

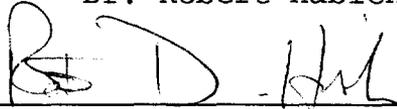
An Analysis of the Heroines of Mrs. E.D.E.N. Southworth

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

This discussion of Mrs. Southworth's work focuses on four of her novels: Retribution (1849), The Curse of Clifton (1853), The Hidden Hand (1859), and The Bride's Fate (1869). In her own life, Southworth had many obstacles to overcome, and her heroines reflect this. Although in many ways Southworth was an independent woman during the 1800s, she was also dependent on others, such as her editor, for support and financial bonuses. In many ways Southworth's characters reflect this same paradox of independence while yet being dependent.

I

Emma Dorothy Eliza Nevitte Southworth (1819-1899) was the first child of Captain Charles Le Compte Nevitte, a merchant from Alexandria, Virginia, and Susannah Wailes of St. Mary's county, Maryland. At the time of their marriage, her mother was fifteen and her father forty-five. Although she never outwardly states that her parents' marriage was an unhappy one, large separations in age between the husband and wife are often portrayed as deplorable in her novels, as can be seen in the marriage of Major Clifton and Georgia in The Curse of Clifton. Emma's mother was so young at the time of their marriage that she could not be separated from her mother, and they lived together in a house in Washington D.C. for several years.

Emma's childhood was not a happy one. She does not describe herself as pretty, "except for a pair of large, wild eyes" (Dobson xiv). At the age of twelve months, she suffered an eye inflammation which resulted in a temporary loss of vision that lasted until she was three. Her father died when she was four, and at his deathbed both she and her sister, Charlotte, were baptized into Roman Catholicism. It is here that she earned all of her initials, although their use was a characteristic flourish. Her last memory of her father consists of him laying his hands on their heads and blessing them. His death sent the family, which now consisted of four women, the grandmother, the mother, and the

two children, into financial hardship because they were left unsupported in an age that offered no employment for middle class women. Fortunately, her grandmother had a small income, and before his death, her father had rented a large house on a long-term basis. Her grandmother also tried to run a select boarding house, but failed because her breeding never permitted her to present a bill.

When Emma was six, her mother married Joshua L. Henshaw of Boston. Henshaw had been Secretary to Daniel Webster, and later opened a school in which he and his wife both taught. Emma learned quickly, and she soon became head of the class. She enjoyed reading anything she could get her hands on.

At the age of sixteen, Emma graduated from her stepfather's school and began her career as a school teacher. At twenty-one she married and moved to Wisconsin with her husband, Frederick Hamilton Southworth, an inventor from Utica, New York. She never publicly stated that her marriage was an unhappy one; however, in 1844, she left Wisconsin as an expectant mother with a small child in hand, and it is unclear whether or not her husband returned to Washington with her at this time. Her grandmother, her dearest friend in childhood, attempted to help her, but her step-father interfered and she was left penniless. Her husband had no intention of supporting her or the children and promptly left for Brazil.

After his departure, Emma began teaching in the Washington Public schools, and received about \$250 yearly for

it. It was also at this point that she began writing short pieces to be published in the newspapers, particularly in the *National Era*. In 1845, her first story, "The Irish Refuge" was published in the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor*, and her second story was printed in the *National Era*. In 1847, "Retribution," her first full-length novel, was published in serial in the *National Era*. Her writing proved to be her financial salvation, although she still had to teach to make ends meet.

Southworth's writing career was a very prolific one. Between 1849 and 1860, she wrote eighteen novels. Among these eighteen are two that are said to be her best works: The Curse of Clifton, which was serialized in 1852 and published in 1853, and The Hidden Hand, which was serialized in 1859. Although these are said to be her best works, she had many novels that were also popular. For example, Retribution, serialized in 1849, was so popular that it was republished in book form by Harpers in the same year (Baym 112). Also, The Curse of Clifton joined Uncle Tom's Cabin and Charles Dickens' Bleak House on the list of 1852s three best-selling fiction titles (Papashvily 118), and The Hidden Hand found company with Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities, George Eliot's Adam Bede, and Thackeray's The Virginians on the list for 1859. The Hidden Hand was also made into at least forty different dramatic versions, and as a side note, in 1861, when she visited England with her children, she

watched one such version of the novel, and saw John Wilkes Booth play the outlaw, Black Donald (Papashvily 126).

Southworth may have been the greatest publishing success in the United States during the nineteenth century, although it is difficult to tell exactly how popular she was since many of her novels were serialized more than once before they were allowed to be published. For example, The Hidden Hand, first serialized in 1859, was serialized twice more before going to publication in its first edition as a book in 1889 (Baym 114). Another complication is that several of her novels were republished under different names. This is true of, for example, The Hidden Hand, which was republished as Capitola's Triumph, and The Curse of Clifton as Fallen Pride and The Mountain Girl's Love (Baym 114).

In 1856, when Southworth made a contract with Robert Bonner it would prove to be her financial, and in some ways physical, salvation. Bonner would also prove himself to be the father figure she never really had, both to her and to her children. For Southworth, as for most of his authors, Bonner acted as a friend, advisor, and banker as well as an employer. In a letter written to him she writes, "the first day that you entered my little cottage was a day *blessed beyond all the other days of my life*. ...You came to me, and saved my life" (Dobson xviii). Southworth did not have the best of health before she signed with Bonner, but the security, prestige, sympathy, and understanding he offered her were the things she needed most, and he readily gave

them. Some examples of the things he did for her include the facts that:

He wrote her frequently; he advised her about her children, her money, and her book rights; he helped her needy relatives; he gave her a star's place on the *Ledger*; he promised to continue her salary if she were ill; he and his family exchanged visits with her; and he sent her presents and large bonuses. (Papashvily 131)

At one point, Bonner even offered to buy her son, Richmond, a replacement if he were drafted to serve in the Civil War (Dobson xviii). Another time, Bonner undertook the task of dealing with Southworth's publisher, T. B. Peterson, because he had the book rights to her *Ledger* serials, and she wrote, "Peterson won't give any more than he can help. Do your best for me" (Papashvily 125-126). Robert Bonner also considered himself to be a very ethical man, and he wanted his paper to reflect his own moral standards. In 1844, Bonner, upset by a story submitted by Sylvanus Cobb that dealt with masters having illegitimate children by their slaves, wrote, "I will not print anything in the *Ledger* that I cannot read aloud to my children" (Noel 93). Once Southworth reached the \$50 per week pay rate, Bonner never gave her a raise, but he continually helped her family, and often gave her bonuses. However, it is in light of the role that Bonner played in her life that he becomes important. Southworth, a mother of two children who had been forced to become totally independent in

children who had been forced to become totally independent in an era that did not make this an easy task, was dependent upon herself and her writing capabilities, but at the same time was dependent upon Bonner for the things that he offered her. In this way, Southworth's life resembles those of her characters, because there is the same paradox working in most of the lives of her heroines, and these heroines also are affected by the standards of her time period.

II

In Retribution, Southworth tells the story of Hester Gray, a young, innocent orphan who has been sent away to boarding school, where she is to learn the proprieties of being a woman in charge of a large estate. Hester, whose appearance is as colorless as her name, is an easy prey for another young girl at the school, Juliette Summers, also an orphan, who is a beautiful girl with an Italian background whose only interest is in herself. Hester is a very trusting person whose blind innocence leads her to believe that she has found a true friend in Juliette. However, Juliette only participates in the friendship because she realizes that someday it might be to her advantage to have a rich friend. Eventually, Hester's guardian, Ernest Dent, comes to call her home, and Hester willingly bends to his will. Hester would willingly do anything Ernest suggested. Eventually, the two get married, and she would do anything to please him.

Hester is like a child that Ernest has to instruct, and she even writes in a letter to Juliette that she is "his child; my eyes wait on him all day, I could sit at his feet forever and learn" (19). Hester is, as was expected of all ladies of class, the perfect example of submission, and again she writes, "His slightest intimation has for me a divine authority, it is happiness, enthusiasm, religion, to obey it" (19).

Hester is also a highly religious woman, as all ladies of good breeding were expected to be. This is seen when, while pregnant, she suddenly finds herself temporarily blind, and instead of blaming God, she looks for the fault within herself. She writes to Juliette, "I was softened, and I wept, Juliette, as I remembered that 'the Lord loveth whom he chasteneth' and thought how I had slighted the Lord who loved me; and I prayed, and was composed" (32).

Shortly after the birth of her baby, whom she names Juliette, her friend comes to stay with her, and her health begins to fail. In her innocence, Hester does not see that Ernest and Juliette have fallen in love with each other, and at her deathbed Ernest tries to tell her that he has done wrong by her. Hester, of course, will not listen to her paragon of virtue trying to defile himself, and she dies without being able to forgive him for what he has done simply because he could never tell her.

While she lived, Hester made every effort to do the right thing by everyone, including the slaves who worked on

her land. At one point, Hester and Ernest had planned to free all of the slaves but she dies just a few hours before she came of age. She never had a bad thing to say about anything, and at her death, a neighbor comments to Juliette that "we have had a great loss - I and you, the family, and the whole neighborhood. We now know that 'an angel has sojourned with us' for we have seen 'the glory of her vanishing wing" (68).

Shortly after her death, Ernest, now forty-five, and Juliette, twenty-two, marry, but it does not remain a happy marriage for long. As stated earlier, gaps in age between husband and wife are often presented in an unfavorable light by Southworth, and this marriage is no exception, because it seems to be doomed from the start. Ernest begins to resent the attention that she receives, and money begins to run tight as a result of her extravagant spending. Juliette resents his harsh reprimands and refuses to yield to his authority because she is too strong willed and stubborn. She is presented as the epitome of wickedness, and is said to have "evil eyes that could not cease from sinning" (70). She creates trouble for other characters and enjoys trying to manipulate people with her charm. Eventually, Juliette leaves Ernest and meets with a horrible fate, and Ernest realizes that she was sent to punish him. At the end of the novel, the narrator explains the difference between different types of retribution, and one cannot help but feel that this is the author's own opinion. She states:

Divine retribution belongs to eternity, and is distant and vague. Human retribution is uncertain, depending upon discovery and other fortuitous circumstances, but Moral retribution is as sure as life, as sure as death, as sure as the sin out of whose bosom it springs, as natural as the pain that follows the contact of fire.... Human and Legal retribution we may elude by concealment; Divine retribution we may avert by a timely repentance; but Moral retribution we must suffer; and that, not by the arbitrary sentence of a despot, but by the natural action of an equitable law old as Eternity, immutable as God. (108)

In this novel, Southworth puts forth the idea that being child-like with wide-eyed innocence is not as good an idea as the women of her time thought it was. This can be seen in her treatment of Hester whose character never seems to get beyond the age of ten. Hester meets with an early grave as a result of her innocence, and never sees beyond the surface of the things that happen around her. She is taken in by both Juliette and Ernest, and never comprehends what is really happening to her. She appears to be an easily fooled dupe, and people realize this and take advantage of her. Hester's character refutes the idea that women should be submissive in all things in order to show their good breeding by showing the reader that innocence in action is fine, but innocence of mind can be dangerous. Southworth creates the character of

Juliette to act as a foil for Hester, and the two could be viewed as exact opposites. Whereas Juliette is beautiful, with a dark complexion and black hair, Hester is pale and colorless with no beauty in her plain appearance. Hester is naive and childish while Juliette is aware of herself and her beauty. She knows what it does to men, and knows how to fool people with her charms.

In The Bride's Fate, Southworth presents the reader with a character who has been greatly wronged by her husband. Drusilla Lyon, who has married Alexander Lyon, the nephew of old General Leonard Lyon who resides at Old Lyon Hall, finds herself alone and pregnant after their first night of marriage. When her husband leaves her, she is forced to leave their home and rely on the mercy of his uncle and his granddaughter, Anna. While staying with his family, she learns that her errant husband has gone off to England, and Drusilla is left a fortune by a wealthy relative. After some time, the whole family decides to go on a trip to England, and here a whole new batch of trouble springs up for Drusilla. While they are in England, her son is kidnapped as a result of a title that Alexander claimed by the right of his mother, because another man could also have claimed the title, and he is gone for almost a month. Drusilla is never told the whole story behind Lenny's disappearance, but when Alexander returns the child to her, she forgives all of his faults.

Drusilla is an example of a character type that David Reynolds calls the "moral exemplar" (339). Southworth presents her as a woman who has every right to be angry with her husband; however, she chooses to remain true to him and to pray for his return. Women in Southworth's time were expected to be morally superior in all things, because men were thought to be totally incapable of morality, unless there was a strong woman to guide him in the proper direction. Cunnington shows this when discussing the new breed of Lady that was rising in the 1850s. He states that the "Perfect Lady was claiming to establish a standard of correctitude towards which it was the duty of Man to struggle,..." (142). The use of the moral exemplar was a means, states Reynolds, "of reconstructing moral value in a world of devalued, amoral males" (342). In The Bride's Fate, Southworth goes to great lengths to show how far the amoral male has gone astray, while showing how strong a figure the moral exemplar was. While Alexander is off running about in London, totally neglecting his duties as a husband and father, Drusilla remains strong and faithful to her cause. She gets along fine without her husband, taking charge of little Lenny and her own accounts with skill, thus becoming almost independent. However, she relies on General Lyon's good nature to have a place to live throughout most of the novel, and her only true desire for herself is to get Alexander back. She is displeased when any of her servants or relatives speak badly of him, and she always has the faith

that he will return and see the error of his ways. The other characters are continually stopping in mid- word to avoid calling him names that Drusilla does not wish to hear, as when, after she learns that he has sold their home, her relatives say things like, "Yes, sir, that vill- I mean Mr. Alexander Lyon- has sold Cedarwood" (30), and, "so let the scound- I mean Alick- go" (31). Even the whole time that Lenny was missing, she kept up her faith that he would be returned. She continually prayed, slept very little, ate less, and was often gone out looking for her child. When Alexander returns the boy, the narrator states:

husband and child, both restored to her in an instant! It is a wonder she had not died then and there! But she did not even faint. Heaven, that had sustained her through such long-drawn-out, unutterable sorrows, gave her strength now to meet the sudden shock of joy. (399)

Throughout her trials, Drusilla shows that she is capable of handling very heavy burdens without falling to pieces, as most women of her time were expected to do. She shows that she has strength and courage that cannot be easily shaken because she knows that her belief in Heaven will sustain her. She shows the reader that it is possible for a lady of good breeding to stay together after something disastrous happens, giving women the courage to not faint at the slightest mishap. Southworth indiscreetly shows the reader that women are made of stronger stuff than most people imagine, and that

they need not give in to societal expectations of feigned weakness.

In The Curse of Clifton, Southworth again presents the reader with a very strong and moral character, who could even be said to be a bit stronger than Drusilla. Kate Kavanagh, the heroine of this novel, is only a young girl when the reader first meets her, but even then one can see her moral and mental strength. Although she is not a young lady from a good family, a fact that is often held against her, she exhibits the same qualities that are expected from ladies of better breeding. Within the first meeting, the reader sees her, at age fourteen, taking care of a grandfather who becomes delirious after drinking, and keeping the house in an orderly fashion because her parents are not around. She also has to take care of her brother, Carl, who says, as males in general would probably have said at that time, "I hate to see strength in women! It don't belong to them, nor grace them, anyhow!" (35). But Kate continues to be a strong character throughout the novel, even though she faces many difficulties. In this same scene, the reader also realizes that Captain Archer Clifton, the main male character of the novel, is entranced by her, even though she is not described as being a particularly beautiful girl, only as one with strong features.

However, Captain Clifton cannot admit to himself that he has more than a distant interest in her well-being, but takes it upon himself to secure a better position for her, and for

her brother also. Kate finds herself gradually falling for Archer, but she knows that he is engaged, and she reprimands herself harshly for any thought that enters her mind of him in any other capacity than as benefactor. However, the marriage, falls through, his fiance becomes extremely ill with brain fever, and in her weakened condition she also catches small-pox. Therefore, her younger sister and stepmother leave the house so as not to catch it, leaving her with no one to wait on her. Kate acts as her nurse, risking her own health to do it, and undertakes the task of trying to convince her that God does love and have plans for her. Though she thinks that what has happened to her, as far as the loss of her beauty is concerned, is a cruel punishment from one who could not possibly love her, Kate convinces her that her beauty will return, and that Archer will still love her. Upon returning from the service for which he was called away, Archer does ask her to forgive him, and Kate overhears him. When she hears this, she thinks out loud, "Thank God. Thank God!. Oh, Merciful Father, help me to say that sincerely. Thank God!" (254). This scene shows how devoted Kate was to doing the proper thing, even though she may now be unable to realize her own unspoken desire.

Eventually, Kate and Archer do get married; however, their happiness is doomed before they are married as a result of a mistake Kate made. Mrs. Georgia Clifton, who married Archer's uncle when she was only fifteen and he is already referred to as "an old man," turns her eyes toward Archer,

long before he and Kate are married, and before her husband dies. Georgia is portrayed as a scheming woman who attempts to get what she wants using any method which will serve her purpose, and is very similar to Juliette of Retribution in many ways. Georgia, who wants Archer for herself, begins to try to come up with a plan to separate them, when she takes advantage of the error Kate made. However, her plan does not fully succeed because Archer still marries Kate, but he treats her badly while not telling her the cause for this sudden change. Kate complies with his wishes, and later learns that he is immediately going back into military service. He tells her that she will be left in charge of the estates, and he wants her to get them out of debt if possible. He no longer treats her as an equal but as a deceiver who has greatly wronged him, and he leaves, wishing her to never be in contact with him unless it is absolutely necessary. While he is gone, Kate lives up to his expectations of her, even though he is not there to see it, and she manages the estates well and gets them out of debt very rapidly. She shows that she is capable of holding her own, in financial as well as moral matters, and eventually Archer discovers the truth in what a great wrong he has done her. Archer comes back to her with a repentant heart, and Kate willingly takes him back, just as Drusilla did in The Bride's Fate.

Throughout The Curse of Clifton, Kate shows her strength in both moral and mental matters, and she also shows that she

can be caring and independent at the same time. Like Drusilla, Kate shows that she is capable of withstanding great shocks without crumbling under the pressure, and although some of the characters might attribute this to the fact that she was not a well bred lady, she demonstrates that every woman has the right to make of herself as she chooses. For Kate, the most important choice is to always do the thing that is morally right, no matter what the personal cost may be. Kate also has that same paradoxical nature of being both independent and dependent, because the things she does while Archer is gone are aimed at making him see how wrong he is about her. Even though she is capable of going on without him, she still holds the faith that he will return and see the error of his ways. Kate goes through many trials before her errant man returns to her, but she manages just fine without him, as any woman should be able to do, or so Southworth implies.

In The Hidden Hand, Southworth presents a new kind of woman in the heroine, Capitola. Unlike her other heroines, Cap, as she is called, has a mind and will of her own, and she goes to great lengths to see that she gets what she wants. When the reader first sees Capitola, she is dressed as a boy, selling newspapers in New York, because she has been left, through a strange series of events, without a parent or guardian. After hearing the story of an old dying woman, Major Warfield of Hurricane Hall goes out to find her and bring her home. He acts as her adoptive uncle throughout

the novel although he is of no blood relation to her, and he attempts to make Capitola conform to societal standards for women. Capitola, having had no real female role model to follow, takes every opportunity possible to rebel in small ways against these standards. She rides out alone, even though she has been forbidden to do so, and she almost gets herself into grave danger by doing this, but her wits save her. When approached by a strange man, who insists that they stop and sit down to talk, Capitola finds an excuse to not sit until he is tired of playing the game. Capitola then, saying that the ground was damp from a recent rain, suggests that he take the saddle blanket off of his horse for her to sit on. He does this, and once the saddle is off the horse, Capitola jumps on her horse and rides away, leaving the man standing there with the blanket in his hands. Later on in the novel, this same man will become angry with her because she refuses to marry him, and he decides that to get even with her he will make light of her character in public. As a result of his insults, Capitola again uses her wits to humiliate the man by "wounding" him in a duel with guns that shoot dried peas, and he never bothers her again.

Capitola also has similar troubles with the novel's villain, Black Donald. Upon once seeing her, he decides that her spirit intrigues him and wants to carry her off and marry her. The first time the attempt is made, he sends his henchmen to do the job for him, but Capitola outwits them, too. The last attempt to abduct her almost ends in Black

Donald's death, because he decides to get her himself. However, by using her wits, she manages to outsmart him.

Capitola is a different character from the rest because she lacks the markings of a true woman during the 1800s. Major Warfield explains to a minister that "Cap isn't *sentimental!* and if I try to be, she laughs in my face!" (175). Capitola is truly a character who has no use for the feminine standards that have been imposed upon her, and she does her best to let everyone know it. She does not like to have to be escorted by the groom when she goes out riding; she does not like to be unable to use the language that she was accustomed to using before Major Warfield came and brought her home; and she does not believe that she is helpless, simply because she is a woman. Capitola loves nothing better than a bit of excitement, because she finds life at Hurricane Hall quite dull most of the time.

III

In her novels, Southworth portrays many types of women. She often shows the reader a character who is purely good and moral, but she also portrays many women who are scheming, strong willed, and self-centered. Southworth develops her characters well, and although there appear to be inconsistencies, a closer look shows that she is trying to deal with the expectations of her time period. Occasionally, her characters even go against the prescribed standards of

her time, and Southworth's opinion comes through without her directly stating it.

Southworth presents the reader with heroines that are often very intelligent, moral, and independent. However, many times the whole reason that they are so independent is a result of something that has happened to them, usually caused by a man. These characters have been forced, as Southworth herself was forced, to carry on as if nothing had happened. They thrive on being able to rely totally on themselves, but their whole purpose in having the appearance that nothing has changed is a ploy to win the man back. In this way, the heroine attempts to regain the respect that the man owes her, especially when she has done nothing to merit his displeasure, and it usually works, as long as the character remains as virtuous as she is supposed to be. This paradox in Southworth's characters could be directly paralleled to the paradox in her own life, as seen in her self-sufficiency, but reliance on Bonner. While the errant man is away, the characters do everything within their power to make sure that the man's name is not defiled in front of them, even though there is usually just cause for it, and they do whatever it is that they think to be the actions that the man would want them to take, based on what was considered proper conduct for a lady at that time. In some novels, a character is presented that is not capable of being independent, and these characters could be seen as making a statement about the roles of women.

Even though many did approve of her writing, there were some who did not. Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of Godey's Lady's Book, praised her for the passion she put into her novels, but was uneasy about her "freedom of expression that borders on impiety" because she continually portrays women who challenge the restraints of genteel womanhood (Dobson xxvi). Hale also felt that Southworth went "beyond the limits prescribed by correct taste or good judgment" (Baym 113). Also, after the publication of her first long serial, The Deserted Wife, the *Post* felt obligated to apologize publicly for the work because it "dealt a little too seriously with a problem of marital incompatibility," even though there was a happy ending. From this point on, Southworth was encouraged to avoid dealing with any serious mental or emotional problems and to stick to naturally occurring disasters (Noel 39-40).

Southworth, through the voice of her characters, is attempting to reject the ideas of genteel womanhood which had been intact for so long. Southworth does not go against the idea that women should set the moral example, agreeing with Cunnington's statement that a woman "was to present a living picture of right-mindedness, illustrating to the rest the highest attainable refinement of thought and feeling," but she leans away from his last statement of the paragraph, where he states that women should stand, "passively in a bustling world as a monument to the abstract virtues" (108). Southworth's characters disagree with the passive part of

that sentence, because they do not stand still and let the world go by them as if they had no part in it. In her time, these were the expectations of the good woman:

They never go into a passion, have no will of their own, never laugh out loud, or go anywhere without a gentleman, or take cheese at dinner- an odious vulgarism! (Cunnington 114-115)

Cunnington also states that the only reason a woman should be educated is to get a husband, and according to the definition of the term 'fast,' as quoted by him as it was used in the 1850s, Capitola is definitely a 'fast' character. The term is defined in this way:

A fast young woman has an inordinate love of gaiety, a bold determined manner, a total absence of respect towards her elders, and sometimes even towards her parents; a flippant style of conversation and a glaring and sometimes immodest dress. She is not in the least sentimental; she does not read Scott or Byron or Moore or even Lord Lytton. In the country she is a daring rider; in town she plays billiards. Her conversation is full of slang--so repulsive in a feminine mouth.
(174-175)

In a world that denied women the right to vote, own property, or speak at public meetings where both sexes were present, it becomes increasingly difficult to have a sense of one's own identity. Tompkins states that as a result, "women had to

have a way of defining themselves which gave them power and status nevertheless, in their own eyes and in the eyes of the world. That is the problem that sentimental fiction addresses" (160). She also states that, "the implantation of virtue was the primary goal of nearly everything nineteenth-century Americans read: textbooks, novels, poems, magazine stories, or religious tracts" (157). Tompkins also feels that "the pain of learning to conquer her own passions is the central fact of the sentimental heroine's existence" (172). In her novels Southworth is subtly trying to tell her female readers that they should not have to give up their passions, as long as they remain moral. She shows that strength in women is not always a bad thing, and that it is possible to be strong without being vulgar. When Sarah Hale states that Mrs. Southworth "borders on impiety," she is showing that she is not yet ready to accept the fact that women are not as fragile as eggs. But Southworth, who was forced to become this way fairly early in her life, is trying to show women that they can be independent, intelligent, and moral all at the same time. Her characters appear to be modified models of herself, depending on what type of mood she is in when she is writing, and they show the world that women are capable human beings just as much as men are.

Though Southworth never actually states her purpose in writing her novels the way she does, a careful reading will reveal that she is not simply writing the same type of sentimental story that the other female authors are writing.

Part of the reason her novels may have been as popular as they were could be tied to the fact that although most women would not yet have had the courage to act as Capitola does, she served as an ideal for what their lives could be like, if they could only get beyond the requirements of good breeding. Although many probably felt that they were not ready to be as liberated as Capitola was, they enjoyed reading about a woman who could do things that they only wished they could do. Although she would never have viewed what she was doing as a step toward women's rights, simply because she states that, "there is nothing I hate on earth with a hatred so intense as I do a she-rebel" (Papashvily 136), Southworth could be viewed as a stepping stone toward the women's rights movement, because, in a way, she prepares women readers to take charge of their own lives and to take an active part in the world. She feels that there must be women who, like she, have been forced to become independent, and have found that it is not such a bad thing to rely on themselves and their capabilities instead of always being subservient to a male. Even though she relies on Bonner to supply her with the extra money and attention she needs, she is not married to him, and therefore has a sense of freedom that few other women have. She writes her novels from the viewpoint of an independent woman, and this shows very strongly in her writing. One sees many similarities in the things that happen to her characters and in her own life, and it does not seem that they were put there by coincidence. Through her characters, she is

gradually trying to wake up the interests of women toward their own state of living. The paradoxes that are inherent in her own life carry over to those of her characters, and they find themselves in the same situations. While Capitola's character goes a bit to the extreme in pursuing her independence, she does end up married in the end, and is subject to the same paradox as the others. Southworth is trying to put forth the idea that it does not have to be one way or the other.

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