Virgin Mary’s functions indicates a change in the understanding and reception of Catholicism and Marian cult behavior in America from 1750 to 1850. The Virgin Mary’s literary influence in America would eventually become centered on bodily imagery. Despite this eventual shift in the cultural needs of American society to explore female

sexuality, the novels of nineteenth-century America indicate the epistemological basis of Marian veneration by noting the impact of Mary's influence on speech, writing, and grammar studies. The scope of this project indicates, through cultural rhetoric, the significance and impact of Marian presence in nineteenth-century American novels.

Early American sentimental novels indicate to the public, and scholars alike, that the authors included in this project note a difference in their works and similar novels of the British tradition. American authors seized the opportunity before them as contributors to a uniquely young and impressionable American culture that had yet to be strongly defined. Operating within the context of American life did not limit the novelists from looking to past literary trends for inspiration and motivation. One inspiration was the implementation of Marian rhetoric adopted from medieval literary trends. The transfer of the Marian image into American literature was met with fervent opposition by a staunchly anti-Catholic population. However, the attempts to remove the Holy Mother from literature were wholly unsuccessful. Instead, American authors began to craft a uniquely American Madonna to complement the new, malleable American culture rooted in removal from the smothering control of Old World culture. The authors of sentimental and seduction novels in early America renewed the Marian image in literature by honoring the medieval tendency to represent Mary as the Christian Lady Rhetorica. American sentimental and seduction novels represent a literary instance in which the Cult of Mary momentarily resurfaces as a textual homage to the Mother of the Trivium and a

momentary enlightenment prior to the fasciation of an oversexualized body of the Virgin Mary.

The motives and value of the American sentimental and seduction novels have been continuously overlooked in the larger scope of early American literary scholarship by avoiding the correlation between medieval and American literature. The scarce attempt of authors to restore the Virgin Mary's reverence to its status at the height of medieval Marian Cult formation is illuminated when evaluated in relation to the authors, critical reception, and texts that represent sentimental and seduction fiction.

The novels of the American sentimental and seduction genre explore Mary as the Mother of the Trivium and archetype of Christian rhetoric, rather than imagining the Virgin of the body that would emerge as the leading Marian image in American literature of the late nineteenth century. Early American sentimental and seduction novels are too often quieted and perceived as one-dimensional in their didactics. The general disinterest in looking closer at the medieval influence is due to the fact that the novels act as an exaltation of the Mother in a moment of resistance to the Catholic Church. The use of Marian images is revealed as a rebirth of medieval rhetoric and is transposed onto the American literary tradition by closely examining Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1794), and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

The larger scope of the novels also uncovers an underlying rhetorical significance of the Virgin to American cultural identity by examining authors of various philosophical and religious identities, the nation's current political and religious environment, and a

global response to cultural stigmas related to Catholicism. A new historical approach to each of the texts discussed reveals the direct impact of these novels within the historical environment they were created. Attending to the responses of Catholicism by public citizens, government officials, and social groups creates a flowing current of understanding that connects the assumptions behind cultural constructs and the meanings given to them by individuals. In my first chapter I will address the relevant history of the Catholic Church in early America, indicating that certain revelations are brought forth that indicate the potential impact of literature on both the individual and the larger society. By studying sentimental and seduction novels from early-American authors, a new historicist critical approach uncovers significance beyond literary seclusion and reveals the works as a part of life larger than existing for their own sake.

The author's biographies, as historic contribution to the novels' construction, also represent the culturally-constructed attitudes and choices revealed in the text. The duality of the authors' attributes to the reading of each text in terms of their contributions to cultural rhetoric. Unlike the cultural materialism of the British tradition, the episteme of anti-Catholicism believed to be controlling the period in American history occupied by the novels did not go on unchanged by the impact of Marian rhetoric found in the literature. Each of the novels included in the scope of this project uniquely engrains a reconfigured Marian image in the minds of readers, reviving medieval Marian iconography and combating the complete deletion of positive Catholic perceptions from American culture. The early American sentimental and seduction novels herein discussed

integrate Marian rhetoric and disseminate it to non- and anti-Catholic Americans in a way that reconstructs the assumed idolization associated with Marian cult communities.

A large portion of the following project is dedicated to establishing the significance of Marian rhetoric to literary studies throughout history. Utilizing the foundations of Marian rhetoric established in Georgiana Donavin's *Scribit Mater: Mary and Language Arts in the Literature of Medieval England* (2012), the aforementioned novels breathe a new spirit into the revered Mother's life in totality: from childhood to Assumption. The literature of Early American authors tends to explore the Virgin Mary by either negating Her role in religious and women's studies altogether, or by focusing solely on Her conception and the function of bodily imagery. The two novels addressed discreetly combat the singular stream of thought and navigate the power of the Holy Mother. The attempts of the authors, however, would eventually be over-taken by the infatuation of the Virgin birth and lessening significance of the historical figure to her myth and function as such. While multitudes of theoretical scholarship has been produced about these novels and current criticism primarily indicates attention to general feminist theory or to the impacts of education in America, there is little indication that the correlation between the Christian Lady Rhetorica and American sentimental and seduction novels has been given the attention it deserves in either literary, theological, or historical studies. Rowson and Stowe's novels and the canon of American sentimental and seduction novels deserve the contributions of a more focused examination and analysis of the Virgin Mary's functions.

## Chapter 2

### Historical Necessity and the Critical Reception of Culturally Motivated Marian Rhetoric in a Time of Cessation from Romish Culture

Much of the criticism surrounding American sentimental and seduction novels is rooted in American identity and the role of women in American life. The multitude of scholarship on the two novels included in this project explores issues of race, family dynamics, and American identity. These novels, however, offer literary critics more than the surface level issues common to American literature. Instead, the significance of these novels reaches back to deeply rooted ongoing issues of humanity. Susanna Rowson's novel *Charlotte Temple* is the tale of a British schoolgirl who is seduced by a charming soldier, John Montraville. He takes her to America where he abandons her while she is pregnant and ill. Charlotte, unsure of what to do, contacts her parents and her father travels to New York. Forced to leave her home, Charlotte reaches out to her old teacher for help. Mrs. Crayton refuses, but Charlotte is taken in by someone else and delivers her child. Just as her father arrives, her illness intensifies. Charlotte asks her father to care for her child Lucy. Both Montraville and Mrs. Crayton suffer for their role in Charlotte's downfall.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, is the wrenching tale of the hardships of slavery. Uncle Tom and Harry, the young son of Eliza, are destined to be sold by their master George Shelby. Eliza escapes with Harry and heads north to reunite

with her husband in Canada. Uncle Tom is sold to a family in New Orleans where he shares a special relationship with his master. Tom's promised freedom is unfulfilled due to the master's sudden death. Uncle Tom is sold to a vicious slave master, Simon Legree. On the Legree plantation, he befriends a slave named Cassy and the two have a close friendship. When Cassy escapes, Legree is furious that Uncle Tom will not give up her whereabouts. Cassy arrives in Canada and discovers her long lost daughter is Eliza. The reunited family moves to Europe and eventually Africa. Meanwhile, Tom is severely beaten and dies.

Upon publication in 1852, Stowe's novel quickly sold over 300,000 copies. The criticism of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* exists as nearly the only notable criticism on any of Stowe's works. At the time of its publication, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was given overwhelmingly supportive reviews. Figures such as Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and former slave Sella Martin all saw the potential in the ways in which Stowe's text encapsulates a historical moment and affects the national makeup upon publication (Knight 348). However, Denise Knight also notes that "throughout early twentieth century, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was either dismissed for its sentimentalism, criticized for its unpolished style, or considered too marginal for serious critical inquiry" (348). The popularity of Stowe's novel continued throughout numerous publications and translations into the languages of the world. Despite the market success, Stowe's novel has faced continued criticism.

In 1997, Joanne Dobson's "Reclaiming Sentimental Literature" proclaimed that sentimental literature, despite prior beliefs that it was lesser in significance, deserved the same literary attention and analysis as canonical authors of the period. Dobson notes the changes in reception, but for each novel she validates her claim that each has something to offer to literary studies that had not yet been evaluated through modern critical theories. Critic Blythe Forcey reads *Charlotte Temple* as a moment of change in American literature. Forcey argues that Rowson's novel indicates the end of the epistolary style of novel writing. In contrast to *The Coquette*, Forcey argues that leaving out the epistolary form allows readers to gain a closer connection to the text.

Unlike Rowson's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is often analyzed in terms of basic Catholic influences attributed to Stowe's personal interests and the more overt religious and racial conversations in the text. Recently, Stowe's novel has been viewed through new literary lenses. Ashley C. Barnes' essay provides a close reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Gates Ajar* from the perspective of exhibitional style. The purpose of her reading is to look at surface-level characterizations rather than in-depth interpretations of each character. While the essay attempts to set up a correlation between Protestant and Catholic influences as stylistic choices, the author's approaches do not account for the possibility for the presence of Marian rhetoric in Stowe's novel. Overall, the author's attention to exhibitional style is a compelling and thoughtful approach, but it is complicated by the comparison and contrast of Protestantism and Catholicism.

Focusing less of style, and more on cultural impact, another critical view of the novels by Stowe and Rowson include John Gatta's *American Madonna: Images of the Divine Woman in Literary Culture*. John Gatta's book focus on the text he believes to most fully encompass the trends in American literary culture to define a uniquely Americanized version of the Virgin Mary. Contextualized within the canons of authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harold Frederic, Henry Adams, and T. S. Eliot, the Marian images explored by Gatta include large chunks of fictionalized Marian embodiment that each exist to demonstrate varied manifestations of the Virgin Mother. Gatta situates these particular others as representative of moments responsible for what is now the accepted Virgin Mary in American popular and literary culture.

Based primarily on the deconstruction of each author's historical biography, the author provides a series of basic, underlying trends that better the understanding of how and why Americans view the Virgin Mary in the ways that she is understood to function in the American conscience. Most notably, Gatta's position on Harriet Beecher Stowe's fiction stands out as wholly concerned with the maternal nature of the Virgin. Expounding upon the author's preoccupation with Mariolatry in her personal sphere, Gatta attempts to create an unbending correlation between Stowe's relationship with her son and the biblical maternal dynamic. With ample evidence from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The Minister's Wooing*, *Agnes of Sorrento*, *Poganuc People*, *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, and *Mater Dolorosa*, Gatta defends his argument that Stowe's characters are

manifestations of the Virgin's motherly pangs. While relevant and intuitive, Gatta frequently contradicts his own observations of the influence of Mary as the Mother of the liberal arts and Woman of the divine Word. Occurring more than a dozen times within his chapter on Stowe's fiction, the authoritative nature of the Virgin's use of rhetoric and power of oratory is offset or only explored at a surface level before quickly contradicting what Georgiana Donavin views to be the presence of Christian Lady Rhetorica. From Gatta's text a gulf emerges in the transposition of the medieval English instruction of Marian rhetoric.

In the period between the height of medieval Marian devotion and American domestic fictions, theologians and scholars of literature and history attempted to trace the changes in Marian reception through various vessels such as literature, law, education, rhetoric and other major cultural components. One such example can be seen in Jane Donawerth's "Conversation and the Boundaries of Public Discourse in Rhetorical Theory by Renaissance Women." Donawerth's essay is one of a pair of essays by the author that looks at the change incurred in rhetoric by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English women authors. Donawerth's essay argues that women writers of the British Renaissance shifted the focus on rhetoric from the public to the private sphere. However, in doing so, the author attempts to separate the written word from oral speech, insisting that each is inherently different and incomparable. While the texts and authors contribute little to the examination of American sentimental and seduction novels, the essay does provide a

historical background that allows readers to see the ways in which feminist and, more specifically Marian rhetoric, can be traced from medieval literature.

Likewise, Lisa Ede, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford's "Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism" is intended to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the historical points in which rhetoric and feminism have met. Using the ancient rhetoricians as a basis, each topical section begins by rooting the subject in the teachings of rhetoric by either Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, or Augustine. Although most of the studies of rhetoric prior to post-modernism dealt little with feminism, the authors insist that there is proof that feminism has much to contribute to rhetoric. Although the authors appear to have provided a comprehensive look at feminism in rhetoric, they fail to ever mention Christian Lady Rhetorica of the medieval period. Mostly, this essay only further validates the necessity in evaluating the presence of Marian rhetoric in American literature.

The critical reception of the two sentimental and seduction novels analyzed in this project are not revealing enough to understand the ways in which Marian rhetoric becomes cultural rhetoric and changes the American literary construction of the Virgin. To fully conceptualize the change that occurs in cultural norms, a thorough examination of the critical reception on Marian rhetoric and studies of cult behavior is also necessary. James Emmett Ryan's dissertation entitled *Inventing Catholicism: Nineteenth-Century Literary History and the Contest for American Religion* contributes to this analysis of sentimental and seduction novels by providing a framework for the nineteenth-century

literary environment in which “the rhetoric of American Catholicism during the nineteenth-century [sic] was intellectually fragmented, regionally variant, often produced without official church sanction, and subject to a wide range of perspectives that draw on the specificity of American social, economic, and political conditions” (i). Ryan’s essay contributes to the documented transfusion of a uniquely American Catholic identity created through literature.

America, in its infancy, faced a monumental shift in culture and social politics in the latter half of the nineteenth century. An indirect war was being waged between the nation’s conservative holy men and the artists of the humanities. It soon became apparent to all that “what was once the province of theologians became largely the business of creative writers” (Reynolds 15). Despite the era’s Protestant religious officials, writers were acting in no way contrary to the fundamental American reiteration of religious literature. Early American religious leaders such as Solomon Stoddard (1643-1729), Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), George Whitefield (1714-70), and Father [Edward Thompson] Taylor (1793-1871) fed the fires of Hell with their glorification of Satan’s fearful power and God’s sweet deliverance. As recent immigrants from Europe, American men would meet these leaders to be told of the gory, disgusting, and vile fates they faced as sinners. The Native American Party, with the support of passionate ministers, made their warnings to Irish immigrants clear: “In 1834, a mob of people—allegedly incited by Lyman Beecher’s anti-Catholic sermons...terrorized nuns and students in a nearby Charlestown convent, desecrated the chapel and graveyard, and

burned the convent to the ground” (Fanning 22-24). In person, far from the pages of books, these men used language and literary devices to force the messages from their God upon the impressionable audiences that stood before them. Father Taylor, the richest in delivery and use of language, would be one of the best known ministers of New England. Often shouting, stomping, and reddening in the face, the Methodist speaker became an example of the passionate way in which words became action. Taylor approached his duty, although not official, as he did not possess the necessary qualifying papers to speak such sermons, with a great involvement of spoken and bodily energy: “He flung himself around his little pulpit-stand with immense contortion” (Haven 44). Darting around the audience with masterfully crafted metaphors and images spilling from his tongue, Father Taylor was the medium by which religious doctrine shifted from lips to letters on a page. Soon, the writers took hostage the veracity of religious teachings and molded them into what would come to define American literature. Although placed in the open for writers to use, religious leaders had to face the reality that American culture was changing, and literature would soon be the new text of religious ideologies. As the transfer occurred, “William Ellery Channing, the leading liberal minister of the day, could concede: ‘The press is a mightier power than the pulpit’” (Channing 164).

By tracing the development of the transcending power of religious ideology as seen through the literature of early America, the fundamental principles on which America was founded as an anti-Catholic nation, the subsequent assimilation of Catholicism into Protestant life, and the ways in which religious writing was adapted,

illustrates how a new playground of literary exposition created a fresh American Catholic identity for American authors. The presence of Catholics in predominately Protestant New England provided American writers a new lens through which to explore. The societal responses to Catholicism, the impact of authors on nineteenth-century American culture, and the uniquely Catholic images adopted by authors such as Rowson and Stowe, indicate that the American Catholic identity became defined through the adoption of the literary vision of Catholicism. The most prominent discrepancy in the study of Marian influence on literature is described by P.J. Achtemeier in *Mary in the New Testament* as being “the problem of intervening traditions” which is “particularly acute in the instance of Mary, the mother of Jesus, for mariological attitudes in the post-Reformation West have been sharply divergent” (7).

In researching the impact of Catholicism and the Marian image made by American authors, many sources have proved useful for chronicling the transmission of religious characteristics into literature, and, thus, recreating the American Virgin. In the texts on the subject of an Americanized Madonna by authors Paul Giles, Jody M. Roy, and Jenny Franchot, the progression of Catholic diffusion into society is clearly outlined. Each of the author’s texts alludes to the further implementation of a unique Virgin Mother best suited to accommodate the American desire for understanding the Virgin Mary as important for how her body has functioned rather than her role in influencing language. The development of the transcending power of religious ideology, as seen through the literature of the American Renaissance, indicates that the fundamental

principles on which America was founded as an anti-Catholic nation, the subsequent assimilation of Catholicism into Protestant life, and the ways in which religious writing was adapted, illustrates how a new playground of literary exposition created a fresh American Catholic identity for American authors. The movement of Catholics in predominately Protestant New England provided American writers a new lens through which to explore. The societal responses to Catholicism, the impact of authors on nineteenth-century American culture, and the uniquely Catholic images adopted by authors prove that the American Catholic identity became defined through the adoption of the literary vision of Catholicism.

Focusing on the absorption of Catholic images and ideals in literature, Paul Giles documents the exchange between Protestants and Catholics and the ways in which literary figures adopted select concepts. Exploring the causes and products of the American Enlightenment, Giles's book examines three specific areas in which American writers adopted Catholicism for literary purposes: history, society, and philosophy. The first area focused on in the book looks to the actuality of Catholic history and how that history corresponds to the American view of the Catholicism. By evaluating the various American myths concerning Catholicism, the author better establishes the desire of American authors to adopt Catholicism as a tool, capable of being manipulated, to enhance literature.

In regards to the political and social reaction to the Catholic presence in America, Jody M. Roy's work outlines the history of American resistance to Catholicism and the

reactions from Catholics. This historical account of the emergence, organization, and formalization of Anti-Catholic campaigns in America follows the long-standing American opposition to the Catholic Church. Through this detailed account of Anti-Catholic attitudes, Roy intensifies the role of those in support of upholding Catholic acceptance in America. Roy identifies a trend in the capability of American literature in subsequently defining the idea of the America Catholic. The foundation of American opposition to Catholicism and the growing disdain amongst Catholics to secure their unique identities solidify the argument that while Catholicism offered something unique to American literature, American literature returned to Catholics a public image.

Jenny Franchot evaluates more closely the necessity of Americans to assimilate the idea of Catholicism into the national identity. The various ways in which American authors used Catholicism as a means of symbolism, imagery, and philosophical ideology, are explored as necessary in the creation of an exceptionally American Catholic population. Beyond introducing Catholics to American culture, Franchot argues that Protestant Americans needed to feel that they had some degree of control over the ways in which Catholics would be viewed. As a means of unifying while separating, American writers combined the romanticism and darkness of Catholicism to highlight the happiness of Protestant America. The author explores how these purposes had an opposite effect, leading to an American obsession with repulsive Catholic images. This book challenges the overall assumption of where the power was held in assimilating Catholicism into American culture. While many felt the American authors to be incorrectly portraying

Catholics, their literature actually attracted much of the Protestant population to better understand and respectively appreciate Catholic beliefs and practices.

Paul Giles, Jody Roy, and Jenny Franchot add depth and significance to the study of the transmission of Catholicism into American literature. Using the varying historical perspectives and viewpoints of Catholic impact on society, each of the works lends to the fundamental argument that the literary fusion with Catholicism created a new Catholic identity in nineteenth-century Americans.

As the desires to break from the Catholic Church heightened in necessity, the most philosophical of the discordant population “catalogued the human mind itself as either Protestant or Catholic in its proclivities and capabilities” (Roy 83). Insinuating that mankind was fundamentally different, according to these theological viewpoints, proposed that the coexistence of both in society was impossible. Such philosophies empowered the people to break away and seek independence in America. The attempts to establish freedom in America may have been only partially considered, noting that “from the start, the United States was geographically bounded by Catholic empires: Spanish territory in Central and South America, and ‘New France’ to the north” (Giles 35). With Puritans focused on the adventure of the wilderness that tempted them in America, Catholics were widely viewed in contrast as lavish city-dwellers. These stereotypical categorizations blurred the visions of early Americans so that when Irish immigrants flooded America, the possibility to cohabit seemed preposterous. Given the historical accounts of the Crusades and the view of the Catholic Church on a global scale,

Protestants were not easily convinced that the sole Catholic interest was to do morally right by God. Instead, Catholics were seen as doing evil work: “Priests frightened nations with religious terror...and in return, the sovereigns loaded the priests with opulence and power, and undertook, from time to time, to exterminate their enemies” (Johnson 139). The hatred of Catholics had grown so completely overbearing that American newspapers were overjoyed at the opportunity to convince the Protestant population that “no class of people on earth are more gullible, more stupidly credulous, than Roman Catholics. There is more superstition to the square inch among these Christians than among the densest heathen” (“Roman”). This general attitude, even if not shared by all, was expressed to all literate Protestants with privilege enough to read periodical publications. While Catholic priests worked diligently to communicate to the public that “loyalty to the Church is not inconsistent with the highest type of America citizenship” (“Catholic”). American writers often blindly defended the well-being of their nation, which they believed to be at risk of exploitation by Catholics. An 1890 article in the *Boston Investigator* illustrates the passion with which American journalists denounced Catholic occupation in America: “We do not agree with the idea that America would be no worse if there was ‘a cross on every hilltop and a covenant in every vale.’ We think it would be decidedly the worst” (“Catholic”). Expanding on the effects of Catholicism in America, the author of the article writes: “It would change industry to prayer, progress to stagnation, enlightenment to ignorance, and the joys of the home to the mockery of nunnery (“Catholic”). Though the efforts of the Puritan settlers of America were with some degree of reasonable cause,

their escape to a new land would prove unyielding to the influence of the Catholic Church.

The pioneering ministers of the young nation established clear principles by which the integrity of Protestantism was to be upheld in the colonies and most of society had a hatred of the impure Roman Catholic ways. This disgust was strengthened with the utmost respect for Protestant doctrine and an undermining of natural wonders often seen in Catholicism. While Catholics existed in America, the sheer force in numbers was in large part due to the reigning Pope in the Vatican. In his official work, “*Annuario Pontificio* for 1865...The reigning Pope has created four archbishopries, and 94 bishopries, 12 metropolitan sects, one delegation and six prefectures. Never has a pontiff been so lavish of ecclesiastical preferment” (Reynolds 17). This act only further incited tensions between Protestant and Catholic leaders in America. As the Protestant population of America continued to have a general distrust and unkindness towards Catholics, the media went as far so to exploit prominent members of Catholic society at every chance. Journalists made these men their pawns in writing enticing news. An article in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, 1800, regarding the event of an arrest of “two Roman Catholic clergymen” indicates the attempts to uncover the flawed Catholic character (“Yesterday”). With only minimal detail as to the arrest, and none to the crime, the article falsely stereotypes the Catholic men as ill-willed. By the mid-nineteenth century, Catholicism was on the forefront of political upheaval, due to incidents such as the aforementioned arrests, that lead to dramatic changes: the English Catholic Emancipation

Bill of 1829, Irish immigration to America during the 1840's, urban labor riots that divided along religious class lines, the Mexican –American War of 1846, and the rise of the nativist and Know-Nothing movements. Catholicism presented a multitude of threats to Protestant Americans. Believing they were moving to America for freedom, the Catholic immigrants' challenges to Protestantism left Catholics unwelcomed to nearly everyone but authors. The threat against Protestant-held jobs, the lure of exoticism, and the thrill of politics all attracted writers (Franchot xx-xxi).

Although journalists played their hand in the negativity toward Catholics, ministers were the true instigators. By the nineteenth century, American society shifted its attitude towards both religion and literature as primary definers of life. These attitudes were best seen in “popular sermons [which] became increasingly dominated by secular anecdote, humor, and pungent images” (Reynolds 7). It soon became evident that boredom and inconsolability were upon the public, and “on all fronts it seemed that signifiers were being harshly torn from signifieds, as religious, political, and even journalistic signs suddenly lacked reliable referents” (Han 48). And thus, the reawakening of Catholicism was a refreshing new concept. Despite the changing fashion, minister stuck to their beliefs in Catholicism as a negative effect on America. Though his role as a minister was indicative of evangelical Puritan beliefs, William Ellery Channing's social commentary had a dual, unforeseen effect of the writers of his time. He had inadvertently encouraged the symbolic and metaphoric uses of Catholicism in literature. Channing believed that literature was largely responsible for the character of a

nation. As his fellow writers proved, Catholicism was, in fact, part of the American identity. Having made so bold a statement, Channing was forced to amend his speech by specifying that new American ideals be upheld, rather than those of the British: meaning, of course, ideas influenced by the Catholic Church.

While the initial purpose of American settlement was a deviation from the Catholic Church, prominent European leaders continued to influence life in the early America. *The Vermont Chronicle* documents that the first Roman Catholic Church in the United States was in Maryland. This church, commissioned by Calvert, Lord Baltimore's son, was in Maryland. The early presence of Catholicism in America would not easily be shaken. Before the mass immigration of Irish Catholics in the nineteenth century, Catholics let their presence be known on one of the nation's most important issues. Expanding its influence, the Catholic Church united on the solitary issue affecting America at its core: slavery. Uniting most closely with Protestant churches in the South, Catholics "condemn[ed] cruelty and injustice; but for slavery as an institution, independent of isolate cases, she legislates in Christian justice" ("First"). This was a victory in the eyes of southerners who were seeking support in remaining a slave nation. Though not showing outward resentment to African-American slavery, the Catholics consoled those involved in the America practice by offering knowledge to slaves and their masters. They taught of submission on earth and heavenly reward, and to the masters, warned of judgment. Doing so, "the Church endeavored to harmonize both, and

not by any violent conviction to endeavor to uproot society, for the purpose of attaining one good, at the certainty of many evils” (“Catholic Stand”).

Catholic officials were determined to spread their influence to America to better serve the recent number of Catholic immigrants making lives in America. They closely monitored the growth of their followers to better accommodate Catholic needs. The Catholic Almanac of 1850 documents that the number of practicing priests in the U.S. grew from sixty-eight in 1808 to 1,810 in 1850. As immigrants flooded into America, the new Catholic population made a profound impact on the New England area that was home to the most dense population of American writers. In Emily Dickinson’s hometown of Amherst, Irish settlers grew uneasy in the period between the celebration of the first Catholic mass in 1840 and 1871 when Catholic presence was unable to dismiss. It was well known that the differing beliefs, language, culture, and religion of Irish immigrants had become a source of joking and amusement to Yankees. Fellow author, Ralph Waldo Emerson, “resorted to calling the new immigrants ‘shovel-handed Irish’ and ‘semi-brutes’” (Lucas). While authors such as Emerson and Margaret Fuller would eventually provide direct commentary on the state of Catholic culture and specifically Marian veneration, the large number of immigrants could also be seen in the double consciousness of many works of American literature discussed prior to the mid-nineteenth century. As both Protestants and Catholics struggled to find their places in American society, a new force of anti-Catholic interests arose.

Beginning on an intimate and localized level, the anti-Catholic efforts soon spread across the nation. While it may have been easily recognizable to few, like Dickinson, in the beginning, these ideals began to be heard by all Protestants. As the anti-Catholic cause fought for the rights they felt owed to them, they in turn only inspired further opposition. The cause and process were multifaceted: anti-Catholics attacked the Roman spiritual presence while pro-Catholic voice emerged in literature as a fascination with Rom's influence. Feeding on the attacks and counterattacks, the duel only advanced the subsequent creation of a uniquely American Catholic identity.

Although the feud had been going on for some 150 years, journalists continued their efforts to subdue the influences of Catholicism at every chance. In protecting the image of the Church, Bishop Gilmour refuted the publication of an article in the newspaper the *Catholic Knight*. Soon, the news was a hot topic for secular journalists. According to one journalist, "Our interest in this quarrel is simply the desire to see the right of a free press maintained in the United States. When a Roman Catholic priest exercises his ecclesiastical authority to suppress a paper...there should be in such a land as this power to suppress the priest" (Goluboff 360). Having little acceptance in the American social and political realms, Catholic leaders often faced struggles in maintaining the integrity of the Catholic Church's longstanding practices. In legal matters, such as the case of the excommunicated bishop Samuel Carten, of Halifax, Massachusetts, Supreme Court Judge Haliburton and the jurors were unable to uphold the Catholic justice system and thus simply dismissed the church's case. Despite the legal

system failing to aid the Catholic Church, “Several of the Catholic clergymen of Halifax were witnesses on the occasion, and gave many interesting facts respecting the rights of society and the privileges of the clergy, as regards the discipline of the Catholic Church, in temporal as well as spiritual matters, in this and other countries” (Franchot 270). John Hughes, Archbishop of New York, was the primary force in curbing the efforts of anti-Catholics in America. Campaigning mostly from 1840-1850, Hughes spoke out to political leaders, Protestants, and Catholics to end the unjust discrimination taking place in America. Although his methods were uncharacteristic of his position, Hughes embraced the role he was given and, choosing to react to politics, distanced himself from other passive Catholic leaders before him. Despite his efforts, the actions of the Catholics in America could not compete with the fury felt toward the Vatican.

Intensifying the resentment to Catholic presence in America, the Papal Bull of 1864-1865 was a breaking point for the anti-Catholic supporters. Despite efforts to calm the rising anger, the hate grew. To try and appeal to American concerns, an official statement was put forth to the public reiterating that the Papal Bull was not intended to threaten the constitutional freedoms of free press or free speech. Instead, the Bull was meant to be addressed to Europeans acting out of accordance to Papal law. These remarks, while acting as an attempt to calm American Protestant anxieties, were ineffective. Divulging opposition on the basis of religious freedom, Puritan religious figures often publicly practiced hypocrisy in their motives by saying “Modern Liberalism, Infidelity, Ultra High Church Doctrines, the principles of expediency, all

these things conspire to aid the march of Popery” (Roy 161). With anti-Catholic organizations gaining power across the nation, there remained a sector of Protestant Americans unaffected by the overprotective sense of Americanism at large.

Much like the impact made by journalists and anti-Catholics, American literature and culture are indebted to the authors of sentimental and seduction novels for their contribution to the memory that would be created of the Virgin Mary and the developing American Catholic identity. As James Emmett Ryan asserts, the work of authors such as Rowson and Stowe would not go unnoticed, because “these resources would prove crucial to representations of Roman Catholicism within a national literary culture whose growth owed so much to the emergence of women’s professional authorship, burgeoning numbers of female readers, and representations of feminine sentiment in popular books” (14). Exploring the Virgin Mary in a uniquely American setting, American sentimental and seduction novels attempt to restore to literary studies the archetypal Marian rhetoric. Competing within a limited discourse, the American revival of Marian rhetoric represents a unique moment in which American culture briefly experienced the literary Virgin as having a function beyond that of the mother and sexualized body. The opposition to Catholicism that came to represent American political and religious discourse would not continue to foster openly Marian rhetorical practices in literature. However, Susanna Rowson and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novels are crafted in a way that allows various other perspectives and discourses to overtly reinforce hegemonic norms while at the same time subverting them through rhetoric. The premise of this argument is indebted in large

part to Georgiana Donavin's irreplaceable contribution to the study of the literary influences of Marian Cult veneration and Christian Lady Rhetorica.

Jenny Franchot's *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* evaluates more closely the necessity of Americans to assimilate the idea of the Virgin Mary into the national identity of women. The various ways in which American authors used the Virgin Mary as a means of symbolism, imagery, and philosophical ideology, are explored as necessary in the creation of an exceptionally American Catholic Mother. Franchot argues that Protestant Americans needed to feel that they had some degree of control over the ways in which Catholics would be viewed. As a means of unifying while separating, American writers combined the romanticism and darkness of the Marian myth to highlight the happiness of Protestant American women. Franchot explores how these purposes had an opposite effect, leading to an American obsession with sexual images of the Virgin Mother. *Roads to Rome* challenges the overall assumption of where the power was held in assimilating Catholicism into American culture. While many felt the American authors to be incorrectly portraying Mary, their literature actually attracted much of the Protestant population to better understand and respectively appreciate Catholic beliefs and practices. Each novel examined indicates an attention to the veneration of Mary and the prominence of her role through language.

The eventual impact of Protestantism on society led to what Saylor qualifies as a "cultural-religiosity paradigm" which eventually "manipulated Roman Catholic immigrant women's traditional reliance upon Mary as a source of religious identity" that

forced the women towards a Protestant view of true womanhood (131). Whereas Saylor views the result to be a combination of two separate identities, the first being “the True Womanhood Model, largely a social and cultural paradigm, and Mary, a paradigm of feminine religiosity” (131). Rowson and Stowe however have created texts that clarify the relationship and mutual effectiveness between the two paradigms. The practical assertion of the paradigm is illustrated in both Eva and Lucy. The two Marian characters are relieved from the burden of Eve’s sin through the authors’ construction of underlying Marian rhetoric.

Focusing on the political and social reaction to the Catholic presence in America, Jody M. Roy’s *Rhetorical Campaigns Of The 19th Century Anti Catholics and Catholics in America* outlines the history of American resistance to Catholicism and the reactions from Catholics. The reactionary environment has much to do with the shift in the Virgin from a representative of the utmost divine speech and wisdom to a guinea pig to explore the implications of a virgin birth. This historical account of the emergence, organization, and formalization of Anti-Catholic campaigns in America follows the long-standing American opposition to the reverence of the Holy Mother. Roy intensifies the role of those in support of upholding Catholic acceptance in America through the detailed account of Anti-Catholic attitudes. Again, by closely looking into the political essays and literary works of Orestes Brownson, Roy identifies a trend in the capability of American literature in subsequently defining the idea of the America Madonna. The foundation of American opposition to Catholicism and the growing disdain amongst Catholics to secure

their unique identities solidifies the argument that while the Virgin Mary offered something unique to American literature, American literature returned to society a very specific and oversexualized public image, and “Evangelical Protestant missionaries—represented here by the prolific American Tract Society (ATS)—found reason to portray Protestant women as special conveyors of the word” (Mercado 2). The acknowledgement of the influence of Protestant women would not go unnoticed as Marian veneration would progress from being solely the work of Catholic Church leaders to the shared responsibility of authors aware of the need to preserve Marian rhetoric in secular literature.

## Chapter 3

### Understanding the Significance of Mary and Defining Marian Rhetoric

A solid understanding of the historical moment in which the novels discussed are written further illuminates the need to look beyond the immediate necessity of the texts and consider the larger cultural influence of each text. Marian veneration and cult attraction stems from an important attention to how Marian iconography has been shaped in relation to the moments and cultures being evaluated. When analyzed in terms of cultural rhetoric, Stowe and Rowson's novels reveal the power of authors to contribute a base layer of Marian respect to the moral fabric of the anti-Catholic culture in which their novels are initially released. However, to appreciate the work of the American authors, it is necessary to trace the development of Marian veneration throughout the literature of centuries prior to American sentimental and seduction novels.

#### ***Protoevangelium* (Book of James)**

The scarce discussion of Mary in canonical texts and the total of four instances in which Mary speaks in biblical text are largely supplemented in Marian historiography by reference and attention to what early scholars titled *Protoevangelium*. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, in *Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus*, acknowledges that the early extracanonical text, while well-known amongst scholars, is rarely referenced outside of communities of religious scholars. Thus, the scarcely recorded biographical contributions on Mary indicate the necessity of creating Marian imagery through fiction to fulfill the

audience desire to understand the woman as a foundational female icon. Gaventa qualifies the importance of *Protoevangelium* by asserting that, while “the story takes place prior to the narrations of Matthew and Luke” the value it holds is that it is the “first evidence of Christian interest in Mary herself” (72-3). The essential difference between this text and the New Testament is not in the qualities attributed to Mary, but rather the role she plays in the larger story of Jesus’ life. This contribution by this early text is mimicked in the sentimental and seduction novels that weren’t meant to define Mary, but rather were intended to fabricate an attitude toward Mary that contributed to the culture in which they were written. Another proposed influence of this early text on the American sentimental and seduction novels discussed here is that the text

...further removes her as a model for Christian womanhood from a practical, earthly context in which all other earthly women must exist and function; unlike Mary, they are without the supernatural benefit and quality of (or the capacity for) perpetual virginity and resultant spiritual purity (Saylor 119).

Much like the emerging American literary treatment of Mary in the mid-nineteenth century, Darris Catherine Saylor’s “The Virgin Mary: A Paradoxical Model for Roman Catholic Immigrant Women of the Nineteenth Century” fails to broaden the scope of Marian studies beyond a focus on Mary as restricted to bodily influence. Saylor’s argument negates the view of Mary as exemplar of language and rhetoric. Instead, Saylor claims that the impossibility of women to retain virgin status through conception, birth, and after birth translates into a poor attempt of society to transpose Marian qualities

on the fulfillment of “True Womanhood” (109). Despite the incongruent claims made by scholars regarding Mary’s worth as a model for woman, texts such as *Charlotte Temple* and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* contributed to the cultural rhetoric that influenced the eventual declaration of the Immaculate Conception.

Within half a century of *Charlotte Temple* and half a decade of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the Catholic Church, under the influence of Pope Blessed Pius IX would declare the Immaculate Conception as official doctrine in the following language:

We declare, pronounce, and define: the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful. (Haffner 153)

Largely the most controversial addition to Catholic Church doctrine to occur since the first two Marian dogmas including the dogma of Divine Motherhood established at the Council of Ephesus in 431 and the dogma of Perpetual Virginity maintained and described at the Council of Lateran 649; the dogma of Immaculate Conception reminded the world, Catholic and not, that the feats and remembrance of Mary are largely associated with the human body and its manifestations. Thus, at the moment of American uneasiness with Catholicism, female authors attempt to regain a viable feminine figure and are again disadvantaged by the tendency for public interest to migrate from the

Virgin's perfection of speech and knowledge of language to the inescapable bodily lure of virginity and childbirth. While the bodily Mary would come to define the American Madonna, Rowson and Stowe, like the medieval authors discussed by Georgiana Donavin, would acknowledge the significance of Mary's early life to her eventual ultimate role as Virgin Mother. Throughout the wider classification of conduct or domestic novels, Christian dichotomy insists upon women choosing the virtuous path rather than transgressing toward the path of Eve that leads to original sin that is thereby redeemed by Marian innocence and freedom from original sin.

### **Mary Speaks**

The occasions on which the Virgin Mary speaks in biblical texts each indicate a potential opportunity seized by Rowson and Stowe to incorporate Mariolatry into the literature commonly read by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American readers. Each of the following occasions of Marian speech are alluded to in the texts discussed. The first of such Marian speeches includes Luke's Gospel (Luke 1:26-38) in which Mary comes to demonstrate her perfected speech. Brian E. Daley, in his article entitled "Woman of Many Names: Mary in Orthodox and Catholic Theology" contrasts Mary's response to that of Zachary's, John the Baptist's father, and finds Mary's to stand out as more trusting (849). While both Mary and Zachary greet their propositions from God with many questions, Daley finds that Mary "responds to the call with a confession of unqualified obedience: 'Be it done unto me according to your word' (Lk 1:38)" (849).

This not only signifies Mary's unaltered adherence to her calling, but the response and specific language with which she responds further qualifies her as a model for studies in rhetoric and direct effectiveness of speech and oratory. Luke describes Mary's listening and internalization of her emotions, rather than vocalizations, to be reflective of her obedience toward God. However, these traits and tendencies not only reflect Mary's relationship with God, but also they come to be the materialization of the model of Christian Lady Rhetorica that writers, theologians, and women would come to imitate. By accepting God's promise, Mary demonstrates her willingness to serve as the reversal of Eve's error and as Irenaeus deems her, the key figure in "untying the knots" made by Eve's mistakes (Daley 850). This view as Mary as the new Eve is demonstrated in both her role as bodily redeemer of the sex but also as purifier of communication between human and God.

Stowe's Little Eva, experiences a similar moment to that of Mary's proposition by Gabriel and handles the moment with similar speech and reflection. As Tom sings a hymn to Eva about Heaven, the girl recalls: "'They come to me sometimes in my sleep, those spirits;' and Eva's eyes grew dreamy" (239). The child's reflections are generally straightforward. She shares her experiences in a way that is both profoundly emotional and decidedly unordinary. The child, like the Virgin Mary accepted her visions and communications with God as the only way and the right way.

The second occurrence of Marian speech in light of which Marian Rhetoric comes to exist is the *Magnificant* seen in Luke 1:46-56:

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord.

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from  
henceforth all  
generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy *is* his name.

And his mercy *is* on them that fear him from generation to generation.

He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the  
imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree.

He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of *his* mercy;

As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham. And to his seed forever.

And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

This speech by Mary and its context is revered in every Christian denomination and the context as a response to Elizabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist and seeing in the flesh the promises of God. Susanna Rowson explores the use of Marian Rhetoric in the fabricated prequel to the message of the *Magnificant* in Charlotte's pitiful speech to Belcour:

How can I be happy, deserted and forsaken as I am, without a friend of my own  
sex to whom I can unburthen my full heart, nay, my fidelity, suspected by the

very man for whom I have sacrificed every thing valuable in life, for whom I have made myself a poor despised creature, an outcast from society, an object only of contempt and pity. (72)

Rowson juxtaposes Charlotte's pleas to Belcour against Lucy's Marian tendencies throughout the novel. By incorporating Charlotte's pregnancy, Lucy becomes the Marian figure once again and Charlotte the Elizabethan figure.

Mary's perfection of speech is continuously paralleled by Lucy throughout *Charlotte Temple*. The third occurrence of Mary's speech in the Bible we see a mother speaking to her Child, gently and sincerely. Upon finding twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple Mary says "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing" (Lk 2:48). This moment and speech resonates with the motherly affection experienced by Lucy Temple upon learning of Charlotte's unknown whereabouts. Lucy prays: "Oh let thy bounteous Providence watch over and protect the dear thoughtless girl, save her from the miseries which I fear will be her portion, and oh! Of thine infinite mercy, make her not a mother, lest she should one day feel what I now suffer", and (43) in pleading for the protection of her daughter she so mimics Mary's concern for Christ.

The final Biblical utterance by the Virgin Mary can be found during the wedding at Cana in the Book of John. This occurrence, while Jesus' first miracle is performed, is important in understanding Mary's role as mother and instrument of God. She first approached her Son saying "They have no wine" in which Jesus responds "Woman, what

have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come” and “his mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:3-5). The way in which Jesus addresses Mary as “Woman” has been debated by biblical scholars for some time, however; it is the responses with which Mary addresses the servants that again establishes her brevity and clarity in speech. Eva, of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, is characterized as a child grown and fostered in the Marian image. In her biblical studies she is described in a way to reiterate the endless love and obedience Mary showed her Son and God: “Nor was Eva less zealous in kind offices, in return. Though a child, she was beautiful reader;-- a fine musical ear, a quick poetic fancy, and an instinctive sympathy with what is grand and noble” (236). The child, like Mary, is boundless in her gratitude and fervor for God’s love and promises.

The four instances in which Mary speaks in the Bible are a model for both Rowson and Stowe. The characters in the sentimental and seduction novels of early American literature encompass the purity and directness of speech with which Mary is revered. Like the literature of the Medieval Era, the two aforementioned novels value the scarcity and clarity of Marian speech. While a lack of vocalization is often viewed as an indication of subservience, the Marian speech in these texts is indicative of a reverence of language.

## **Motherhood**

The structure of *Charlotte Temple* is significant because it is designed to include the backstory of the Temple family and provided the novel's main character, Charlotte, with a history. One significance of this inclusion is that Lucy Temple's character is established and later developed into a foil for La Rue, but at a deeper level the backstory establishes a correlation between Lucy and the Virgin Mary. While Charlotte will eventually become the image of Marian Rhetoric, Lucy's characterization is comparable to particular Marian devotions seen in Anglo-Saxon meditations. Having learned of Lucy Temple's upbringing and virtuous character, the reader is given a sense of the possible paths a girl might take in life. Most of the criticism on *Charlotte Temple* remains closely tied to exploring class distinctions and gender roles and the image of the Virgin is overwhelmed with the broader question of what the author is saying about women.

Marion Rust's essay "What's Wrong with Charlotte Temple?" comes the nearest to exploring characters in a way as to give Marian scholars a renewed vantage point for criticism. Although Rust does address the fact that Lucy Temple is a foil to her daughter in terms of virtue and piousness, the correlation between Lucy as a Marian image and Charlotte's desire to meet similar expectations is never mentioned in the essay. Rust points out, "To seduce is 'to induce (a woman) to surrender her chastity.'" (495). As she continues, the essay is shaped around the idea that Charlotte was forgiven and still punished. Rust's view of Charlotte can also be aligned to Marian veneration and the concept Frederick W. Marks believes to be at fault for much of the confusion surrounding

the Virgin Mary's own virgin status while pregnant with the Son of God. This short article by Frederick W. Marks is indicative of a defensive rebuttal to decades and centuries of criticism about the relevance and reverence of the Virgin Mary in religious culture. Marks' essay provides counterarguments to many of the sweeping accusations of biblical proof that Mary is undeserving of the praise and status given to her by Marian cult followers. By clarifying particular images in biblical text and demystifying misconstrued language, Marks looks to note the biblical and historical relevance of Mary.

In his essay "Marian Misconceptions", Marks notes that often "Mary is also described as conceived without 'stain of sin,' rather than 'without sin,' meaning that she was free from such consequences as of original sin as the pain of child birth, bodily corruption, and sensual temptation," he continues, "Doubtless, there will always be those who present Mary as conceived 'without sin' (instead of 'without stain of sin', implying thereby that she couldn't sin" (20). Much to the same effect, Rust qualifies the lesson taught through Charlotte by addressing the author's creation of her character as capable of falling from the image of her mother, Lucy, and their mother Mary: "Furthermore, that she managed to reclaim her virtue, in the guise of her father's forgiveness, even after being seduced, suggested a way out for those who found the requirement of female gentility trying, while the high cost of reclamation (namely imminent death) reminded them of the risks involved" (497). While Rowson attributes Mary's positive qualities to Lucy, she also attributes the Virgin's human qualities to Charlotte. Birth privilege does not deem neither the Virgin Mary nor Charlotte capable of falling from God and being

punished for sin. Again, the body and sexuality of the Virgin become the movement of Rust's discourse rather than the text's underlying veneration of Mary's essence through language and knowledge. The duality of Lucy and Charlotte Temple representing the power of the Virgin's rhetorical influence is communicated to the reader by dwelling on the sorrows of both women.

An overwhelming attention to sorrow, while believed to a standard characteristic of the genre, is present throughout *Charlotte Temple*. However, Donavin alludes to the significance of these sorrows in the implementation of Christian Lady Rhetorica. In Gower's text, Mary is observed by the narrator as experiencing the deepest sorrows: "It pertained to your duty, Lady, to have sorrow and sadness more than any other person born of earth . . . During Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, she sorrows because she lacks power to help her son or convey the message of his glory to the people" (Donavin 44). Chapter XIV of *Charlotte Temple* adds to the scholarship of Marian rhetoric a uniquely American view of sorrow. Upon learning of Charlotte's departure from her place of residence, Lucy Temple "fell into a strong hysteria" (40), but quickly gains her composure and says to her husband: "'Temple,' she said, assuming a look of firmness and composure, 'tell me the truth I beseech you, I cannot bear this dreadful suspense. What misfortune has befallen my child? Let me know the worst, and I will endeavor to bear it as I ought'" (41). Lucy's request to her husband appears later, almost verbatim, during the aforementioned conversation between Charlotte and Belcour. The following

aside in the novel directly addresses the reader and announces the importance in recognizing the rhetoric of the Virgin as the utmost perfection of speech:

A mother's anguish, when disappointed in her tenderest hopes, none but a mother can conceive. Yet, my dear young readers, I would have you read this scene with attention, and reflect that you may yourselves one day be mothers. Of my friends, as you value your eternal happiness, would not, by thoughtless ingratitude, the peace of the mother who bore you: remember the tenderness, the care, the unremitting anxiety with which she has attended to all your wants and wishes from earliest infancy to the present day. (41)

For the reader, Rowson's dual Marian image, seen in both Charlotte and Lucy, is a didactic moment meant to lead readers to see the Marian image in all women, but also the starkly different outcomes of those who choose to dismiss Mary's wisdom, authority, and inspiration.

In contrast to Lucy and Charlotte, Mademoiselle La Rue, being a stand-in mother figure, knowingly encourages Charlotte to partake in momentary acts of pleasure. La Rue's character is particularly important for a modern equation of Charlotte to prospective nuns participating in discernment, the first step of joining a convent.

La Rue acts in antipathy to the lifestyle of Lucy in her simple solitude. Charlotte, being given the option of which life to model, foolishly finds herself too far removed from the pious essence of her mother and the Virgin, and instead falls victim to the temptations of La Rue who acts on impulse and craves immediate satisfaction in the

opportunities her careless life presents her. As their travels continue, La Rue further acts as a foil in the novel to the circumstances of the woman removed from her home. Having forced Charlotte to her place in America where she is abandoned and miserable, La Rue is an antithetical character because her cravings for life's pleasures eventually lead to her becoming "Mrs. Crayton, exulted in her own good fortune, and dared to look with an eye of contempt on the unfortunate by far less guilty Charlotte" (48). In maintaining the didactic nature of the sentimental novel, Rowson's implementation of La Rue as a foil informs and attempts to sway the reader of the possibility of living by particular models. As the woman responsible for Charlotte's well-being, La Rue had fallen from grace when she "had eloped from a convent with a younger officer" (Rowson 21). Rowson's characterization of La Rue is meant to represent the results of so effectively possessing the gift of language and rhetoric, but tragically falling from God.

La Rue's role at Madame Du Pont's school is intended to be that of a woman responsible for fostering the necessary skills for the young, female occupants to function on their own in society. While the potential for fostering academic rigor exists at Du Pont's school, La Rue's presence compromises Charlotte's future. Charlotte, disinterested with the prospect of male companionship, declares to La Rue that she should not like to leave school yet...till I have attained a greater proficiency in my Latin and music" (24). Although the school Charlotte attends is secular, the basis for the approach to education Charlotte receives dates back to John of Garland's impact on education in the thirteenth century: "Although Garland participated in a movement

toward the secularization of education, he was ever mindful of the curriculum's ultimate service to the church and to the theological underpinnings of what he considered to be a morally grounded theory of the liberal arts" (Donavin 113). The environment in which Charlotte is overcome by the well-crafted speech of La Rue exists because of the vision of men like John of Garland. While Madame Du Pont's authority and credibility is lessened by Charlotte's failure to resist La Rue's temptations, Charlotte suffers from dismissing her opportunity to "finish the education her mother had begun" (Rowson 20). In *Charlotte Temple*, La Rue represents the temptation of Charlotte whereby, when Charlotte consciously abandons her studies, she forsakes what Garland terms "the Virgin's dowry", whereby the implication is that "Garland's students should, like the Virgin, have their minds so trained upon God that they might magnify their understanding" (Donavin 93). Despite the potential of Mademoiselle La Rue to have achieved the divine gift of Marian language, her fall from adherence to her education at the convent led her to negatively influence Charlotte.

Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* contributes to the sub-genre of seduction novels innumerable Americanized literary depictions of Christian Lady Rhetorica. As Donavin's text indicates, "Mary's reign over scriptural exegesis and devotional expression has been too long underplayed in analyses confusing virginity and subordination with vacuity" (3). However, Rowson's novel revives the medieval veneration of the Virgin Mother by investigating the representations of Mary's wisdom of the divine, her sorrows, and her importance in liberal arts education.

## **Marian Rhetoric**

The conceptualization of Christian Lady Rhetorica in the two novels is anchored in the scope of this study by Donavin's text. *Scribit Mater* is a necessary text in understanding the foundational arguments and relevance of Marian piety as it is transposed from Medieval English literature to the various domestic fictions of early American literature. The foundation of the research on American sentimental and seduction novels stems from Georgiana Donavin's text on the relationship between the Virgin Mary as the Mother of the Trivium and the implications of Her role as the essence of Medieval studies and Her transmission from pedagogy to various forms and genres of literature. The critical position in which Donavin's text exists is situated to illuminate that which has been overlooked in Marian studies. The author insists that the focus she has adopted in her book has been "underplayed" (3). Removing herself from the tendency of scholars to emphasis gender and sexuality in regards to Mary, Donavin, rather, positions Marian piety in relation to the impact resulting on rhetorical instruction and the development of language in the Marian image. Navigating the Virgin's influences on language, pedagogy, oratory, and her role as a muse, the author defends a unique position that removes the familiar post-modern lens and the deconstructionist practice.

Carefully constructing her argument within a notably Church-influenced period of literature, Donavin aims to inspire the work of the critics before her with a perceptive approach to viewing Mary. By first establishing a common definitive concept of rhetoric

for the text, Donavin ensures that the intended audience will reevaluate its understanding and expectation of the term and allow her text to operate within a necessarily confined and functional framework. To further clarify her intentions to the readers, the author also notes that her book will look at both the religious connotations of the Virgin's influence and the historical and practical application of Her influence.

Most notably different in this text is the period and geographical location of the foci. Negotiating the influence of the Virgin Mary in Medieval Literature contributes a substantial number of direct correlations. The nature of education and the role of the Catholic faith allow for Donvain's scope to remain rigorous but also encompass a number of major components that solidify her argument. However, for the sake of illustrating the basis of a new perspective, Donavin confines her exploration to the medieval English literary canon. By isolating each main argument, Donavin creates an accumulated understanding that leads to her theory being applied to literary works of the period. In essence, the creation of this highly-specialized critical theory allows literary scholars, such as myself, to explore canonical works with a fresh, relevant stance.

Donavin's text is necessary because it carries through the influence of pedagogy and rhetoric in both the British tradition, as Donavin evaluates, and the American literary tradition. The conceptual basis of Mary as an anchor in dame-schools and the contrasting image of Mary as a vessel of wisdom rather than a sexualized body of interest will blend the nature of the American sentimental and seduction novels with Donavin's discovery of a trend in medieval English literature.

Donavin's text begins by illuminating the various authors and instances in which the Virgin Mary is venerated as the highest possessor of holy speech and wisdom. Among the cornerstones of her argument, Donavin explores Mary's dialogue throughout the Bible, the implementation of Mary in early rhetoric and grammar schools, and the many instances of Marian devotion throughout medieval poetry and lyrics. As Donavin indicates in her introduction, "*Scribit Mater* seeks to explain, in contrast, how, where, and why a steeping in Marian language at the beginning of medieval grammar instruction resulted in representations of the Virgin as a purified grammar, an acclaimed rhetorician, an inspired muse, and a mentor for writers" (17). The following chapters are the primary components of Donavin's text and are representative of major manifestations of medieval Marian veneration in literature and language: "The English Lives of Mary," "John of Garland, Gram/marian," "The Musical Mother Tongue in Anglo-Latin Poetry for Meditation," "Chaucer and Dame School," "Mary's Mild Voice in the Middle English Lyrics," and "Margery Kempe and the Virgin Birth of Her Book." Evaluating specific moments, Donavin illuminates the historical and rhetorical significance of Marian Rhetoric and creates a counterargument to Julia Kristeva's "Stabat Mater."

The perception of American novels as lacking the tradition and sustenance correlating to that of the British tradition has become a flaw in the scholarship of sentimental and seduction novels of America as they are only comparatively read against their British cousins. Marion Rust explains the error in this narrow mind frame: "The worst mistake we can make, then, is to call this an American novel and then retroactively impose all

sorts of qualities onto it that weren't in existence at the time, such as a secure sense of national identity as distinct from the mother country" (xxiv). While the national identity Rust refers to is an approach that holds no value in the two novels, the influence of Catholicism and Marian Cult influence are just as present in American culture as in medieval culture, just with a subversion. Cathy N. Davidson provides anecdotes of intense social impact by noting that "novel reading could thus provide as much of an emotional or spiritual experience (as well as a guide for living) as did the earlier intensive reading of the Bible" (142). Thus, Davidson's observation indicates the need to evaluate these texts not by the ways they adhere to or circumvent the characteristics of their respectable genres, but by the particular pressing discourse that has gone unnoticed or unexamined. Likewise, narrow criticism that focuses solely on either rhetoric, gender studies, new historicism, or any other literary theoretical approaches, negate the possibility to best understand the ways in which the texts are functioning, both unto themselves and in the wider sense of literary studies.

Early American sentimental and seduction novels have long been representative texts for the literary study of themes on women and education. By broadening the scope of evaluation of sentimental and seduction novels, the themes of women and education in these novels are indicative of representing a pivotal moment in Marian studies. When tracing the history of medieval Marian studies, there becomes an undeniable link between the works of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the American sentimental and seduction novels.

Nearly a half decade after Rowson's seduction novel, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in 1852 and came to fully represent the American sentimental genre as the best-selling American novel, and certainly one of the most popular novels of all time. Categorized as a sentimental novel, Stowe's text challenges the genre with an added political agenda, but it also upholding the fundamental essence of sentiment in fiction. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Evangeline St. Clare, a young, jubilant girl, represents three embodiments of Marian rhetoric as an exemplar of sainthood, a motherly muse and intercessor to God, and embodiment as perfected oratory, rhetorician, and grammarian.

David S. Reynolds explains that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* "can be distinguished from the other Conventional [sic] novels because of the turbulent social forces it confronts and the imposing variety of moral exemplars it uses to counteract these forces" (388). In Stowe's novel, Uncle Tom and Eva act as the most significant characterizations of moral exemplar aligned against the social force of slavery. Stowe's novel, often analyzed for its treatment of Catholicity, is said to "portray Eva and Tom according to specifically Catholic conventions of sainthood. Little Eva is an evangelist, certainly, but a Catholic one" (Barnes 180). While Eva's kindness, good will, and piety are abounding daily, one particular conversation best illustrates the maturity and divine wisdom imparted upon the girl. When preparing to attend church with Marie, St. Clare attempts to alleviate his daughter from attending the "dreadful tiresome" church with Marie one day by asking her

“What do you go for then?” when she agrees that it is “tiresome, some” (165). In her response, the girl illuminates her saintly qualities:

“Why, you know, papa,’ she said, in a whisper, ‘cousin told me that God wants to have us; and he gives us everything, you know; and it isn’t much to do it, if he wants us to. It isn’t so tiresome after all.”

“You sweet, obliging soul!” said St. Clare, kissing her; “go along, that’s a good girl, and pray for me.”

“Certainly, I always do,” said the child, as she sprang after her mother into the carriage... “O, Evangeline! Rightly named,” he said; “hath not God made thee an evangel to me?” (165-6).

By characterizing Eva as a saint among men, Stowe, like medieval authors, sets a foundation for the adherence to living like Mary in the utmost perfected image of simple goodness. As Donavin explains in her introduction, sainthood was a common characterization in medieval Marian rhetoric: “The story of the Virgin’s life, studied in scripture, amplified in apocrypha, and embellished in saints’ lives, emphasizes Mary’s thoughtfulness, intelligent study, and verbal acumen” (3). Being only a young child, Eva rationalizes the benefits of adhering to a life that mimics that of the Virgin Mother. The qualities that Eva possesses are constant and unbending, and the same qualities are responsible for Tom’s initial fascination of the girl on their shared trip.

One of Eva’s impressions on the text as a Marian embodiment is evident in the adoration that Tom has for the girl and her role as a muse. Upon first meeting the girl,

“Tom, who had the soft, impressible nature of his kindly race, ever yearning toward the simple and childlike, watched the little creature with daily increasing interest. To him she seemed something almost divine...he half believed that he saw one of the angels stepped out of the New Testament” (133). While the girl mesmerizes Tom in her beaming essence of good and innocence, Marian rhetoric maintains that Mary, in her composure communicates her divine wisdom. On this quality that Eva possess, John Gatta asserts that with Eva it is “not through her speech so much as through a quality of presence that bears the Word into the world” (59). As Tom and Eva’s relationship develops, the text notes that Tom’s veneration of the girl is equivalent to that of medieval Marian Cult followers: “He loved her as something frail and earthly, yet almost worshipped her as something heavenly and divine. He gazed on her as the Italian sailor gazes on his image of the child Jesus” (236). Much like Tom’s reception of Eva, John of Garland “makes it clear that veneration of the Virgin leads to his own powerful speech. Mary has inspired him in the chaste life of learning and deeply focused reading” (Donavin 99). The dynamic Stowe creates with the relationship between Tom and Eva mimics the relationship between Marian grammar studies and Geoffrey Chaucer’s poetic song. Donavin traces the influence of dame school instruction on Chaucer’s *The Prioress’s Tale*. Much like the connection Donavin sees between Chaucer’s work and Marian language, there is also the connection of “Mary to elementary grammar and choral education through the student-hero, who is the Virgin’s special devotee” (183). In further exploring the relationship between student and teacher, Stowe’s dynamic Bible scenes

develop into a special attention to Eva as the Marian embodiment of rhetoric, oratory, and grammar.

Ashley C. Barnes points out that “Catholic doctrine held that while reading the Bible might be salutary, it could not be the instrument of grace, because no text could deliver the spirit and presence of its author” (181). In contrast, Protestantism insists upon reaching salvation through reading the Bible. Reading *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* through the angle of exhibitional style, Barnes insists that the sentimental nature of the novel and the attention to Catholic practice is akin to what Elizabeth Maddock Dillon describes as “defin[ing] sentimentalism in terms of an anti-individualist ethos that emphasizes connective over autonomous relations” (183-4).

Heather Love, another critic particularly interested in the religious connotations of Stowe’s novel, focuses on reading *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* closely for the history of sacred hermeneutics, and she insists on a reading that “rel[ies] on description rather than interpretation” and is “close but not deep” (375). Further applying the exhibitional style, Love’s reading of the novel can thus be said to familiarize American readers with Mary, Mother of the Trivium without providing a context for the larger significance of Marian veneration in Catholicism. When an exhibitional style of analysis is applied to Eva’s reception of language and Biblical scholarship, the girl comes to represent Mary, the acclaimed rhetorician, orator, and grammarian representation of language studies. As Tom and Eva’s relationship develops, an increasingly Marian-like image is formed in Eva’s ability to foster and instruct studies of song and speech. The satirical treatment of

Eva's revelation to Marie and St. Clare only further enforces that Eva is the Mother of the Trivium in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*:

"Now, that's just like Eva," said Marie; "just one of her odd speeches."

"Is it an odd speech, papa?" said Eva, whisperingly, as she got upon his knee....

"O, I've been up in Tom's room, hearing him sing, and Aunt Dinah gave me dinner."

"Hearing Tom sing, hey?"

"O, yes! he sings such beautiful things about the New Jerusalem, and bright angels, and the land of Canaan." (169).

In this scene Stowe creates Eva's fostering nature by illustrating the three steps process, wherein Eva reads the Bible to Tom, Tom expounds upon the text, and the two join in song on their Biblical readings. Much later in the text Eva's interests further denote her interest in the value of Biblical instruction. Much to her mother's surprise, Eva declares that she wishes to set up a boarding school. Her mother's sheer disbelief on the matter indicates the irregularity of her dreams. Unlike criticism on the novel indicates, this desire in Eva is not based on racial discriminations; however, her desire to teach reading and writing revolves around Eva's understanding of these skills as necessary in becoming closer to God and fulfilling the Virgin Mary's role as Mother of the Trivium.

Stowe's Mrs. Shelby represents a different role of Mary from that of Little Eva. Little Eva, the pious, innocent Marian figure, does not approach Marian rhetorical conventions inclusively. Rather, Mrs. Shelby offers an alternative embodiment of Mary

by possessing the traits of a true rhetorician. Mrs. Shelby is Marian in speech and thought in her “clear, energetic, practical mind, and a force of character every way superior to that of her husband” (232). The duality of cultural rhetoric in Stowe’s novel, both regarding slavery and Mariolatry, act to “[undermine] conventional cultural ideologies of holiness, while at the same time using the cultural icons belonging to the ideology to entice a large reading public” (Visser 145).

## Chapter 4

### Marian Manifestations / Marian Images

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* inscribes holiness in the cultural stereotype of the angelic dying child Little Eva, as well as in her social opposite, the black male slave Uncle Tom. According to Daley, "Such a rhetoric of symbols inevitably suggests that all these biblical and natural images are also types of salvation, personally fulfilled by Mary" (Daley 856). Stowe's bold depiction of Tom's moral integrity and spiritual strength in this vastly popular novel was the dramatic centre of her political anti-slavery message, and had a deep social impact. Similarly, Little Eva's Marian tendencies impacted the social constructs of womanhood as ideal only when inherently possessing the traits shared between the woman and the Virgin Mary. While Irene Visser's essay "Of Women, Slaves and Cannibals. Dynamics of Holiness in Three American Novels of the Mid-Nineteenth Century" focuses on the cultural power of Uncle Tom, Little Eva is equally characterized "to embody an ideal and stimulate controversies concerning the nature of holiness" (Wilcox xviii).

Similarly, Winifred Fluck's "Novels of Transition: From Sentimental Novel to Domestic Novel" provides a thorough documentation of the progression of novels that led to seduction novels and their relationship to American literature in general. Fluck addresses the ways in which, as Marion Rust's essay points out, a seduction novel can be classified as such when in fact, no overtly sexual acts are written: "What makes the offer

of the seducer so tempting is that to be ‘chosen’ by such a man for a companion is a moment of distinction for the heroine. Through this choice, the heroine receives an acknowledgment of her person as ‘something special’ that she never experienced before” (97). Thus, the seduction novel is a further removed, enhanced, or muddled sentimental novel because of the physical and emotional urges that take center stage in the women’s lives. The women of Susanna Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple* contribute to the Americanization of Christian Lady Rhetorica because they are written to embody the pious Marian image, and they are given the opportunity to navigate romantic relationships and children in a particularly Marian manner.

The epigram for Chapter XXVII of *Charlotte Temple* reads:

Pensive she mourn’d, and hung her languid head,  
Like a fair lily overcharg’d with dew. (71)

While the drastic contrast in countenance between Mary and Charlotte could not be more different, like the Virgin, the “fair lily” of a woman has been impregnated by an absent man (Montraville) and must communicate her feelings and understanding to another man (Belcour). Considering the preface of *Charlotte Temple* and recalling the warning Rowson heeds, the pitiful state of Charlotte takes on a dual meaning for readers. Conveying Charlotte as the archetypal victim of seduction, Rowson is able to craft a warning to her intended audience. The scholarship on seduction novels indicates the fear of the public that such novels would add to the romantic notions young women had of men. Comparing Royall Tyler’s *The Algerine Captive* to *Charlotte Temple*, Larry R.

Dennis makes a connection between Updike Underhill's "illusions, illusions which Rowson and her cohorts in the sentimental school of writing perpetuated" (73). While critics continue to insist that the authors of sentimental and seduction novels are responsible for the continued errors in women, each of the accused authors clearly communicates in prefatory material that the novels in question are for young girls to gain the necessary knowledge to avoid circumstances similar to that of the protagonists.

Rowson's novel begins by addressing young women who "are thrown on an unfeeling world without the least power to defend themselves from the snares not only of the other sex, but from the more dangerous arts of the profligate of their own" (5). As the prefatory message denotes, the speaker is warning young girls to remember that their circumstances are not unique and should be handled with the utmost attention. Only by closely analyzing the text is it more apparent that Rowson is referencing Mary's ability to maintain the utmost dignity through her trials. Much like *Charlotte Temple*, Donavin observes that Anglo-Saxon poetry tends to "focus on single events in the Virgin's life" (27). The most significant moments in Mary's life have become opportunities for authors to reinforce that Mary is "magistra for language studies, muse for poetry, and exemplar of perfected speech in a fallen world" (Donavin 3).

One example of the exploration of Mary's life is found in Matthew 1:19-20 in which it is said that "Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream" (Catholic Youth Bible). In *Scribit*

*Mater*, Donavin notes that Advent Lyric VII, an Anglo-Saxon work, “is unusual...because its elaboration of the antiphon consists entirely of a dialogue between Mary and Joseph” (31). The dynamic Donavin explores in Lyric VII attempts to demystify prior criticism and illuminate the “point in the poem” when “Mary alleviates Joseph’s anxiety in the same way that she hopes God will relieve hers—by making manifest the divine plan” (34). Charlotte, like the Mary of Lyric VII, is “Strong in divine knowledge and authority” (Donavin 36). Like Mary, Charlotte’s public shaming leads to an intense moment of reflection and opportunity for the transmission of divine knowledge.

Much like Donavin observes in John Gower’s *Mirour de l’Omme*, Rowson also encourages “courtly readers to emulate Mary’s emotional reactions to events in the life of Christ and implies that pious feelings such as Mary’s are the conduit to divine understanding” (Ruud 37). With Belcour present and attempting to save Charlotte from her suffering, Charlotte must consider the possibility of giving birth to her child alone. Upon his invitation for her to join him in New York, Charlotte confesses to Belcour that she had “once conceived the thought of going to New-York to seek out the still dear, though cruel, ungenerous Montraville, to throw myself at his feet, and entreat his compassion; heaven knows, not for myself; if I am no longer beloved, I will not be indebted to his pity to redress my injuries, but I would have knelt and entreated him not to forsake my poor unborn--” (72-3). Charlotte’s lament indicates the veneration of Marian rhetoric by noting that “Something like humanity awakened in Belcour’s breast

by this pathetic speech” (73). Donavin notes in Lyric VII that “Mary alleviates Joseph’s anxiety in the same way that she hopes God will relieve hers—by making manifest the divine plan” (34). Likewise, upon learning of Montraville’s potential romantic interest, Charlotte says: “I can bear it very well; I will not shrink from this heaviest stroke of fate; I have deserved my afflictions, and I will endeavor to bear them as I ought” (73). Charlotte, accepting her fate, verbally insists on Belcour’s understanding that her pregnancy is divinely appointed and whether or not Belcour or Montraville come to understand as Joseph does, Charlotte has proven herself to be inspired by Mary. While Rowson invokes Marian language with *Charlotte Temple*, she does so to communicate a lesson to readers. Although the content of seduction and sentimental novels are believed to further contribute to the unrealistic expectations of the readers, the presence of modern Marian rhetoric which is only one aspect of the larger rhetoric of American Catholicism that would flourish in American literature of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries. The primary significance as constructing characters in the Marian image is because “it is to say that their abiding historical reality, their concreteness, draws us through and beyond the level of concrete things to let us experience what God has done for us” (Daley 868). Although Mary has become understood as a solely Catholic cult following, the image and speech of the Virgin resonate throughout literary history.

Focusing on the absorption of Catholic images, such as the Virgin Mary in literature, Paul Giles documents the exchange between Protestants and Catholics, and the ways in which literary figures adopted the concept of the Virgin as a tool for exploiting

the body and sexuality. Exploring the causes and products of the American Enlightenment, Giles's book examines three specific areas in which American writers adopted Catholicism for literary purposes: history, society, and philosophy. The first area of focus in the book looks to the actuality of Catholic history and how that history corresponds to the American view of Catholicism. The historical section is relevant because it shows the moment of departure from the Marian image in Donavin's text. Giles better establishes the desire of American authors to adopt the image of the Virgin as a tool, capable of being manipulated, to enhance literature by evaluating the various American myths concerning Catholicism. Giles' chapter entitled "Transcendentalism and 'Catholicity': Orestes Brownson" is particularly useful to the study of this blend of religious beliefs into literature, in which Giles documents the unique traits of Brownson's works in comparison to other transcendentalists. Brownson, much like the author's being evaluated, added a unique dimension to the use of Catholicism in literature as he translated the usefulness to his own personal religious affiliation and the historical perception of the Virgin.

Susan Hill Lindley, in *"You Have Stept Out of Your Place:" A History of Women and Religion in America* suggests three models by which women were defined and categorized in nineteenth century American society. Immigrant women, favorably noted for their influence, were not, however, the sole influence of Catholicism on the image of True Womanhood. Rowson and Stowe's female characters were equivalent agents in bridging the gap between Lindley's "cultural paradigm" and "paradigm of feminine

religiosity". Characters such as Little Eva and Lucy Temple are the women that fill the gap between religion and cultural change. Therefore, the Marian image of the Mother of Christ and Rhetoric, are fused via literary feminine manifestations and remembrance of the Virgin's medieval cult focus. Darris Catherine Saylor notes this fusion by stating that "this cultural-religiosity paradigm manipulated Roman Catholic immigrant women's traditional reliance upon Mary as a source of religious identity that could be used to draw these women further and further into the cultural roles that a largely prejudicial Protestant America felt were appropriate and necessary for them" (131). This moment in Protestant control and subjugation of the Marian role would eventually lead to the downfall of Marian rhetoric and the rise of the Marian body as an image of artistic exploration.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions

The presence of Marian veneration in American literature represents a unique contribution to the study of cultural rhetoric. By concentrating on the intent, textuality, and effects of Marian rhetoric in early American novels, this project has illuminated the cultural significance of the Virgin Mary's functions and a change in the understanding and reception of Catholicism and Marian cult behavior in America. While the American novel often borrowed from the British tradition in the nineteenth century, the unique cultural context in which the genre was formed created the opportunity for further attention to rhetorical theories that would become criticism centered on Marian language.

Although the Virgin Mary's literary influence in America would eventually become focused on bodily imagery, the novels of nineteenth century America indicate a large significance in Her influence of speech, writing, and grammar studies. This project indicates, through an examination of cultural rhetoric, the significance and impact of Marian presence in nineteenth century American novels. The scope of the novels discussed uncovers an underlying rhetorical significance of the Virgin to American cultural identity by examining authors of various philosophical and religious identities.

The literary influence of Marian veneration is a specialized analysis of early American Catholic culture. Although Mary would eventually become an image of the female body in American culture, her rhetorical significance in the novels addressed

shows the ability for early rhetorical studies to manifest in new cultural environments. This project indicates that, by way of cultural rhetoric, the Virgin Mary has significantly impacted nineteenth-century American novels. Georgiana Donavin's *Scribit Mater* informs the scholarship on Marian rhetoric in one of the most comprehensive evaluation of medieval literature. Donavin's text provides a historical reconfiguration of the importance of the Virgin Mary to language studies and literature.

Donavin's text informs the scholarship of sentimental and seduction novels and American authors create a unique opportunity to explore Marian imagery and speech. The foci of domesticity and religious zeal uncovered the femininity of Mary in literary characters. Even in the midst of anti-Catholic society, the Virgin Mary manages to revitalize exalted feminine character. The transfer of the Marian image into American literature was met with fervent opposition by a staunchly anti-Catholic population. However, the attempts to remove the Holy Mother from literature where wholly unsuccessful and rather, many American authors began to craft a uniquely American Madonna to better serve the needs of their readers. Stowe and Rowson renewed the Marian image in American literature by honoring the medieval tendency to represent Mary as the Christian Lady Rhetorica. American sentimental and seduction novels represent a literary instance in which the Cult of Mary momentarily resurfaces as a textual homage to the Mother of the Trivium and a temporary departure from the oversexualized body of the Virgin Mary.

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## Appendix A. Iconography



Figure 1.1 Isis suckling Horus

Appendix A (Continued)



Figure 1.2 Isis suckling Horus

Appendix A (Continued)



Figure 1.3 Isis suckling Horus