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**UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ**

**THE MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY FEMALE  
REALITY AND IDEALS IN THE USA IN MARIA  
SUSANNA CUMMINS'S *THE LAMPLIGHTER***

**A Pro Gradu Thesis**

**by**

**Sirpa Siikanen**

**Department of English**

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Sirpa Siikanen  
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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten Yhdysvaltojen koillisosissa 1800-luvun puolivälissä eläneiden valkoihoisten naisten kokemukset ja todellisuus sekä tuon ajan naisihanteet heijastuvat Maria Susanna Cumminsin teoksessa *The Lamplighter*. Tuon ajan naiskirjailijoiden teoksia ja niissä esitettyjä näkemyksiä on tulkittu monin eri tavoin: jotkut tutkijat ovat nähneet niiden ilmentävän ns. kotikultin konservatiivisia arvoja yhteiskunnassa, kun taas toisten tutkijoiden mielestä ne heijastavat kyseisenä ajanjaksona eläneiden naisten ongelmia tai jopa yllyttävät naisia kapinaan. Tutkielman ensisijaisena materiaalina on siis kirja *The Lamplighter*, jonka sisältämiä ajatuksia verrataan olemassa olevaan tietoon tuon ajan naisten elämästä ja asemasta yhteiskunnassa sekä toissijaisesti jo olemassa oleviin tulkintoihin aiheesta. Tutkimusmenetelmä on siis kvalitatiivinen ja vertaileva.

1800-luvun puolivälissä vallinneen ns. kotikultin ideologiassa naisten ja miesten tehtävät yhteiskunnassa erotettiin tarkasti, ja kodista tuli paikka, josta käsin oletetusti moraalisesti korkeammalla tasolla olevien naisten tuli huolehtia kansakunnan, miestensä ja lastensa moraalista. Teoksesta kuitenkin käy ilmi, että naisen elämä nuoresta tytöstä lähtien sisälsi monia ongelmia: teoksen nuoret naiset joutuvat kärsimään orpoudesta ja alistaisesta asemasta perheessään. Ylistetty avioliitto ei välttämättä ole ongelmaton: nainen on ainakin taloudellisesti enemmän tai vähemmän miehensä armoilla, ja raha-avioliittojenkin viitataan olevan yleisiä. Lisäksi äidin rooli on vaativa, koska juuri äidin oletetaan vastaavan lastensa, erityisesti poikien, moraalista ja selviytymisestä maailmassa. Teos tuo myös esiin naimattomiin naisiin liittyviä ennakkoluuloja, ja työssäkäyvien naistenkaan todellisuus ei ole teoksessa ongelmaton. Lisäksi monet teoksen naiset näyttävät reagoivan ongelmiin kärsimällä erilaisista fyysisistä tai psyykkisistä oireista.

Eräänlaiseksi ratkaisuksi ongelmalliseen todellisuuteen teos esittää kuvan ihannenaisestä, joka ihanteellisen luonteensa avulla menestyy elämässä. Tämän ihannenaisten piirteet ovat osaksi samoja kuin kotikultin ihannenaisten ominaisuudet: usko Jumalaan ja hänen tahtoonsa alistuminen, velvollisuudentunto, uhrautuvaisuus, rehellisyys ja aitous, älykkyys ja kotirakkaus. Kuitenkin tarkasteltaessa näitä piirteitä tarkemmin käy ilmi, että ne eroavatkin monissa suhteissa kotikultin naisihanteesta, "tosinaisesta", ja että jotkut niistä, kuten naisen älyllisten ominaisuuksien korostaminen, näyttävät olevan täysin ristiriidassa tuon ihanteen kanssa. Joka tapauksessa myös *The Lamplighter* esittää miesten ja tulevien sukupolvien moraalista huolehtimisen naisen tärkeimpänä tehtävänä. Vastakohtana ihannenaiselle teoksessa on kaksi muuta naistyppiä: alaluokkainen "tietämätön" nainen sekä yläluokkainen itsekäs "kaunotar", jolle maalliset arvot ovat kaikkein tärkeimmät. Teoksessa nuori nainen voi tulla "ihanteelliseksi" vain toisten naisten moraalikasvatuksen ja esimerkin avulla. Tällainen naisten välinen suhde voi myös muuntaa syväksi ystäväydeksi, josta naiset saavat tukea elämässään.

Asiasanat: nineteenth-century USA. cult of domesticity. cult of True Womanhood. women's history. women's literature.

## CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. THE IDEOLOGY OF DOMESTICITY	5
2.1 Domesticity in fiction	7
2.2 The reception of "domestic fiction"	9
2.3 Maria Susanna Cummins's <i>The Lamplighter</i>	14
3. THE FEMALE REALITY OF THE MID-NINEENTH-CENTURY AS REFLECTED IN <i>THE LAMPLIGHTER</i>	18
3.1 Growing up female	18
3.1.1 Orphans and semi-orphans	18
3.1.2 Daughters' subordinate position	27
3.2 Women's alternatives	37
3.2.1 Marriage and motherhood	38
3.2.2 Single women	50
3.2.3 Working women	55
3.2.4 Opting out - sickness as a way out	64
4. THE "IDEAL" WOMAN IN <i>THE LAMPLIGHTER</i>	72
4.1 Piety and submission to God	73
4.2 Duty and self-sacrifice	77
4.2.1 Duty beyond all else	78
4.2.2 Self-sacrifice	80
4.3 Self-control	82
4.4 Sincerity, simplicity and modesty	87
4.5 Intelligence	93
4.6 Marriage and Domesticity	98
5. THE WARNING EXAMPLES: THE "IGNORANT" AND THE "BELLE"	108
6. EDUCATION AND SISTERHOOD AS THE SOLUTION	115
7. CONCLUSION	126
BIBLIOGRAPHY	133

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this thesis is to find out how one of the most popular books in the 19th-century United States, *The Lamplighter* (1854) reflects the reality of women living there at the time and how the then prevailing ideals for womanhood come out in it. The subject is especially interesting because in the nineteenth century, in the period of modernization and industrialization, the foundations of present-day society and cultural system were built, including certain suppositions about women's "nature" and place in society. Also the feminist movement was born in the nineteenth century.

The mid-nineteenth-century was the hayday of the cult of domesticity and the cult of separate spheres, which separated strictly the roles of men and women and assigned for women the role of mother and moral guardian in the society, a role which she was supposed to act out at home, the "sanctuary" in the world of money and competition. This ideology found a channel of expression in the domestic literature which includes fiction written by women about women and for women between 1820 and 1870. However, in this "domestic" fiction undercurrents of female dissatisfaction and perhaps even covert revolt can be found, which makes it an especially interesting topic for study. The literary history written and taught in the 20th century rarely even mentions the works of these extremely popular female writers, and *The Lamplighter*, one of the most popular of them is no exception in this sense even though it continued to sell well into the 20th century and must have had some effect on the lives of tens of thousands of women.

In the following chapters I shall first deal briefly with the cult of domesticity in general and then in the literature. After that, different responses to and interpretations of these novels are examined. The background of *The Lamplighter* and its author, Maria Susanna Cummins will be dealt with in a separate chapter. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth chapters will be dedicated to the analysis of the data, *The Lamplighter*. The picture it conveys of the lives of women and of the ideals of femininity will

be compared to historical background information, and furthermore, when possible, the findings will be compared with existing interpretations. The abbreviation "LL" will be used to refer to *The Lamplighter* in the extracts taken from the novel.

## **2. THE IDEOLOGY OF DOMESTICITY**

The Victorian period (1837-1901) was in the USA a period of great transformation, a period of modernization which includes industrialization, urbanization and the foundation of modern culture system (Walker Howe 1976:3,7). In the mid-nineteenth-century capitalist democracy was expanding at a quick rate, bringing with it competition and insecurity to the lives of many Americans. As a reaction against this, there was a growing insistence on the separation of home and family from market and state. People wanted to prevent their personal relations from becoming commodity relations. Thus the family became to be described as a "sanctuary", an "oasis" or "an ivory tower", free from the corruption and cold values of the marketplace. The rejection of market relations in the family was tied to the acceptance of them in other areas of society; the capitalist division between waged and non-waged work was the basis of the domestic division of labor between men and women. (Coontz 1988:210,213.)

According to Kelley (1984:140-141; emphasis original) there was a clear distinction in the sex roles which corresponded exactly to the division between home and marketplace. The public sphere was man's sphere where he acted as a leader and a decision-maker in politics, business, religion and culture. Women, in contrast, were trained for domesticity. Their economic functions and responsibilities were primarily family- and home-oriented, simply a part of their domestic vocation. In fact, women's identity was the identity of domesticity. Even if some women performed male functions, such as managing farms and running shops, those functions were performed "in place of or in the absence of males, or helping males". Cott (1977:74) also supports this view by stating that a woman's sex role contained her work-role, a vocation in which women required preparation and instruction

even if it was considered their "natural" role. This sharp division between the roles of women and men is called "the doctrine of the two spheres, or separate spheres" (Degler 1980:26).

Cott (1977:69-71,84; emphasis added) notes that in the "regenerate" society home became more and more to be viewed as a place of salvation where *morality* and *self-control* were to be instilled in the children by the mother. Women were judged competent for this task because they were supposedly disinterested in the matters of the world and because they possessed the appropriate attitude of selflessness. Demos (1986:49-50) mentions that this new kind of importance granted for women in childrearing was linked to the changing ideas of human development, mainly to the new emphasis on the formative influence of early experiences in life. Many writers and advisers even believed that mother's experiences during pregnancy could affect the destiny of the child. According to Welter (1966:163) home was also supposed to be "a cheerful place", so that the men of the family would not have to go out seeking enjoyment in their lives. Evans (1989:95-96; emphasis added) points out that within the urban middle classes this ideology of *domesticity* had gained a broader meaning by the 1840s and 1850s. The belief was that women could sustain the democratic social order by their moral influence in the home. Also Cott (1977:94-5; emphasis added) observes that mothers were to implant the *social control* deemed necessary in a democratic republic. This was based on the republican idea that "government's success depends on the stability of virtue among its citizens". According to Riley (1986:92) at the same time "female" values such as morality, virtue and honesty became increasingly the ideals put forth for all Americans; the American cultural values became feminized. According to what Barbara Welter (1966:152; emphasis added) has named *the Cult of True Womanhood* piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity were the four cardinal virtues of women. From the fact that women were assigned the role of moral guardians followed that "morally superior women" should have possibilities to spread their influence for example

through teaching at schools, through acting in charity organizations and through writing "morally improving" novels (Riley 1986:92).

### **2.1 Domesticity in fiction**

Ryan (1982:13-14) observes that it was not only "crops and commodities" that were spread out quickly in the new industrializing and integrated economy but ideas were also launched to the public efficiently in various ways. This was possible because literacy had grown at a quick rate between the American Revolution and the year 1840 when a total of 90 % of American-born male and female citizens could read and write, mainly thanks to the expansion in the public school system. Kelley (1984:8-10) notes that "by the 1840s America had the largest reading population ever produced" due to the doubled population and the high level of literacy, and therefore a mass market for books existed. Producing large quantities of books cheaply became possible also because of the technological improvements in the publishing industry and the fact that the publishers at midcentury no longer suffered from the lack of capital. Also the appearance of subscription libraries all over the country was a contributing factor because it assured a level of minimum sale. Literary periodicals, born mainly in the 1840s, also strengthened the importance of the written word.

Ryan (1982:15-17,120) notes that the written word was a way of "stitching a mass of transients into a society", meaning that literature unified migrants, westward pioneers and other people cut loose off their roots. Furthermore, the urban middle class in its unstable position and changing conditions needed literature to guide them. There was a need for conversation between the reading audience and the publishers and out of this conversation two basic features emerged. First, domesticity, topics relating to family life, became the central topic of literature. Second, women replaced men "as the primary subject matter, largest reading audience and the best-selling authors". "Domestic fiction" was not only literature by and for women but literature that saw the world within the limits of woman's sphere. Several other propositions followed from this starting point. First, if women were

given the central role in the literature of domesticity, they had to marry. Second, husbands should be somehow superior to their wives. Third, the woman in her inferior position had to have some range of power and action.

The domestic literature thus born can be temporally divided in three groups. The first group of writers, in the early nineteenth century, consisted largely of New Englanders, usually prominent public figures such as Protestant ministers whose domestic advice was primarily circulated in the form of sermon in their personal authority circles. The second group consists of "pronouncements of domestic topics" originating from the voluntary reform associations, such as temperance associations. To the third and the most influential group belong the best-selling female authors who dominated the field by 1850s with the aid of publishing tycoons. Direct instruction had now become the monopoly of professional specialists, while the novel had become the main article of popular domestic literature. (Kelley 1982:16-17).

Baym (1995:xii) mentions that as women became avid readers, they also became writers. Male authors were usually slow to realize the existence of female audience and even if they did, were reluctant to write for it. Publishers, however, saw what was happening and opened the way for female authors, first through women's magazines and then through books. Consequently, in addition to teaching, authorship became one of the two earliest professions that American women entered in large numbers. Actually, authorship was often seen as an extension to the teaching role. According to Kelley (1984:7,12) Catharine Maria Sedgewick, the author of *A New England Tale*, published in 1822, was the first of the "literary domestics", kind of a pioneer. The other commercially successful literary domestics were, in a chronological order: Catherine Maria Sedgewick, Caroline Howard Gilman and Caroline Lee Hentz in the 1830s, Maria McIntosh, E.D.E.N. Southworth and Harriet Beecher Stowe in the 1840s, Maria Cummins, Mary Jane Holmes, Sara Parton, Mary Virginia Terhune, Susan Warner, and Augusta Evans Wilson in the 1850s.



Ryan (1982:118) observes the problematic nature of the lives of these female authors: they all moved away from the woman's sphere, home, by taking upon themselves the role of breadwinner. The need for money played an important role at least in nine of the literary domestics' careers and four of them would probably never have written for publication if there had not been the need for income (Kelley 1984:145). As "private" women they felt they had to justify their careers for themselves and for others "in the name of woman", by reasoning that they wrote for the good of humanity. Furthermore, they described their literary efforts as "as works dictated by God" which thereby transformed their work into something more elevated. (Kelley 1984:287,293.) However, according to Walker Howe (1976:23) in the Victorian age, in general, both poetry and fiction had to find their legitimation in the morals they taught. Anyhow, the literary domestics could not perceive themselves as creators of culture, which had traditionally been a male role. All these factors contributed to the fact that ten of the twelve literary domestics resorted to anonymity, at least in the beginning of their careers. Many of them also wrote under (male) pseudonyms. Consequently, these women suffered through their lives of a kind of divided identity, one that could not be totally reconciled.(Kelley 1984:126-7,184).

## **2.2. The Reception of "domestic fiction"**

The term "literary domestics", has been invented by Mary Kelley in her article "The Literary Domestics: Private Woman on a Public Stage" in *Ideas in America's Cultures: From Republic to Mass Society* in 1982 (in Kelley 1984:345). The terminology used in referring to these women writers tells a lot about the meaning/importance granted to their work. According to Mussell (1981:xi,7) different scholars have interpreted their work and its significance in different ways. It can be, however, said that these works "tell stories about relationships between men and women". Mussell sees these women whom she calls "the domestic sentimentalists" as a part of gothic and romantic tradition. Women in the more gothic novels have adventures and meet many dangers whereas those in the more romantic novels "must

learn to be domestic, virtuous women in order to achieve their goals". Mussell also mentions *The Lamplighter* as the best example of nineteenth-century American fiction.

Henry Nash Smith (1974:49-50) claims that the works of the literary domestics were viewed with disdain by contemporary literary critics and writers both in the United States and in Britain. For example Henry James and Nathaniel Hawthorne both criticized these novels. Mussell (1981:8) mentions that the best-sellers of the literary domestics prompted the famous outburst of Nathaniel Hawthorne in his letter to his publisher in 1855, a couple of years after *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) "had been less than enthusiastically received by the reading audience" :

America is now wholly given over to a d.....d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash-and should be ashamed of myself if I succeeded. What is the mystery of these innumerable editions of the "Lamplighter", and other books neither better nor worse? -worse they could not be, and better they need not be, when they sell by the 100,000.

The fact is, however, that the public loved these stories and, consequently, these novels went through multiple and worldwide editions (Riley 1986:90). Moreover, according to Baym (1978:22-3) the reception of the novels by critics was actually mixed: the moralistic tone of the novels made many clerical opponents fear that their function in society would be taken over by these novelists and, furthermore, male authors felt their position threatened by the sudden appearance of female writers. However, many critics approached these novels with the same seriousness as any other literary work and wrote about them "with attention and respect". The critics of the time were particularly interested in how the novels succeeded in the depiction of American social life, taking regional differences in characters and manners under special study. Furthermore, Baym (1984:245,249,298) notes that the then acute question of the importance of home and woman's mission in life was seen as central in these novels. Some critics stressed "the potential of the novel as an agent for female acculturation".

Also the attitudes of critics in the 20th century towards the works of the literary domestics has varied a lot. Leslie Fiedler (1975:260-1) has stated

that "the successes of the purely commercial purveyors of domestic sentiments are unimportant except as they cast light on the contemporary failures of more serious writers". He criticizes the novels of their continuous portrayal of suffering martyr-like female heroines and of the will to see the male as crushed and submissive in the end. Also Henry Nash Smith (1974:50-1) classes these novels among "popular fiction" which fulfills expectations and expresses only received ideas and provides "channels for the unimpeded discharge of strong but crude feelings". In short, he thinks that there is an ethos of conformity behind all these works in the form of unquestioning female submission to authorities: God, men or society in general. Douglas (1977:9,62-3) sees the novels of literary domestics as "exercises in euphemism essential to the system of flattery which served as the rationale for the American woman's economic position". In her opinion, the female authors and readers of this fiction suffered from a huge need of uncritical confirmation of their identities, of showing their inferior position in the most favourable light. They sought instant satisfaction of their needs, which this kind of literature could provide. This reflects the rising shopping mentality among American women who had become the prime consumers of American culture. In short, she thinks that these novels had an enormous conservative influence on the society. Also, Jehlen (1981:590) sees these authors as conformists believing in the natural goodness of middle-class values which can be seen in the plots of the novels: the heroines are "passive throughout, 'exposed' at first, in the end married".

More many-sided interpretations of the significance of these novels can be found in the writings of Mary P. Ryan, Mary Kelley and Joanne Dobson. They all share the view that the fiction of literary domestics has a two-fold message. On one hand these novels glorify the homely values of the middle-class and the domestic ideal of woman's moral superiority, on the other hand there is an undercurrent of female dissatisfaction and even despair to be found in the novels, due to the hard reality of woman's life. (Kelley 1979:436-7, Ryan 1982:118-125, Dobson 1986:225-227). According to Dobson (1986:224,227-8) this "subversion" includes both

deliberate and inadvertent undercutting of the prevailing ideals of femininity. This subversion has been realized by manipulating the "norms" of conventional domestic narrative, by manipulating character presentation and plot. This was possible because both the author and the audience were aware of the conventions of the genre and of "the cultural ethos they embodied" Kelley (1979:442-4) notes that these female authors did not consciously intend to give such a negative image of woman's role in the family and the society. They actually tried to "impress on their readers the example of superior heroines serving family and nation" and they tried offer a model of a perfect haven-like home for their readers but, however, "their tales subverted their intentions". The heroines of the novels try hard to meet the ideals and challenges of woman's role but they succeed only partially and encounter many difficulties and obstacles. The glorified role of wife and mother may be a disappointment, social and economic disasters, sickness and death bring further difficulties to their path. Furthermore, the self-sacrificing acts of the heroines are often undermined by the "impurity" of the people surrounding them, especially by men with their corrupt worldly values. Consequently, the woman ends up being the victim. Ryan (1982:123,130) agrees with this interpretation by stating that "the feminized novel of the 1850s was above all else a literary dramatization of the contradictions of the family and the gender system". She also mentions that the critique of domesticity is not overt but is "buried in the vagaries of plot or nuances of tone".

Nina Baym and Helen Waite Papashvily have interpreted the meaning of these novels in the most radical way. Papashvily (1956 as quoted by Kelley 1984:345) stated that "the fiction encouraged a pattern of feminine behavior so quietly ruthless, so subtly vicious that the ladies of Seneca appear angles of innocence". "The ladies of Seneca" refers to the first women's rights convention organized at Seneca Falls in 1848 (Evans 1989:94-5). Also Nina Baym has in her book *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870* (1978) re-examined these books from perhaps the most radical perspective. She criticizes the

various labels given to these novels: "sentimental fiction", "fiction of sensibility", "domestic fiction" and "domestic sentimentalism" of being judgemental and misleading, and uses simply the term "woman's fiction" instead, demanding serious treatment of the novels. According to her, these books are "tales about the triumph of the feminine will", "stories of the formation and assertion of a feminine ego". She claims that the authors figured that women together could make a peaceful revolution, on the precondition that women first developed their own character. The phrase "woman's sphere is in the home" could come to mean "woman's sphere is to reform the world". What is revolutionary in this development is that woman alone is seen responsible for her own life, and marriage and children, for example are not considered necessary at all for woman's identity. Hardships are seen in the novels as occasions for perfecting one's character, which implies a deeply Victorian world view. (Baym 1978:12,19,22-27,36,39,49) Baym's views have been criticized for example by Mary Kelley (1984:346) who, although recognizes Baym's good intentions, accuses her of a too one-sided and radical interpretation of the novels, one that does not take the historical context into account properly. Mussell (1981:85) accuses Papashvily and Baym of confusing a fictional revolt and a real one. In her opinion, it is not to be assumed that the reader too will be unconventional if she identifies herself with an unconventional heroine. Instead, reading such "unconventional" fiction may be simply an outlet of tensions in real life.

As we have seen in this chapter, different authors and researchers have interpreted the meaning of "domestic fiction", fiction written by women in the United States between 1820-1870, in very different ways. Some of them have judged these novels as conservative and conformist manifestations of the prevailing ethos in society, whereas others have found in them undercurrents of female dissatisfaction and even rebellion, although realized in subtle ways. In the following chapter the career of one of the literary domestics, Maria Susanna Cummins is dealt with and special attention is paid to her most successful novel *The Lamplighter* which is also one of the

most popular books of the nineteenth-century USA and the primary subject of this thesis.

### **2.3 Maria Susanna Cummins's *The Lamplighter***

According to Baym (1995:xv-xvi) the success of Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, which was published in 1850 and actually established the category of the best seller, inspired "a host of imitations and derivatives and helped to create several successful authorial careers, including that of Maria Cummins's ". *The Lamplighter* (1854), her first and the most successful novel, became actually the second most popular book of the decade, only *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of Harriet Beecher Stowe being more successful. At the time of its publication, Maria Cummins was only twenty-seven years old.

Maria Susanna Cummins (1827-66) was the daughter of David Cummins, a Massachusetts lawyer who was a Unitarian (Douglas 1977:338-9). Maria Cummins's mother was her father's third wife and Maria was the first of their four children. Also the four children from the two previous marriages of David Cummins belonged to their family. Maria Cummins lived her life privately with her prosperous family in Dorchester outside of Boston. She felt no financial pressure to write unlike many of her colleagues at the time, and she never married. Maria Cummins received her education at home tutored by her father and in Mrs. Charles Sedgewick's young ladies' school. Mrs. Sedgewick's husband happened to be the brother of Catharine Maria Sedgewick, the much admired novelist (see above p.8). She obviously offered a role model of a female writer for Maria Cummins and she might also have taught her that being unmarried needed not to be a shame for a woman. (Baym 1978:164 and 1995:xiii-xv).

According to Kelley (1984:24) Maria Cummins's literary career lasted twelve years after the appearance of *The Lamplighter* in 1854 and was cut short by her death at the age of thirty-nine. During these twelve years she wrote four novels: *The Lamplighter* (1854), *Mabel Vaughan* (1857), *El Fureidis* (1860) and *The Haunted Hearts* (1864). *The Lamplighter* was immediately a huge success: within eight weeks of publication its sales rose

to 40 000 copies and by the end of 1854 to 73 000 copies. Nash Smith (1974:49) mentions that the novel became very popular also in Great Britain and its popularity lasted for decades. Nash Smith also points out that the heroine of the novel, Gertrude (Gertie) Flint, has even served as a fictional model for Gerty MacDowell in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. According to Baym (1995:xvi-xvii) *The Lamplighter* was also quickly translated into French, German, Danish, Italian and other languages. In the United States cheap reprintings appeared almost yearly until the 1920s. However, the success of the book was not viewed favourably by everyone: Baym (1978:164) notes that the *The Lamplighter* was the exact inspiration for Hawthorne's outburst against "scribbling women" (see above p.10). Nash Smith (1974:50) also mentions that for example M. G. Van Rensselaer (1879), an American literary critic placed the novels of Maria Cummins among "low-class fiction", meaning that they had no artistic value.

Also, for Maria Cummins, as for most of her contemporaries, writing had to be justified in social and moral terms (see above p.9). Because addressing men publicly was deemed inappropriate for female writers, they "had to limit their explicit aims to the improvement of their own sex and children". Consequently, the audience implied in *the Lamplighter* is "exclusively female". Male characters "are seen almost entirely in their relations to, and contact with, the women characters". In this way women could be shown how to use these contacts to exert influence upon men. (Baym 1995:xv). According to Kelley (1984: 287,293) Maria Cummins ascribed all her literary efforts to heaven, stating in a letter: "If I have done anything worth doing, it has been done through the motives and spirit of God." In her funeral Reverend Nathaniel Hall stressed in his eulogy how Maria Cummins had felt the importance of writing for the good of humanity: hers had been "a simple gladness," he said, "less than she had gained the public's applause than that she had touched, to issues humane and philanthropic, the public's heart".

These moral justifications are linked to the fact that many of the literary domestics wrote their novels anonymously (see above p.9), and Maria

Cummins was no exception in this sense: all her four novels were published anonymously. After the great success of *The Lamplighter* speculations about its author ran wild. In 1855 Mary Virginia Terhune, a novelist herself, wrote that Cummins's "*The Lamplighter* was in every home, and gossip of the personality of the author was seized upon greedily by press and readers." Somehow the net finally closed around Cummins and speculation turned into knowledge. *The Boston Transcript*, for example, wrote: "It is rumoured in literary circles that the authoress of the new volume which has met with so wide a sale, is the daughter of Hon. David Cummings [sic], widely known as Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of this Commonwealth". Although the identity of Maria Cummins became to be publicly known, she seems to have maintained the modesty that was expected of women. Mary Virginia Terhune wrote in her autobiography after meeting Maria Cummins and later Augusta Evans Wilson: "both were quietly refined in manner and speech, and incredibly unspoiled by the flood of popular favor that had taken each by surprise". (Kelley 1984:27, 126-9,320). Maria Cummins died in 1866 after two years' illness from an "abdominal complaint" (Baym 1995:xxvii).

What is then the secret behind the success of *The Lamplighter*? Many answers and interpretations can be suggested to this question but Baym (1995:xxxix) quite correctly notes that the contemporary (female) reader of *The Lamplighter* did not actually interpret the novel but experienced it and found inspiration in it for their own lives. Baym suggests that the secret of the book is "nothing more or less than the joy of reading, the pleasure of the text." Baym (1978:17) further assumes that "woman's fiction" in general succeeded "in engaging and channeling the emotions of readers through identification with the heroine".

*The Lamplighter* tells the story of the development of Gertrude (Gerty), an orphan, who finds a new home with Trueman (True) Flint, a lamplighter, after having been thrown out by Nan Grant, her previous guardian, who has treated her badly. Abused and mistreated, Gertrude learns to love True as her own father and also befriends the Sullivans living next door, especially



the young Willie Sullivan, whom she she later falls in love with. True dies suddenly and the care of Gertrude is taken over by Emily Graham, who is blind, and her influential father Mr. Graham. Under the care and example of Emily the character of Gertrude develops further and she gradually becomes a virtuous young woman, who, however has to face many trials in her life. After many adventures and trials Gertrude meets her father, who was supposed to be dead, and finally marries Willie Sullivan, whom she believes to have lost for another woman. There is also a kind of second heroine in the book, the almost christ-like Emily Graham, who, it is revealed later in the book, is the old loved one of Gertrude's father. They also get married in the end of the book. There are also many other interesting characters in the story and the story itself takes places in various places in New England and among different social classes, which offers colorful depiction of the New England society of the time.

Because the story is basically a story of female development and female characters, a story of female experience, the following chapters of this paper are dedicated to the study of them. The often problematic female experience conveyed by the novel is compared to the facts we know of the life of the mid-nineteenth-century white women living in New England. The purpose is also to show that *The Lamplighter* offers its own "solution" to the problems in women's life by presenting for the reader a model of an "ideal" woman and also a few warning examples of "failed" womanhood. The process through which a young girl can become "ideal" will be also dealt with. Furthermore, the results are throughout the study compared to the previous studies on the subject, if possible. The epigraphs (quotations) at the beginning of each chapter of *The Lamplighter* will not be dealt with, as the study of them would introduce further questions of intertextuality. Moreover, interpreting their meanings would be extremely difficult due to the fact that most of the are extracts of poems and this study being a study of prose.

### **3. THE FEMALE REALITY OF THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY AS REFLECTED IN *THE LAMPLIGHTER***

In this chapter, the image of the reality of white women living in the mid-nineteenth-century Northeastern United States conveyed by *The Lamplighter* will be dealt with by comparing it to what we already know about women's position and reality at the time. The purpose is to study whether the novel conveys a problematic picture of the female reality at the time, or whether there are perhaps even "rebellious" ideas concerning woman's place, as some researchers have suggested. The starting point/hypothesis for this study is that the female experience conveyed by the "domestic" literature of the mid-nineteenth-century, including *The Lamplighter*, is not solely positive but actually a more or less problematic and challenging experience in a rapidly changing world, a view promoted by many scholars, for example by Joanne Dobson, Mary Kelley and Mary Ryan (see above pp. 11-12).

#### **3.1 Growing up female**

*The Lamplighter* is basically a story of female growth and development, a story that describes a young girl's (or girls') transition from childhood to adulthood. In this chapter facts about mid-nineteenth-century female childhood and early adulthood are examined with special reference to their portrayal in *The Lamplighter*, special attention being paid to the problems experienced by young girls.

##### **3.1.1 Orphans and semi-orphans**

The first "critical period" of a woman's life in the mid-nineteenth-century was actually her birth, and even if the child survived, the mother's death at childbirth was not rare. According to the mortality statistics from the years 1840 and 1850, the death rates of women between the ages of 10 and 35 are greater than those of men, reflecting the effects of childbearing on women's lives (Degler 1980:60). According to Banner (1995:10) the life expectancy

for women in 1850 was 40 years, whereas in 1900 it had risen to 51 years partly thanks for the introduction of antiseptic techniques in childbirths which decreased the danger of puerperal fever, an infection of childbirth that had been fatal for women and their babies for centuries. Kelley (1979:445) mentions that if the mother died, the husband could usually at least provide for his children's material welfare although he was considered unfitted for their emotional upbringing. The effects of the father's death could be even more devastating, the mother not being prepared to earn a living for herself and her children, this being the role of the male breadwinner. But the worst fate a child could face was becoming an orphan, being left alone in the world without the "shelter" of the nuclear family. In the works of the mid-nineteenth-century female writers "no figure is either treated with greater emotion or sentimentality, or endures greater hardship and privation than the orphan who appears in the work of every writer". According to Degler (1980:108) in the case of the mother having died in the childbirth, it was expected that other members of the family would take care of the child, a task which often fell on the grandparents or the aunts. Fathers were not expected to take care of small children if it was only possible to find a woman to do it. The novels written by women at the time often give a very negative image of the daily life of the neglected and overworked orphans, and most often the guardians mistreating them are aunts, usually the mother's sisters (Baym 1978:37).

In *The Lamplighter* there are, as it seems for the modern reader, surprisingly many female orphans or semi-orphans, the most central of whom is Gertrude Flint, also called Gerty, the heroine of the book. Kelley (1979:445), for example, mentions Gerturde as an example of the archetypal orphan of the time in literature. Gertrude's sad existence is described on the first few pages of the book:

...but no one noticed the little girl, for *there was no one in the world who cared for her*. She was scantily clad, in garments of the poorest description. Her hair was long and very thick; uncombed and unbecoming...her whole appearance unhealthy. (LL 1; italics SS)

*No one loved her, and she loved no one; no one treated her kindly; no one tried to make her happy, or cared whether she were so. She was but eight years old, and all alone in the world.* (LL 2; italics SS)

Gertrude, at the beginning of the book, lives at Nan Grant's house in Boston's poorer quarters. Gertrude's fate is a sad one because Nan Grant, who is coarse, violent and uneducated constantly mistreats her. The scene at the beginning of the book, in which Nan learns that Gerty has accidentally spilt the milk she was supposed to fetch, illustrates well the treatment Gertrude receives:

At this moment Nan Grant came to the door, saw what had happened, and commenced pulling the child into the house, amidst *blows, threats and profane and brutal language...*Gerty was *scolded, beaten, deprived of the crust* which she usually got for her supper, and *shut up in her dark attic for the night.* (LL 3; italics SS)

In the same paragraph some light is shed on Nan Grant's questionable motives for taking care of Gerty:

Her mother had died in in Nan Grant's house, five years before; and she had been tolerated there since, not so much because when *Ben Grant went to sea he bade his wife be sure and keep the child until his return* (for he had been gone for so long that no one thought he would ever come back), but because *Nan had reasons of her own for doing so; and, though she considered Gerty a dead weight upon her hands, she did not care to excite inquiries by trying to dispose of her elsewhere.* (LL 3; italics SS)

In addition to the actual violence Gerty is exposed to at Nan Grant's, she is given no tasks to perform, which was totally against the prevailing ideas of young girls' upbringing. Nan only wants to keep her out of sight. Furthermore, Gerty is never sent to school or taught anything:

Nan Grant had no babies; and, being a very active woman, with but a poor opinion of children's services, at the best, she never tried to find employment for Gerty, much better satisfied if she she would only keep out of her sight; so that, *except her daily errand for milk, Gerty was always idle, — a fruitful source of unhappiness and discontent, if she had suffered from no other.* (LL 8-9; italics SS)

(Willie:) "Is Nan Grant the cross old woman you used to live with?"

"Yes. How did you know she was cross?"

"O, my mother's been telling me about her. Well, *I want to know if she did n't send you to school or teach you anything?*"

*Gerty shook her head.*

"*Why, what lots you've got to learn!...*" (LL 33; italics SS)

In addition to the poor treatment Gerty receives from her "guardian", she has no friends but is teased by other poor children, who have seen her beaten and called ugly and wicked:

She did sometimes mingle with the troops of boys and girls, equally ragged with herself, who played about in the yard; but not often,—there was a league against her among the children of the place. Poor, ragged and miserably cared for, as most of them were, *they all knew that Gerty was still more neglected and abused...* children as they were, they felt their advantage, and *scorned the little outcast.* (LL 5; italics SS)

Gerty's stay at Nan's is terminated with a sad event in which Nan finds out that Gerty has been hiding a kitten in the house and throws the kitten into a vessel of hot water; the kitten dies in torture and Gerty gets so angry at Nan that she throws a stick of wood at her (LL 11). As a counter-reaction, Nan throws Gerty out of the house:

"Ye'll never darken my doors again, yer imp of wickedness!" said she, as she rushed into the house, *leaving the child alone in the cold, dark night.* (LL 11; italics SS)

Trueman Flint, the friendly lamplighter sees Gerty thrown out of the house and asks Gerty a few questions concerning her situation, and, having found out what has happened, tries to talk to Nan, whose response is chilling:

"Who won't let you in?—your mother?"

"No! Nan Grant."

"Who's Nan Grant?"

"She's a horrid, wicked woman, that drowned my kitten in bilin' water!"

"But where's your mother?"

"I hadn't got none."

"*Who do you belong to, you poor little thing?*"

"*Nobody; and I've no business anywhere!*"

...

"She's no child of mine," said Nan; "she's been here long enough; she's the worst little creature that ever lived; it's a wonder I've kept her so long; and now I hope I'll never lay eyes on her again,—and, what's more, I don't mean to...*She's the city's property—let them look out for her*; and you'd better go long, and not meddle with what don't consarn you." (LL 12; italics SS)

Gertrude becomes orphan for the second time because True, the friendly lamplighter who starts taking care of her after Nan has thrown her out of her house, falls ill and dies in. This time, Gertrude, however, is older and more mature, and after a period of deep grief and with the help of her new "surrogate mother" Emily and her friends the Sullivans, especially Willie, Gertrude survives the loss.

Henry Nash Smith (1974:66), who in general places little value on the works of whom he calls "purely commercial purveyors of domestic sentiments" (see above p.11), acknowledges that "the early chapters of *The Lamplighter* present convincing details of Gerty Flint's life with the slatternly Ann Grant in a dockside Boston slum." It is interesting to note that Nan Grant refers to Gerty as "city's property" (in the quotation above). According to Elbert (1987:94-7) there was a growing awareness in Boston during the 1840s and 1850s about the state of exploitation and degradation of children, especially among the poorer classes and immigrants. It was feared that this would lead to more crime, and especially crimes committed by girls were seen as a threat to moral order, women being considered the upkeepers of their families and the nation's morality. As a solution, voluntary associations started, for example, taking care of orphan children by placing them into orphanages. This is probably what Nan Grant refers to by "the city's property". Riley (1986:97) notes that in Boston moral reformers opened "a Home for Unprotected Girls". Mintz and Kellogg (1988: 84-5) mention that in general, the situation of working-class children in the cities was often very poor. In Boston, it was reported by the Committee on Internal Health that in the slum districts, residents were "huddled together like brutes without regard to sex, age or a sense of decency...". American newspapers and popular literature published "vivid

descriptions of impoverished families; of ragged children begging for pennies; of small girls selling nuts, fruits and toothpicks; and of teenage hoodlums stealing goods...”. Moreover, two of every three children born in the slum districts died before their second birthday. Evans (1989:85,100-1) points out that the children of the urban poor, ”scent out to scavenge, easily sled into petty thievery and prostitution.” Evans also states that the middle-class reformers, horrified by the absence of what they considered proper homes and upbringing for children, often condemned the lower class mothers of maternal neglect.

In addition to Gertrude, there are five more female characters in *The Lamplighter* who are revealed to be orphans or semi-orphans. Even the succeeding generations of women could face the fate of becoming an orphan, as is the case of Gertrude and Gertrude’s mother, Lucy Grey, whose story is told at the end of the book by Gertrude’s father. Lucy’s father is a sea captain, and Lucy had been living with him on board a ship after the death of her mother. Then his father dies suddenly from an illness and the consequences for Lucy seem devastating because she is left with no money and no relatives, the ship heading for Rio:

With kind words and persuasions I restored her to her senses; and then, as the full consciousness of her desolation rushed upon her, she sunk at once into a state of hopeless despondency...Captain Grey had made no provisions for his daughter; indeed, it would have been impossible for him to do so, as the state of his affairs afterwards proved. Well might the poor girl lament her sad fate! *for she was without a relative in the world, penniless, and approaching a strange shore, which afforded no refuge to the orphan!* (LL 382; italics SS)

Lucy sees no other solution for the situation but to accept Philip’s (Gertude’s father’s) proposal for marriage, Philip wanting to take care of Lucy although he does not actually love her:

”The unsophisticated girl had never thought of marriage; *she had sought the protection of a friend, not a husband*; but I explained to her that the latter tie only would obviate the necessity of our parting; and, in the humility of sorrow, *she finally accepted my unflattering offer.*” (LL 382; italics SS)

Later on, after many turns in the plot and believing his husband to be dead, Lucy ends up at Nan Grant's with her child and finally dies there, Gertrude being left under Nan's care with the consequences known.

Even the position of a girl born to a middle-class or upper-class family, with mother or both parents dead, was considered pitiable at the time. Degler (1980:82) observes that mothers were warned against letting servants or nurses raise their children because "they, with their own bad habits, could reduce or eliminate entirely the mother's indispensable control over the child's development" (see chapter 3.2.1 below for more information on motherhood). In *The Lamplighter*, Isabel Clinton, the only surviving child of a wealthy merchant whose other six children had all died young, has been raised by servants and later by her bold and boisterous aunt, with negative consequences (see also chapter 5. below):

*At an early age deprived of her mother, and left for some years under the care of servants, she soon learned to appreciate at more than their true value the outward attractions she possessed; and her aunt, under whose tutelage she had been since she left school, was little calculated to counteract in her this undue self-admiration. An appearance of conscious superiority...the independent air..."*  
(LL 188; italics SS)

Also Kitty Ray, Isabel's cousin, who is taken care of by their aunt, too, is an orphan, although very little of her background is revealed. The fact that she is an orphan comes out in the context of an affair in which she has been ruthlessly deceived by a young man, Ben Bruce, to believe that he loves her, whereas he has only tried to arouse Gertrude's jealousy, Gertrude being the real object of his admiration:

(Gertrude:) "Think how her confidence has been abused! how that *motherless and fatherless girl, who had a claim to the sympathy of all the world* has been taught a lesson of mistrust!" (LL 235; italics SS)

Kitty Ray herself, whose development from an ignorant little girl to a responsible and principled young woman is also described in the book (see below p.122), decides to adopt an orphan girl called Grace (Gracie). Gracie



is presented to the reader for the first time in chapter XXXVII, the events of which take place in Saratoga, a famous tourist resort of the time:

Some half-dozen gayly and fancifully dressed children, whose mothers were scattered about on the piazzas, and whose nurses were at supper, had collected around a strage little new-comer, whom they were subjecting to every species of persecution. Her clothes, though of rich material, were most untidily arranged, and appeared somewhat soiled by travelling. Her little black silk frock (for the *child was clad in mourning*) seemed to be quite outgrown...*her whole appearance denoted great negligence on the part of her parents or guardians.* (LL 288)

At the end of the book Gracie's future prospects look good because she has found a home with Kitty and her future husband, a minister, whose niece she is:

...Kitty laughed....explained to Gertrude that she was engaged...and that the child she held by the hand was his orphan niece, and just like a daughter to him

...

Gertrude, as she remarked the happy transformation which had already been effected in the countenance and dress of the little girl who had been so sadly in want of female superintendence,... (LL 414-5)

The fifth female orphan, or actually semi-orphan, in the book is the blind Emily Graham, the only daughter of Mr. Graham, a wealthy businessman. Mr. Graham and Emily become Gertrude's guardians after the death of Trueman Flint. Emily has actually lost her mother twice: first her biological mother and then her first stepmother, to whom she was very attached.

"You are aware, perhaps, that *my mother died when I was too young to retain any recollection of her*; but my father soon married again, and in this step-parent, whom I remember with as much tenderness as if she had been my own mother, I found a love and care which fully compensated for my loss...As long as our mother was spared to us we lived in comparative harmony; but at last, *when I was just sixteen years old, she was stricken with sudden illness, and died.*" (LL 314-5)

Emily actually gets "a third mother" when her father marries for the third time, but this step-parent, widow Holbrook, the aunt of Isabel and Kitty, is a

noisy and showy woman, fond of "gay company", a totally unfitting parent for Emily whose health is very fragile:

(Gertrude:) "Do you really mean so, Mr. Arnold? Mr. Graham married! When? To whom?"

"To the widow Holbrook, a sister-in-law of Mr. Clinton's; she has been staying at Havana with a party from the north, and the Grahams met her there"

...

"I have seen her very often," said Anne. "*She is coarse, noisy, dashing person,—just the one to make Miss Emily miserable.*" (LL 179; italics SS)

Later in the book Mrs. Graham (ex-widow) Holbrook, who is actually jealous for Emily for the attention she gets from her father, leagues together with Isabel against Emily when they do not succeed in shattering Gertrude's peace of mind:

Her malicious persecutors...now made their attack in another quarter; and Emily, the sweet, lovely, unoffending *Emily*, became the object against whom they aimed many of their shafts of unkindness and ill-will

...

*Indeed, his love and thoughtfulness for Emily, and the enthusiastic devotion manifested towards her by every member of the household, had early rendered her an object of jealousy to Mrs. Graham, who was therefore very willing to find ground of offence against her...* (LL 242-3; italics SS)

Later on in the story Mr. Graham understands the unhappiness his new wife has brought to the household, but is still unable to totally regain control of the household (see below pp. 39-40). Mrs. Graham is actually a good example of a type of woman despised in the book (see chapter 5. below) As Baym (1995:xiii) notes, at the time men were likely to marry more than once because death of the mother in childbirth was frequent, and therefore "families of stepbrothers and stepsisters were common." Orphans, stepparents and reconstituted families were, consequently, a part of many women's familial experience, a fact that could add its own complications to family life.

In conclusion it can be said that being an orphan or semi-orphan in the mid-nineteenth-century was not a rare experience, and this can also be seen

in *The Lamplighter*. The worst fate a child could face was the death of both parents, and therefore, being left on the mercy of relatives or other possible guardians, who could be totally unfit to raise a child. This was the reality both in the lower and the upper classes, whereas the problems an orphan faced could be quite different. Gertrude's bad treatment by Nan Grant illustrates the hard reality a "lower-class orphan" could face in the hands of possibly violent and uneducated guardian. Lucy's, Isabelle's, Kitty's and Emily's situations, for their part, shed light on the lives of middle- and upper-class orphans. Even if they are treated without violence and do not have to suffer from hunger and from the deprivation of material needs, their upbringing may be inadequate, being left to be raised by servants, or in general not enough attention is paid to the formation of their personalities, as is the case with Isabelle. In addition, they may also meet financial difficulties, as is the case with Lucy. Furthermore, if they have a parent living, his (or hers) new marriages can further complicate their lives; an example of this is the third remarriage of Emily's father. However, even if a girl was not an orphan, her position was not always an easy one, as revealed in the following chapter.

### **3.1.2 Daughters' subordinate position**

According to Mintz and Kellogg (1988:47,58) by 1830s "a new conception of childhood began to emerge." Children now stayed longer in their parents' households and particularly the parents of northeastern middle-class families kept their sons and daughters "well into their teens and even their twenties." Childhood became to be viewed more and more as a separate stage of development in a person's progress towards adulthood. Locke's view of child's mind as "tabula rasa" and the view presented by Rousseau that children were naturally social and affectionate were behind the new object of child-rearing: developing a child's conscience and self-government. According to Ryan (1982:46) mothers were required to "maintain a

constant moral vigilance over their progeny from infancy until the critical period when, in early adulthood, they left the parental home.”

Chambers-Schiller (1984:77,107,123) notes, however, that an unmarried woman regardless of her age “remained first and foremost a daughter.” Unless the young woman had given her hand to another man, her father was considered responsible for her and he “held a claim on her services”. Furthermore, parents or other guardians could decide on their daughters’ education, which could be a cause of great frustration for many young women. Riley (1986:72) mentions that in the families of middle- and upper-class Americans, girls were expected to sit quietly sewing or reading in the presence of their parents, whereas boys were often allowed to run and play games. Girls usually saw their fathers only “briefly at dinner or bedtime, often in the role as major disciplinarians of the family”. Demos (1986:50) also states the role of fathers as “final arbiters of family discipline” despite the fact that the father’s importance generally waned in the families at the same time as the mother’s increased.

Mintz and Kellogg (1988:53,60) point out that the fact that children increasingly stayed at home longer than before often created emotional and psychological tensions especially in middle-class homes with adolescent children. The children remained under their parents’ control as long as they stayed at home even when they were anxious to live their own lives independently of their parents. Also, Ryan (1982:60) notes that this longer residence of children at their parents’ house “not only extended the period of the moral control of the mother but also allowed parents to supervise the social transitions incumbent on young adults”.

In *The Lamplighter* there is a good example of tensions created by a conflict between parental (paternal) authority and child’s, or actually a young woman’s will. In chapter XXI Mr. Graham, Gertrude’s guardian naturally expects Gertrude, who is now a young woman, to join them in their trip to the south but Gertrude, who has found out that her friends need her help, makes her own decision, based on her sense of duty (see below pp.78-9), and a clash follows.

"Ah! then you are to be of the party, Miss Flint?"

"Of course, of course," answered Mr. Graham, without giving Gertrude a chance to speak for herself; "we depend upon Gertrude,—couldn't get along at all without her."

...

"I did expect to go with Mr. and Miss Graham," answered Gertrude, "...but I have just decided that I must remain in Boston this winter,"

...

"...I tell you I insist upon it. *You are under my care, child, and I have a right to say what you shall do.*"

...

(Mr. Graham:) "...*I can't say that I see how their claim compares with mine. Haven't I given you the best of educations, and spared no expense either for your improvement or your happiness?*"

"I did not think, sir," answered Gertrude, humbly, and yet with quiet dignity, "of counting up the favors I had received, and measuring my conduct accordingly..." (LL 139-140; italics SS)

Mr. Graham stubbornly persists in his opinion despite Gertrude's justifications for her choice and despite the support given for Gertrude by Emily's (his beloved daughter). Finally, understanding that Gertrude will not give in, he presents an ultimatum:

"No, you're not *sorry* (emphasis original); if you were, you would not walk straight in the face of my wishes," said Mr. Graham, who began to observe the expression of Gertrude's face, which, though grieved and troubled, had in the last few minutes acquired additional firmness, instead of quailing beneath his severe and cutting words;—"but I have said enough about a matter which is not worthy of so much notice. *You can go or stay, as you please. I wish you to understand, however, that in the former case I utterly withdraw my protection and assistance from you. You must take care of yourself, or trust to strangers...*" (LL 146; italics SS)

Gertrude will not give in but says goodbye to Emily and leaves for Boston to help Mrs. Sullivan to take care of her sick father. In addition, Gertrude goes to teach in the school she was formerly a pupil in. Gertrude is backed up by friendly Dr. Jeremy, who has heard of what had happened between Gertrude and Mr. Graham:

(Dr. Jeremy:) "...*It's Graham's wanting to lay down the law for everybody that comes within ten miles of him that I can't endure; his dictatorial way of acting, as if he were the Grand Mogul of Cochin China...I consider you a girl of sense—one who knows*

what's right—and will do what's right, in spite of Mr. Graham”  
(LL 155; italics SS)

Gertrude, even though she is sorry of what had happened, wants to show Mr. Graham that she is able to support herself:

*”He hinted that I should never be able to support myself, and should be driven to a life of dependence; and since the salary which I receive from Mr. W. is sufficient for all my wants, I am anxious to be so situated, on Mr. Graham’s return, that he will perceive that my assurance, or boast (if I must call it so), that I could earn my own living, was not without foundation.”*  
(Dr, Jeremy:) *”So Graham thought that, without his sustaining power, you would soon come to beggary—did he? With your talents, too!—that’s just like him!”* (LL 175; italics SS)

Mr. Graham, having married widow Holbrook, invites Gertrude to accompany them in their trip abroad, as a companion for Emily. However, there is a strong patronizing tone in his letter to Gertrude:

*”...I am induced to propose that you join us in New York, and attend the party, as a companion to Emily. I have not forgotten the ingratitude with which you once slighted a similar offer on my part, and nothing would compel me to give you another opportunity to manifest such a spirit, but a desire to promote the happiness of Emily, and a sincere wish to be of service to a young person who has been in my family so long that I feel a friendly interest in providing for her. I thus put it in your power, by complying with our wishes, to do away from my mind the recollection of your past behavior; and if you choose to return to us, I shall enable you to maintain the place and appearance of a lady...Trusting to your being now come to a sense of your duty, I am ready to subscribe myself your friend,*  
J.H. GRAHAM” (LL 183;  
italics SS)

Gertrude accepts the offer for the sake of her friend's (Emily's) well-being, and the dispute becomes settled. Later in the story Mr. Graham learns to appreciate Gertrude's character.

Rothman (1982:410,412) notes that when it came to choosing mates for marriage, by the end of the eighteenth century the "parental-run marriage system" had totally disappeared. This meant that daughters were free to

choose their mates but also that parents supervised little their socialization with potential husbands. Degler (1980:12) agrees with this idea and mentions also that this applied to children in all classes of society. However, parents could influence the matter if they strongly disapproved of the choice. The usual solution was either to send the daughter away from home or move the whole family.

In *The Lamplighter* there is one instance where parents (or actually a parent) clearly use their authority in affecting the daughter's choice for marriage partner. This is the case of Emily having "tender feelings" towards Philip, the son of her first stepmother. Emily's father, Mr. Graham, had always disliked Philip probably partly for the reason that he and Philip's biological father had been enemies and he had even refused to let Philip call him "father" (LL 371). Emily's stepmother, Philip's mother, always tried to make his husband like her son but met little success. Eventually it became Emily's work to try to act as a mediator between Philip and her father:

(Emily:) "*How dear my young playmate became to me, no words can express. The office which each filled, the influence which each of us exerted upon the other, was such as to create mutual dependence...there was one respect in which my bold young protector and ruler ever looked to me for aid and support. It was to act as a mediator between him and my father; for, while the boy was almost an idol to his mother, he was ever treated with coldness and distrust by my father, who never understood or appreciated his many noble qualities, but seemed always to regard him with an eye of suspicion and dislike.*" (LL 315; italics SS)

After the death of Philip's mother Mr. Graham, Philip still residing in the Grahams' house and working in Mr. Graham's counting-house, Mr. Graham decides to break the bond between his daughter and Philip, a bond which he probably suspects to be quite intimate. His first step involves the introduction of a housekeeper, Mrs. Ellis into the family to keep an eye on the young "couple":

(Philip:) "There was one great compensation for my trials, and that was the love I cherished for Emily, who responded to it with equal warmth on her part...At length my mother died... And now, without excuse or even warning, my step-father commenced a course of policy as unwise as it was cruel...*He tried to rob me of the only*

thing that sweetened my and blessed my existence—the love of Emily.” (LL 372; italics SS)

(Emily:) ”*Our eyes could not, therefore, long to be closed to the fact that he was resolved to put an immediate check upon the freedom of intercourse which had hitherto subsisted between the two youthful inmates of his house; to forward which purpose he immediately introduced into the family, in the position of a housekeeper, Mrs. Ellis...The almost constant presence of this stranger, together with the sudden interference of my father with such of our long-established customs as favored his step-son’s familiar intimacy with me, sufficiently proved his intention to uproot and destroy, if possible, the closeness of our friendship... My father, however, as it is frequently the case with people of his unsocial temperament and apparent obtuseness of observation, saw more of our manoeuvring than we were aware of, and imagined far more than ever in reality existed*” (LL 316; italics SS)

Emily suddenly falls ill with fever, and after several weeks’ separation Philip goes to meet Emily in her chamber. Mr. Graham enters the room unexpectedly and, furious, accuses Philip of trying to lure his daughter into marriage and, more serious, of a forgery of a large amount of money. Emily, terrified by these accusations and by the anger of the wrongly-accused Philip, faints with fatal consequences. Philip springs to help her and intends to reach a bottle of cologne on the table but accidentally takes one containing acid, which he accidentally spills on Emily’s eyes. As a consequence, Mr. Graham tells him to leave and never come back. Philip leaves, and just when Emily finds out his location, she is told that Philip is dead, with the consequence that Emily loses her sight for good, crying over the fate of her loved one.

(Emily:) ”...when we were suddenly interrupted by my father...*It is sufficient to say that in the double accusation which my exiled parent now brought against the object of his wrath he urged the fact of his seeking (as he expressed it) by mean, base, and contemptible artifice to win the affections, and with them the expected fortune, of his only child, as a secondary and pardonable crime, compared with his deeper, darker, and but just detected guilt of forgery,—forgery of a large amount, and upon his benefactor’s name... I sunk back in a fainting fit... it was an accident... There were several bottles, and in his haste, he seized one containing a*



powerful acid... It had a heavy glass stopper,—and he—his hand was unsteady, and he spilt it all—”

”On your eyes?” shrieked Gertrude.

...

”What became of him?” said Gertrude...

”...*He banished him from his sight and knowledge forever...having at length learned the actual residence and address of the ill-fated youth, I was commencing ... a letter of love, and an entreaty for his return, when a fatal seal was put to all my earthly hopes. He died, in a foreign land, alone, unnursed, untended, and uncared for...and I, on hearing the news of it, sunk back into a more pitiable malady; and—alas for the encouragement the good doctor had held out of my gradual restoration to sight!—I wept all his hopes away!...For a time, therefore, I dwelt in utter darkness, —the darkness of despair... You can form no idea of the utter wretchedness in which my days were spent...*” (LL 318-21; italics SS)

Although Emily is at first very depressed, believing that Philip is dead and having to live her life blind, it is not implied that she would be bitter towards her father. However, it is exactly Mr. Graham’s tyrannical behavior that has caused all the terrible incidents.

In the case of there being both daughters and sons in the family, the first place of importance was usually given to sons in the mid-nineteenth-century families in the United States. Often ”an unmarried daughter’s contribution to the household economy or to domestic management enabled a family to provide for sons”, whose task was to earn ”social and financial credit” in the community. (Chambers-Schiller 1984:122-3). According to Mintz and Kellogg (1988:88) in many working-class families daughters were expected to leave school early and start working so that sons could pursue their education. In addition, one daughter usually remained unmarried so that she could care for the younger children in the family or take care of the parents when they became old.

In *The Lamplighter* there is one example of this priority given to sons in the family, namely the case of Fanny and Ben Bruce, who live in the neighbor of the Grahams’ suburban mansion. Mrs. Bruce, their mother, cares mainly for her lazy and vain son, which is reflected in Fanny’s personality:

Fanny Bruce was a girl of good disposition and warm heart, but *she had been much neglected by her mother, whose chief pride was in her son, the same Ben of whom we have previously spoken. She had often been left behind in some boarding-house, while her pleasure-loving mother and indolent brother passed their time in journeying; and had not always been so fortunately situated as at present. A sense of loneliness, a want of sympathy in any of her pursuits, had been a source of great unhappiness to the poor child, who labored under the painful consciousness that but little interest was felt by any one in her improvment or happiness.* (LL 177-8; italics SS)

This precedence sons were given over the daughters was also reflected in the education young women could receive. As Cott (1977:108-122) mentions, by 1825 women's education "promised to train women to know their place". The idea behind women's education was utilitarian, the social usefulness of women as daughters, wives and mothers being the cornerstone. Therefore, utilitarian education was based on a limited idea of woman's role. The strongest justification was that as guardians of the nation's morality, women had to become well-educated mothers (the ideal of republican motherhood). Vinovskis and Bernard (1978:864-66) note that even though only 3,6 % of white females in New England in 1850 were illiterate (most of them were foreign born), segregation of sexes in the schools remained the ideal and it was commonly accepted that girls should not be prepared for the same occupations as boys. High school students were usually divided into male and female departments, young men being trained for college or business careers and young women trained to be "daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, companions and teachers, who would help to detrmine the manners, morals and intelligence of the whole community" The teachers' aim was to instill in every woman "a well-disciplined mind, high moral aims, refined tastes, gentle and graceful manners, practical views of her own duties...". Most of the antebellum American women who attended public schools attended primary or common schools only, their attendance rates being consistently lower and their illiteracy rates higher than those of males.

Cott (1977:115-7) mentions that with the cult of domesticity coeducational insitutions became less reasonable and the first type of

women-only education was the so-called "ornamental education", which appealed mainly to the upper-middle and especially upper classes of society. The girls in these schools were taught "accomplishments to adorn the daughters of the wealthy", including languages, drawing and embroidery. Later on ambitious female academies were founded, with more "intellectually demanding" subjects. Still the underlying ideology of the cult of domesticity was never totally questioned. Miller Solomon (1985:17) points out that upper-class parents often sent their daughters to academies simply as a way to keep them busy, under control and to make them more marriable. Young girls in the middle and working classes, who often worked outside their homes for money, could, if the parents permitted, use their savings for educational purposes.

In *The Lamplighter* quite a liberal view of women's education is presented and there is relatively little parental (negative) interference in the daughters' education, which could cause great frustration to many young women at the time (Chambers-Schiller 1984:77), the fact that Nan Grant did not want Gerty to get any education being an exception in this sense (see above pp. 20-21). The model of women's education presented in *The Lamplighter* will be dealt with more deeply in chapters 4.4 and 6., but, in short, the "ornamental education" of the daughters' of the wealthy is clearly criticized and a more intellectual pursuits are encouraged:

Emily, in her choice of books, did not confine herself to such as come strictly within a child's comprehension. *She judged, rightly, that a girl of such keen intelligence as Gerty was naturally endowed with would suffer nothing by occasionally encountering what was beyond her comprehension; but that, on the contrary, the very effort she would be called upon to make would enlarge her capacity, an be incentive to her genius.* So history, biography, and books of travels, were perused by Gerty at an age when most children's literary pursuits are confined to stories and pictures. (LL 70; italics SS)

"Yes. She will go to Mr. W's this winter."

"Why! Isn't that a very expensive school for a child like her?"

"It's expensive, certainly; but I wish her to be the best teacher I know of, and father makes no objection to the terms. He thinks, as I do, that if we undertake to fit her to instruct others, she must be thoroughly taught herself...*he agreed with me that we had better*

*put her out to learn a trade at once, than half-educate, make a fine lady of her, and so unfit her for anything.* (LL 100-101; italics SS)

The superiority of Gerty's education compared to girls' education in general can be illustrated by a passage in which both Kitty and Isabelle are unable to read a newspaper properly to Mr. Graham. Gertrude, who has been developing her intellect in the public school, later in a private school (Mr. W's, see the example above) and, even more important, under the guidance of Emily, is being called for:

"What shall I read?" said Kitty, taking the paper rather unwillingly.  
"The leading article, if you please."

*Kitty turned the inside and out, looked hastily up and down its pages, and then declared her inability to find it.* Mr. Graham stared at her in astonishment, then pointed in silence to the wished-for paragraph. She began, but had scarcely read a sentence before Mr. Graham stopped her, saying, impatiently, "Don't read so fast,—I can't hear a single word!" She now fell into the other extreme, and *drawled so intolerably* that her auditor interrupted her again, and bade her to give the paper to her cousin.

Belle took it from the pouting Kitty, and finished the article,—not, however, without *being once or twice being compelled to go back and read more intelligibly.*

"Do you wish to hear anything more, sir?" asked she.

"Yes; won't you turn to the ship-news, and read me the list by the steamer."

Belle, more fortunate than Kitty, found the place, and commenced.  
"At Canton, April 30th, ship Ann Maria, Ray *d-i-s-c-g.*" "*What does that mean?*

"Discharging, of course; go on."

"*S-d-t—a-b-t 13th,*" *spelt Belle, looking dreadfully puzzled all the while.*

"*Stupid!*" muttered Mr. Graham, almost snatching the newspaper out of her hands; "not to know how to read ship-news! Where's Gertrude? *Where's Gertrude Flint? She's the only girl I ever saw that did know anything.* Won't you speak to her, Kitty?" (LL 203; italics SS)

In conclusion it can be said that young girls growing up in the mid-nineteenth-century USA were in a dependent position in the sense that they were considered to be under the care and control of their parents (or guardians) as long as they were not married. As a good example of this is

the incident where Gertrude persists in her decision to follow her inner sense of duty instead of her guardian's orders. Mr. Graham issues an ultimatum to leave Gertrude without any support if she will not obey her orders. Furthermore, parents could decide on the educations and even on their choice of husbands, to an extent, even if it was generally agreed that marriages should be based on love and individual choice. This fact comes out in *The Lamplighter* in the context of Emily's and Philip's emerging love being cruelly interfered by Mr. Graham, Emily's father, who will not accept Philip. In addition, sons were usually given the priority in families: they were given as good educations as possible and in general more attention than daughters, as is the case of Fanny and Ben Bruce in *The Lamplighter*. Moreover, the education young girls received were often very superficial, as seems to be the case of Isabelle and Kitty when contrasted to the education Gertrude has received.

In the preceding chapters it has been pointed out that in the mid-nineteenth-century USA the almost only acceptable role of women in society was that of a wife and a mother, which left its impact on the upbringing and the education of girls, for example. The next chapter will be dedicated to the study of ideas and facts concerning a woman's possible occupations and choices at the time and to the ways in which these are reflected in *The Lamplighter*.

### **3.2 Women's alternatives**

According to Welter (1966:152) the attributes of the Cult of True Womanhood", the ideology that bloomed in the USA between 1820 and 1860 could be divided into four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. All these virtues together "spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife—woman." Having these virtues, a woman was promised happiness, while not having them, she could be judged by everyone. The most important of these virtues was probably domesticity, the view that the true woman's place was unquestionably her home and that her

primary role was that of a wife and a mother. However, as will be pointed out in the following chapters, the role of wife and mother was not, for various reasons, a part of many women's experience in the mid-nineteenth century United States. Some women also resorted to illness as a way to escape troubled reality.

### 3.2.1 Marriage and motherhood

Hendrick (1992:41-2) notes that in the nineteenth century a new ideology (domesticity) arose was based on the idea of women as weak and delicate physically and mentally, and therefore not suitable for "paid employment" or formal education. Moreover, women, "the weaker sex" were considered to be the tender, nurturing sex, with strong maternal instincts and few, if any, sexual needs. The role of women was to marry, to bear and raise children and to support hard-working husbands. Welter (1966:162) points out that the most important task of "domestic" women was to "bring men back to God", to take care of the morality of their sons and husbands. Coontz (1988:223) points out that women's exclusion from the public life was claimed to be due to the domination of her biology, of her sexual organs, and not to the domination of men. For example, in 1849 Dr. Frederick Hollick announced: "The Uterus, it must be remembered, is the *controlling* (emphasis original) organ in the female body, being the most excitable of all, and so intimately connected, by the ramifications of its numerous nerves, with every other part."

Cott (1977:73-4,98; emphasis added) mentions that for women their domestic work role became to mean what "wordly occupations" meant for men, it became *a vocation* which was contained in her sex-role, and, therefore, all women were classed together. However, a woman's "natural" work role as a wife and a mother required preparation and instruction. According to Ryan (1982:61) young women were expected to equip themselves "with the domestic skills necessary in a poor and servantless home, as well as the elegance and taste required to adorn a rich man's

mansion”, because the economic and social situation of their husband could always change.

### **The reasons for getting married**

According to Seidman (1991:60) in Victorian America love was to be the basis of marriage. Love had its spiritual, mental and moral constituents and one knew that he/she had found true love if he/she had discovered ”the essential spiritual self of the other”, which could be accomplished by mutual self-disclosure during the courting process. Cott (1977:76-7) notes, however, that it was quite usual at the time to marry for economic motives, and this was usually condemned in public. Chambers-Schiller (1984:45) further points out that many unmarried women considered getting married for economic reasons, even if they in principle objected to ”money marriages”. Welter (1966:171) observes that according to the cult of True Womanhood women were expected to ”choose only the high road of true love and not truckle to the values of a materialistic society.” Cott (1977:77-8) points out that the woman’s choice of mate was fateful because marriage bound woman and man together and subjected woman to the man, because wives were legally subordinate to their husbands. Cott also recognizes the irony in choosing a husband: a woman actually chose her own bondage because the ideal marriage for love was based on a voluntary choice. Seidman (1991:57) agrees with these ideas and mentions that it was essential for a woman to know as much as possible about the character and habits of the man who would ”determine her social fate.”

In *The Lamplighter* marriages based on ”selfish motives” such as gaining money or high position are clearly condemned, which seems to have been the general view of the time as it has been pointed out above. The first incident where this comes out is the letter from Mrs. Ellis from New York to Gertrude after the Grahams’ trip to the south (Havana and New Orleans) during which widow Holbrook had managed to marry Mr. Graham:

(Mrs. Ellis:) ”...He married the widder Holbrook, the same I wrote you about. *She was determined to have him, and she’s got him...*She followed Mr. Graham up pretty well at Havana, but I

guess he thought better of it, and did n't really mean to have her. When we got to New Orleans, however, she was there; and the long and short of it is, *she carried her point and married him.* (LL 180-1; italics SS)

The consequences of Mr. Graham's sudden marriage are felt by everyone in the family, especially by Emily and Gertrude and also by the servants (see eg. above p. 26 and below p. 59-60), and finally also Mr. Graham comes to understand the mistake he has done, but it is too late to change the state of affairs:

Perhaps he would not like to acknowledge it, but part of his satisfaction arises from the circumstance that the repose and seclusion of his household is rendered complete by the temporary absence of its bustling, excitable mistress...There is something pleasant, too, in being able to indulge his imagination so far as almost to *deceive himself into the belief that the good old times have come back again when he was his own master*; for to tell the truth, *Mrs. Graham takes advantage of his years and growing infirmities, and rules him with wonderful tact.* (LL 331; italics SS)

Also the above-mentioned fact that marriages based on economic reasons were not uncommon and actually even expected of young girls without money or "connections" comes out in *The Lamplighter*. On many occasions young women were forced by the circumstances to resort to marriage. The marriage of Gertrude's mother Lucy Gray to Philip Amory is a good example of this (see above p. 23). Moreover, in chapter XXVIII Ben Bruce, who has taken to Gertrude tries to flirt with her, not being able to understand that a poor orphan girl could refuse him:

Ben Bruce had such confidence in the power of wealth and a high station in fashionable life, that it never occurred to him to doubt that Gertrude would gladly accept his hand and fortune, if it were placed at her disposal. No degree of coldness, or even neglect, on her part, would have induced him to believe that *an orphan girl, without a cent in the world, would forego such an opportunity to establish herself.*

Many a prudent and worldly-wise mother had sought his acquaintance; many a young lady, even among those who possessed property and rank of their own, had received his attention with favor; and, *believing, as he did, that he had money enough to purchase for a wife any woman whom he chose to select,*



*he would have laughed at the idea that Gertrude would presume to hold herself higher than the rest . (LL 206; italics SS)*

Gertrude, who does not love or even respect Ben Bruce, especially after he has deceived Kitty to believe that he is in love with her to arouse Gertrude's jealousy, turns down Ben's proposal, which Ben cannot understand. This occasion illustrates well the idea of "true love" conveyed in the book, which corresponds quite well to the general idea of love of the period, which is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.5:

(Ben:) "...if, on the other hand, *you are so far forgetful of your own interests as deliberately to refuse such a fortune as mine*, I think it's a pity you have n't got some friend to advise you. *Such a chance doesn't occur every day, especially to poor schoolmistresses*; and if you are so foolish as to overlook it, I'll venture to say you'll never have another."

... (Gertrude:) "Allowing I could so far forget *myself* (emphasis original), Mr. Bruce, I would not do *you* (emphasis original) such an injustice as to marry you for your fortune. I do not despise wealth, for I know the blessing it may often be; but *my affections cannot be bought with gold*." (LL 234; italics SS)

Kelley (1979:444) notes that in the books of "literary domestics" regenerated males who have corrupt values and to whom corrupt values and to whom money and social position are more important than the people around them are very common, and Ben Bruce seems to be a good example in this sense. *The Lamplighter* shows also that not only women married for money and position:

(Mrs. Petrancourt:) "...She [Isabelle] is making a great sensation in the United States, I hear, and has troops of beaux."  
 "Most of whom are probaly aware," remarked Mr. Petrancourt, "that she will have plenty of money one of these days." (LL 293; italics)

(Mr. Amory/Philip to Willie:) "... I shall find it hard to believe that a young man who has had the ambition to mark out, and the energy to pursue, such a course on the road to fortune as you have thus far successfully followed, can, in his sober senses, have made a serious resolve to unite himself and his prospects with *an insignificant little playmate, of unacknowledged birth, without beauty or fortune*... You must remember that *much of the consideration which is paid to a young bachelor of growing prospects ceases to be*

*awarded to him after marriage, and is never extended to his bride, unless she be chosen from the select circles to which he aspires...*"  
(LL 352-3; italics SS)

### **The reality of marriage**

Cott (1977:53,80) points out that because young girls, especially in the wealthier circles were often allowed quite a lot of freedom and also the working- and middle-class girls working outside their homes could live more or less independently economically, they experienced a "marriage trauma" which followed a young woman's romantic acceptance of a husband. They unquestionably associated marriage with the demanding duties of wife and mother carried out in the isolation of home, although they, on the other hand, gained "domestic power" in their domestic spheres. Coontz (1988:221,234) further observes that along with the romantization of love and marriage in a world of "separate spheres" came the fact that many women realized that their high ideals for a husband could not be met. Many wives had to find out that their husbands did not really love their individuality but the ideal image of domestic womanhood. According to Chambers-Schiller (1984:49-55;emphasis original) such words as *gamble* and *lottery* were commonly used to describe the insitution of marriage. Marriage subjugated the woman to the man, based on Christian views of man as superior and on the laws of society which subordinated "wife to husband in economic, political, social and sexual terms." Furthermore, once married women had to forget their individual pursuits and goals, because self-abnegation was demanded of them. Domestic work was often felt to be isolated, trivial and never finished, with no intellectuality or personal significance. In addition, frequent and unplanned pregnancies were a part of many women's experience.

Degler (1980:54,59,61,208-9,228,294) seems to agree with these interpretations and points out that married women also in households with servants considered the household routines unending. Many women feared childbirths and eventually had more babies than they wanted, a fact which together with economic reasons and the growing importance granted for the

development of child's personality contributed to the dropping fertility rate in the nineteenth century. If birth control methods failed for reason or another, or the husband was not co-operative, many women resorted to abortions. Degler also suggests that the argument that women experienced no sexual pleasure was actually beneficial for women, who could use it to control their husbands' sexuality and to limit family size. Cott (1978:233,4) supports this view and further notes that the idea of women as "passionless" widened women's opportunities and enhanced their status not only in the family but in society in general.

Banks (1981:35-7) mentions that women were unable to protect themselves against violent or otherwise irresponsible husbands because they had no legal identity of their own. In marriage a woman "had no rights over her own person, her own property, her earnings and even of her children". Many cases were reported in which husbands "squandered their wives' property", abused them physically or denied them access to their young children. The early feminists in the United States tried to promote the rights of married women to hold property and earnings, the guardianship of children and equal rights in divorce. Between 1839 and 1865 many states had passed some kinds of married women's property rights acts, but they were often limited, for example excluding earnings. Mintz and Kellogg (1988:61) point out that with the belief that love and personal happiness and the welfare of society were primary objects of marriages "divorce and remarriage were justified in instances of adultery, physical abuse, or failure of a marriage partner to fulfill his or her proper role."

By 1830s permissive divorce laws had been adopted in many states many states, and after 1840 the number of divorces began to rise in all states, reflecting the fact that women were increasingly reluctant stand poor treatment from their marriage partners. Griswold (1986:731) observes that as there were few economic opportunities for women and as there were no alimonies, leaving one's husband must have been frightening decision, yet one worth making in many cases. In fact eighty-five percent of divorces granted on the ground of cruelty were granted for women. These changes

were reflected also in child custody cases in which "as early as 1860, a number of states had adopted the "tender year" rule, according to which children who were below the age of puberty were placed in their mother's care unless she proved unworthy of that responsibility" (Mintz and Kellogg 1988: 62).

In *The Lamplighter* there is not very much description of the reality of marriage except for the marriage of the Grahams, which is not very happy for reasons already mentioned (see above pp. 39-40 and also below p.112), and the marriage of the Jeremys, which seems to be a happy one (see below p.104 for the view of the ideal marriage). The heroine of the novel, Gertrude, and also the "second heroine" Emily do not get married until the end of the book. There is, however, an example of a "typical" badly-treated and deceived wife in the book, namely Aunt Sarah, the sister of Mrs. Sullivan:

(Mrs. Sullivan:) "...and there was *Aunt Sarah's husband—he seemed to be such a fine fellow when Sally married him, but he cheated father dreadfully at last*, so that he had to mortgage his house in High-street, and finally give it up entirely. He is dead now, and I don't want to say anything against him; but *he did n't prove what we expected, and it broke Aunt Sarah's heart...*" (LL 38; italics SS)

Aunt Sarah's ex-husband seems to be another good example of whom Kelley (1979:443) calls "the unregenerated male" who is the threat to the "domestic dream". Aunt Sarah's sister, Mrs. Sullivan has neither been able to escape marriage-related problems because her husband had died, leaving his family with no money:

Mrs. Sullivan's husband was an intelligent country clergyman; but, *as he died when Willie was a baby, leaving very little property for the support of his family, the widow went home to her father, taking her child with her.* (LL 36; italics SS)

Ryan (1982:61) notes that many women had to prepare themselves for possible widowhood for example by learning needlework, which is also the (part-time) occupation of Mrs. Sullivan (see below pp.62-3). In general, widows and divorced women suffered from the same problems as single

women in general, which will be treated later on in chapter 3.2.2, only with the extra "burden" of having to take care of their children. Also Philip's mother, later in the book, is revealed to have been poor in her widowhood, with the consequence that she and her son become economically dependent on her new husband, Mr. Graham, who will not accept Philip:

(Emily:) "...*My step-mother had been extremely poor in her widowhood, and her child, having inherited nothing which he could call his own, was wholly dependent upon my father's bounty...*"  
(LL 315)

### **Mothers' responsibilities**

Motherhood seems to have been a frequent source of worries for women in the mid-nineteenth-century USA. Baym (1978:15-16) observes that in an era when many children died young it was often believed that among ordinary children there were special children who had been "set apart from the first and consecrated to a special mission". Welter (1966:161) notes that "true women" were expected to bear the loss of children with submission, which, naturally, was not always easy. Furthermore, as Smith-Rosenberg (1972:656-7) points out, the image of ideal mother was actually contradictory to the image of ideal woman. The ideal woman was "emotional, dependent and gentle" whereas the ideal mother "was expected to be strong, self-reliant, protective, an efficient caretaker in relation to children and home". Moreover, a mother had to face "severe bodily pain, disease and death - and still serve as the emotional support and strength of her family". Cott (1977:87-92) observes that childrearing which had now become "a specialized domestic process carried out by mothers" required conscious effort, a fact that was reflected for example in the detailed journals of many women of the progress of their children. Mothers were to teach by precept and example, a fact that was not always easy because of the contradiction between mother's expected self-denial and the goal of self-government expected of children. In addition, mothers were to teach especially their sons qualities and skills needed in "the world" even though mothers themselves were to carry out their tasks in "the home", which was

seen as a total opposite to "the world". The vocation-like character of motherhood was further complicated by the fact that controlling conception was difficult.

The relationship between the mother and the male child was, according to Ryan (1982:58-9) "at the very core of the cult of domesticity". In this relationship culminated the many contradictions in the mother's vocation (see the paragraph immediately above) because sons had to move from the domestic sphere to the public sphere, to "the swiftly modernizing and rapidly moving society". This transitional period, adolescence, was acknowledged to be "a critical period", "an hour of anxiety and peril" for the parents because it was feared that sons (and daughters) would not survive from the "shock of entrance" into the difficult and corrupting world. Mintz and Kellogg (1988:59) point out that children were being kept longer at home exactly because adolescence was considered to be a phase in which children needed special supervision and protection. Demos (1986:103) observes that "the new and menacing environment of the city" became the specific locus where choices and temptations converged.

According to Halttunen (1982:3,10-1,60; emphasis added) in the antebellum advice literature inexperienced young men who had just "set foot on the city" were approached by "*confidence men*" who wanted to "dupe and destroy" them. Three types of confidence men could be distinguished: the youth's urban companion, the demagogue and the gambler. Halttunen also points out that the fear of confidence men reflected deeper fears about the direction of American society, the belief being that "the republic's only chance for survival lay in the character of the rising generation". The confidence men had their female counterparts, "*the painted women*", who were spoiled by the "hypocrisy of fashion". There are examples of these "painted women" also in *The Lamplighter*, and they will be dealt with later on in chapter 5. Coontz (1988:234-5) notes that whereas the possibilities of children's overprotection or underpreparation by the mothers were many, many women expressed their anxieties by sentimentalizing childhood deaths in literature and, especially, in

temperance tales in which "young man ignored his mother's teachings and broke her heart as well as ruining his own life."

*The Lamplighter* illustrates well the anxieties of a mother with an adolescent son trying to find his place in the world. Mrs. Sullivan seems to be an ideal mother, who constantly thinks of her son's best, forgetting her own needs:

Willie was *his mother's pride, her hope, her constant thought.*

...

*She spared herself not toil or care to provide for his physical comfort, his happiness, and his growth of knowledge and virtue."*

(LL 36; italics SS)

...

*The care-worn, patient face* of the former [Mrs. Sullivan]...Mrs. Sullivan avoided asking him any questions concerning the occurrences of the day; *for her watchful eye saw how much such inquiries pained him*, and therefore she waited for him to make his communications, if he had any. (LL 79; italics)

In chapter XVII Willie leaves for Calcutta to work as a clerk in Mr. Clinton's mercantile house. Mrs. Sullivan's sorrow and self-sacrifice, which are expected of an ideal mother, seem to be consistent with the ideal of "self-limiting mother's love", the idea that the love of one's child should not surpass the love for God and his will (Cott 1977:90):

And Willie went to sea. *And the pious, loving, hopeful woman, who for eighteen years had cherished her boy with tenderness and pride, maintained now her wonted spirit of self-sacrifice, and gave him up without a murmur. None knew how she struggled with her aching heart*, or whence came the power that sustained her. No one had given the little widow credit for such strength of mind, and the neighbors wondered much to see how quietly she went about her duties the day before her son sailed...and wore *the same look of patient humility* that ever characterized her. (LL 107; italics SS)

"O, no, Gerty! I am a sinful creature, full of weakness; much as I desire to meet my Saviour, *my earthly heart pines with the vain desire for one more sight of my boy*, and all my dreams of heaven are mingled with the aching regret that the one blessing I most craved on earth had been denied me." (LL 168; italics SS)

Mrs. Sullivan, who is now seriously ill and is taken care of by Gertrude, tells Gertrude about a dream she has had, in which she sees Willie, her son, surrounded by people: men and women, who are, as she finds out, cheaters, gamblers, alcoholics and temptresses, and who try to "lure" Willie to their corrupted way of life, to become one of them. It is the task and responsibility of Mrs. Sullivan, or actually her spirit, to guide Willie to survive these temptations and she succeeds in this:

One of them offered him a seat at the table, and all urged him to take it. He did so, and the young man at his right filled a glass with bright wine and handed it to him. He hesitated, then took it and raised it to his lips. Just then I touched him on the shoulder. *He turned, saw me, and instantly the glass fell from his hand and was broken into a thousand pieces. I beckoned, and he immediately rose and followed me...*the man whom I had first noticed, and whom I knew to be the most artful of the company...whispered in his ear. Willie faltered, turned, and would perhaps have gone back; but I placed myself in front of him, held up my finger menacingly, and shook my head...*More than once my watchful eye saved the thoughtless boy by my side from some pitfall or danger, into which, without me, he would surely have fallen...*  
 ...A brilliant young creature was leaning on his arm,  
 ...I saw into her soul, however, and *she was vain, proud, cold-hearted and worldly*; ... He looked around, but,  
 before he could see his mother's face, the siren's voice attracted all his attention. Again and again *I endeavored to win him away*; but he heard me not...*I seized the moment when she had thus weakened her hold upon him, and, clasping him in my arms, spread my wings and soared far, far away, bearing with me the prize I had toiled after and won. As we rose into the air, my manly son became in my encircling arms a child again, and there rested on my bosom the same little head, with its soft, silken curls, that had nestled there in infancy...*" (LL 170-2; italics SS)

This dream of Mrs. Sullivan's seems to illustrate well the fears and anxieties mothers had about how their sons would survive in the corrupt world of confidence men and painted women. Baym (1977:169) notes that Mrs. Sullivan interprets her dream along the lines of the "social theory of woman's ability to deter the male from evil and stimulate his better nature" that was dominant at the time. Mrs. Sullivan's original "selfish" wish to see her son once more "has been sublimated into the desire to do him good; and



this desire is further refined as death is required as the price of such influence”.

Having told her dream to Gertrude, Mrs. Sullivan dictates her last letter to Willie, a fact that seems to illustrate well the belief in the influence of mother’s example and advice, even after her death. Even in the moment of death all a mother thinks about is the welfare of her son:

In the letter which she dictated to Willie, she expressed her perfect trust in the goodness and wisdom of Providence...*She reminded him of the early lessons she had taught him, the piety and self-command which she had inculcated, and made it her dying prayer that her influence might be increased, rather than diminished, and her presence felt to be a continual reality...*and besought him never to discredit or disgrace his childhood’s training. (LL 173; italics SS)

There is another instance in the book which illustrates a mother’s special love for her son and the problems she may encounter: the stories Emily and later Philip tell about Philip’s mother (Emily’s first stepmother), who tries her best to mediate between her beloved son and her stern husband, who will not accept him and manages somehow to do this but then dies suddenly:

(Phillip:) ”...*I was the idol of my invalid mother, who, though she loved me with a love for which I bless her memory, had not the energy to tame and subdue the passionate and wilful nature of her boy...*” (LL 371; italics SS)

(Emily:) ”... *My father’s sternness towards her son was a great cause of unhappiness to our mother, I can have no doubt; for I well remember the anxiety with which she strove to conceal his faults and misdemeanors, and the frequent occasions on which she herself instructed me how to propitiate the parent, who.....As long as our mother was spared to us we lived in comparative harmony; but at last, when I was just sixteen years old, she was stricken with sudden illness, and died...*” (LL 315; italics SS)

In this chapter it has been demonstrated that in the light of what we know about marriage and motherhood in the mid-nineteenth-century immense expectations were put on marriages, which often turned out to be failures or even disasters, women not being able to protect their rights properly. In *The Lamplighter* the sad story of Aunt Sarah and her husband seems to be an

example of this. Moreover, despite the new view of ideal marriage as a spiritual union based on love, many women and men continued to marry for more "concrete" reasons: for money and better status in society.

This reality is also reflected in *The Lamplighter* in which Ben Bruce takes it for granted that Gertrude, who is poor and has no family of her own, will marry him. Furthermore, it is hinted that the admirers of Isabel are all more or less interested in her future heritage. It is also shown that also aspiring young men were expected to marry girls with a "proper" background if they wanted to succeed in their career, as Philip tells Willie. Widowhood posed problems for many women left without money, as in the case of Mrs. Sullivan and Philip's mother, who had to return to their parents' or find a new husband. The everyday reality of wives was often demanding, and the immense expectations for mother's influence created anxieties, especially in the case of mothers having adolescent sons, who had to find their place in the supposedly corrupt world of confidence men. Mrs. Sullivan's dream illustrates very well the fears and anxieties of these mothers, who felt it to be their responsibility to "lead" their sons through temptations and dangers. A mother's love for her son and her "benevolent power" is also illustrated in the case of Philip's mother trying to mediate between his son and her new husband.

Although wife- and motherhood was the central role of women at the time of the cult of domesticity, not all women married for various reasons. The following chapter will deal with these single women and their reality, taking the picture *The Lamplighter* gives of them into account.

### **3.2.2 Single women**

Mintz and Kellogg (1988:56-7) observe that in the colonial America marriage was seen as a social obligation and an economic necessity, and, therefore most women and men married. However, after the mid-eighteenth-century the amount of men and women who did not marry increased. Marriage had now become "a far more deliberate act than it had been in the past." Women became more and more conscious of the enormous

responsibilities that had been given to mothers and wives. Chambers-Schiller (1984:17-22) points out that it was commonly expressed in the antebellum women's literature that it was better not to marry than "to suffer the miseries of a bad marriage or to compromise one's integrity in order to gain a husband or a competency". According to the "Cult of Single Blessedness" single life could be socially and personally valuable, a belief that was rooted in the radical Protestant belief "that the true Christian lives according to the dictates of God's laws rather than man's social and institutional forms". Consequently, unmarried women could gain "eternal grace" and social approval if they "assumed a noble work in a good cause at the inspiration and command of their God". Furthermore, because singlehood was associated with celibacy, it was seen "purer" than marriage.

Chambers-Schiller (1984:29-35) points out that in addition to the changing image of marriage and motherhood and to the possibility of working "for God", the fact that women outnumbered men in New England affected the amount of single women. By 1850 there were 20 000 "surplus" women in New England. Furthermore, the transformation of family economy with the onset of industrialization increased the employment opportunities of women: women could, for example, become mill workers, teachers, do shoe-binding, sewing or work as servants (see chapter 3.2.3 for more information on working women). Although unmarried women usually worked to contribute to the well-being of their families, the new importance and independence they gained, especially if they lived outside their parental homes, fostered a new sense of individuality in many of them. Consequently, many single women dreamed of better educational opportunities and many took "extraordinary measures in pursuit of learning", which would not have normally been possible for married women. Baym (1995:xv) notes that in many "close-knit" families daughters were not encouraged to leave home to marry if they did not want to and women who were considered "sickly" were also free not to marry. Degler (1982:156) points out that many single women lived together in quite a

marriage-like companionships, at least in the private level, although these relationships were not necessarily lesbian.

In spite of the new opportunities and even prestige single women had gained marriage was usually preferred to spinsterhood because "most women could not realistically expect to build a career or be economically self-sufficient" and because there was still a "social stigma" attached to spinsterhood (Seidman 1991:57). Degler (1980:152) mentions that being "an old maid" was not actually an honorable status. Dr. George Napheys, a popular medical writer of the period noted that: "Common proverbs portray the character of the spinster as peevish, selfish, given to queer fancies, and unpleasant eccentricities". Although he admitted that this was not true of all single women, he concluded that in general the popular attitude was realistic. Welter (1966:169) points out that the women's magazines tried to do their best to remove the stigma of being an "Old Maid". According to Chambers-Schiller (1984:107,159,173) the life of single women was often complicated also because of the unending demands of parents and relatives, the difficulties in earning a living or trying to pursue a career, the deaths of sisters and other close friends and because of the fears caused by the medical theories "about the origins of decay and disease in "unused" [female] organs".

In *The Lamplighter* there is one female character who can without any question be characterized as an "old maid": Miss Patty Pace. The popular stereotype of the eccentric spinster is reflected also in her looks, manners and character:

(Willie:) ".I saw *the strangest-looking figure you ever imagined...I must tell you how she was dressed. She did look so ridiculous!...* Her dress, though, wasn't the strangest thing about her. What made it funny to see her way of walking; she looked quite old and infirm, and it was evident she could hardly keep her footing on the ice; and yet *she walked with such a smirk, such a consequential little air!* O, Gerty, it's lucky you didn't see her; you'd have laughed from then till this time... Upon that, she turned round, made another curtsy to him [Mr. Bray, the shopkeeper], and answered, in a little, cracked voice, "*Can you assure me, sir, as a gentleman of candor and gallantry that this is not an exhilarating potion?*" *The gentleman could hardly keep from laughing...* Every person we met

stared at us; and it's no wonder they did... I ought not to laugh at *the poor thing*; for she needed somebody to help her along, and I'm sure she wasn't heavy enough to tire me out, if she did make the most of herself. *I wonder who she belongs to...*" (LL 75-6; italics SS)

...She held in her hand a tumbler of pepper and water, and begged her visitor to drink, assuring her it would warm her stomach and prevent her taking cold; and when *Gertrude, who could only with great difficulty keep from laughing in her face*, declined the beverage, *Miss Patty* seated herself, and, while enjoying the refreshment, *carried on a conversation which at one moment satisfied her visitor she was a woman of sense, and the next persuaded her that she was either foolish or insane.* (LL 115; italics SS)

The first of the previous extracts is from a scene in which Willie helps the poor Patty Pace who has slipped on the icy sidewalk, Patty Pace "giggling" and "tossing her head" like a young girl (LL 76) because of all the attention she receives from a young, polite man. The second extract is from a scene in which Gertrude, who has travelled together with Patty Pace from the city by coach finds a refuge from rain in her house, which is near the Grahams' suburban mansion.

Patty Pace had been an upholsterer in her youth, an occupation in which she has obviously been good and quite popular despite her eccentricism but she still regrets not having married and declares her intention to marry *a young man* one day. This ardent wish of hers could be taken as a sign of the general mid-nineteenth-century belief in the centrality and importance of marriage in a woman's life:

She had, in her youth, learned an upholsterer's trade, which she had practiced for many years in the employment (as she said) of the first families in the city... Notwithstanding her wonderful visionary and comprehending powers, she had never been known to make mischief in families. She was prudent and conscientious, and, though always peculiar in her habits and modes of expression, and so wild in some of her fancies as to be often thought by strangers a little out, *she had secured and continued to retain the good will of a great many kindly-disposed ladies and gentlemen, at whose houses she was always well received and politely treated...* Miss Patty labored under *one great and absorbing regret...* it was that *she was without a companion...*"I should do vastly well in this

world, if I only had a companion;... *I somewhat meditate matrimony*...It is true, time is inexorable; but I cling to life, Miss Gertrude, *I cling to life, and may marry yet.*" (LL 119-20; italics SS)

...

"... I may suit myself with a companion, notwithstanding. I approve of matrimony, and *have my eye upon a young man.*" (LL 210; italics SS)

Although Patty Pace is quite a strange figure, she seems to have the function of an entertainer in a company: everybody wants to hear her lively and often clever chatting about people and about "dress and fashion", her favorite themes:

...Occasionally, however, *some remark made by Miss Pace irresistibly attracted the attention of every one at the table, and extorted either the laughter it was intended to excite, or a mirth which, though perhaps ill-timed, it was impossible to repress*... and Mrs. Graham, who was possessed of great suavity of manner when she chose to exercise it, and who loved dearly to be amused, spared no pains to bring out *the old lady's conversational powers*. She found, too, that *Miss Patty* was acquainted with everybody, and *made most appropriate and amusing comment upon almost every person who became the topic of conversation*...Dress and fashion, two favorite themes with Miss Patty, were now introduced... (LL 209-11; italics SS)

A little later on in the book Patty Pace reveals the "secret" of Willie suddenly having found a job as a clerk in Mr. Clinton's service: she has told him about Willie's helpfulness and modest character. Willie finally becomes her "knight" and hero, who gets more rewards after her death: Patty Pace, who in general takes good care of her money, does not want to leave her possessions to "the vultures", her relatives, who, according to her, are only interested in her money (LL 362). Instead, Willie, her hero, gets all according to her testament which she, demonstrating surprising legal knowledge, dictates to Gertrude:

To Gertrude's astonishment, *Miss Patty announced her own perfect acquaintance with all the legal knowledge which the case demanded*...The sole inheritor of her estates was *William Sullivan, the knight of the rosy countenance; and the same chivalrous spirit which won Miss Patty's virgin heart, and gained for him her lasting favor*... (LL 363; italics SS)

In conclusion it can be said that *The Lamplighter's* portrayal of a spinster, Miss Patty Pace, reveals both positive and negative aspects of the single life. In general, she seems to enjoy her life especially in the company of other people who love to hear her funny stories and remarks. She has also been successful and valued in her job as an upholsterer, which was not probably the case of all single women working, and she has probably done well economically. However, her character reflects to an extent the nineteenth-century view of "old maids" as odd and eccentric. Furthermore, the fact that Patty Pace regrets not having married probably reflects the centrality of marriage in women's lives at the period. In general, the character of Patty Pace does not seem to offer a role model in a way that especially Gertrude does (see chapter 4. for the "ideal" woman), but seems to be more like an exception in the book, a peculiar individual, who is, however, depicted in an understanding and humorous tone.

### **3.2.3 Working women**

According to Ryan (1982:60-1) the fact that marriage and motherhood were seen as women's destiny led to the fact that occupational alternatives to them were rarely mentioned in the literature of the antebellum era. However, training in some "respectable skill" like needlework or teaching was preferable because it would make it possible for her to earn her living in the case of spinster- or widowhood. In general "young women were not encouraged...to take their futures directly in their own hands". Working was considered to be socially unacceptable if it was not necessary for economic reasons, and, once a woman married, she usually left her work (Degler 1980:374-5). Mintz and Kellogg (1988:91) point out that working-class children, also daughters, often had to defer marriage to be able to contribute to their family's income. They usually worked for approximately seven years before marrying. At the same time, as Lerner (1976:185,190) points out, middle and upper class ladies' "idleness" had become a status symbol

and women's work outside home was generally condemned with a few exceptions.

Banner (1995:6) notes that in 1840 Harriet Martineau, an English author who was also a feminist, mentioned seven possible occupations for women in the USA: teaching, needlework, keeping boarders, setting type, working as servants, or working in bookbinding or as mill girls in cotton factories. Cott (1977:36,39,45) mentions factory work, teaching, needlework, domestic work and work in "given-out industry" (=manufacturing for example shoes at home for an employer) as possible occupations for unmarried women. Married women could take boarders, teach at schools, do sewing or work in given-out industry, if necessary. Riley (1986:66) observes that many women also turned to prostitution, especially in the cities, because finding other well-paying work was usually difficult for women. Baym (1978:30) states that "during the period between 1820 and 1870 there were virtually no satisfying and well paid occupations for women", although writing could be an exception in this sense for some women (see chapter 2.1 above).

According to Degler (1982:379-80) teaching was the profession that "counted by far the most women in the nineteenth century". Teaching was acceptable for women because it was seen as an extension of woman's "natural" work role as the rearer of children. The reason why women were preferred as teachers was that they were willing to accept lower wages than men for the same work. Miller Solomon (1985:32-3) points out that female teachers' salaries were about one-third of men's. Although many women saw teaching as their mission, the "financial return" was, however, more fundamental even if the wages were low. The reality of teaching as a vocation was in many cases very demanding and even discouraging and the "romantic notions of adventure and service evaporated in the face of reality". Consequently, many female teachers left after a short period of work. Many women, on the other hand, gained independence and self-respect in their teaching work. In addition to the lower wages women received, Vinovskis and Bernard (1978:866-8) state that women also taught



"less rigorous intellectual subject" and usually the younger students, and men almost always had the leadership positions in the schools. By 1860 the teaching profession had become almost thoroughly feminized, for example in Massachusetts 77.8 percent of teachers were female in that year. Furthermore, it is estimated that one out of every five Massachusetts women taught school at some time of her life.

In *The Lamplighter* there are at least two women who work as a teacher in school: Miss Browne, Gertrude's teacher and Gertrude herself. *The Lamplighter* actually gives quite a positive image of female teachers and teaching as a profession. For example, Miss Browne is described as "a young woman of good sense and good feelings" (LL 65), who knows how to manage children. Gertrude works as an assistant teacher at Mr. W.'s private school for two different occasions and it is also mentioned that she teaches at Sunday school (LL 222). Gertrude's work as an assistant teacher is not unproblematic but the compensation she gets for it, her salary seems to be quite good; she is able to earn her own living:

Of Gertrude's school-duties we shall say nothing, save that *she was found by Mr. W. fully competent to the performance of them, and that she met with those trials and discouragements only to which all teachers are more or less subjected, from the idleness, obstinacy, or stupidity of their pupils...* (LL 152-3; italics SS)

(Gertrude:) "...He [Mr. Graham] hinted that I should never be able to support myself, and should be driven to a life of dependence; and, since *the salary which I receive from Mr. W. is sufficient for all my wants*, I am anxious to be so situated, on Mr. Graham's return, that he will perceive that *my assurance, or boast...that I could earn my own living, was not without foundation.*" (LL 175; italics SS)

The exact amount of Gertrude's salary is revealed as Dr. Jeremy wonders at Gertrude's decision to leave her job to join the Grahams:

"... It is not merely giving up *three hundred and fifty dollars a year*<sup>1</sup> her own earning, and as pleasant a home as there is in Boston; it is relinquishing all the independence... (LL 184; italics SS)

It is noted in the explanatory notes at the end of the book that three hundred and fifty dollars would have been a good salary for the time, especially for a woman. It may be that the author of the book has in this context wanted to emphasize the importance of the good character of a teacher: Gertrude, whose character seems to be "ideal" (see chapter 4. below) and who does her work properly gets a good compensation for her work. In addition to the good salary Gertrude receives, it is implied that she has been popular among her students: they have given her a beautiful watch:

"Nearly quarter past three," replied Gertrude, glancing at her watch  
(*a beautiful gift from a class of her former pupils.*) (LL 326; italics  
SS)

However, "between the lines" of Mr. Graham's invitation for Gertrude to join his company it can be understood that earning a living as a teacher was not considered proper for *a lady*, and, moreover, teaching could be even seen as a form of *slavery* :

(Mr. Graham:) "...She prefers to make *a slave* of herself in Mr.  
W's school..." (LL 140; italics SS)

"...*I shall enable you to maintain the place and appearance of a  
lady...*" (LL 183; italics SS)

There are several examples in *the Lamplighter* of women working as domestic servants. According to Coontz (1988:216-7) the nature of domestic servants' work changed in the 1830s. After the 1830s servants were "less likely to share community networks with their employers" and at the same time longer work hours, more personal services, more "work discipline and a stricter separation of tasks for mistress and maid" were demanded. Riley (1986:66,102) mentions that of all working women domestic servants were probably the most underpaid. The "large influx of immigrants, especially Irish", contributed to the fact that salaries were so low, many untrained women seeking domestic work. In the 1840s approximately 250 000 women, one tenth of the adult female population, worked as domestic servants, the majority of whom were Irish immigrants. According to Degler (1980:372-3) "in 1850 there were more women domestic servants than

women in teaching and manufacturing combined. And this was so even though domestic service...was shunned like the plague by most women”, the reason for this being that domestic service was associated ”almost invariably” with loss of freedom. Degler suggests that the large number of women working as domestics together with the fact that that work was generally despised shows how severely limited women’s working opportunities.

In *The Lamplighter* there are three different types of female domestic servants: the housekeeper, the cook and the servant-girls or maids. Of these three, the situation of the housekeeper, the energetic Mrs. Ellis seems to be the most favorable: she seems to be respected and valued by her employer Mr. Graham, who has allowed her to make her own decisions:

(Emily to Gertrude:) ”... you know *Mrs. Ellis has been here a number of years; she has had everything her own way, and is not used to young people...She is a very faithful woman, very kind and attentive to me, and very important to my father...*” (LL 98; italics SS)

Furthermore, Mrs. Ellis comes from a good family and, as it appears, *has been compelled to take an employment as a housekeeper* for economic reasons, which has probably hurt her pride and is reflected in her behavior towards Gertrude, her ”inferior”:

*She had long had her own way in the management of all household matters at Mr. Graham’s, and had consequently become rather tyrannical.* She was capable, methodical, and neat...the housekeeper...had a slight prejudice in favor of high birth. Indeed, *though now depressed in her circumstances, she prided herself on being of a good family,* and considered it an insult to her dignity to expect that she should feel an interest in providing for the wants of one so inferior to her in point of station. (LL 101; italics SS)

As Mrs. Ellis is valued highly in the family, she can express her opinion of the state of things rather freely:

”Safe!—What, for that great girl!” exclaimed *Mrs. Ellis, whose position in the family was such that there were no forms of restraint in her intercourse with Miss Graham.* (LL 111; italics SS)

Despite her good position in the family also Mrs. Ellis has to suffer from the exhausting demands of the new Mrs. Graham and her nieces and from the inadequate orders she receives from her new mistress:

” ...There’s no end to the fine clothes Mrs. Graham and those nieces of hers put into our wash. I declare, it’s a shame!...I’ve been helping, myself, as much as I could; but, as Mrs. Prime says, *one can’t do everything at once; and I’ve had to see the butcher, make puddings and blanc-mange, and been worried to death, all the time*, because I had forgotten to engage those strawberries...*I’ve got just as much as I can do till dinner-time. Mrs. Graham never kept house before, and don’t know how to make allowance for anything. She comes home from Boston, expects to find everything in apple-pie order, and never asks or cares who does the work.*” (LL 191; italics SS)

Also the cook, Mrs. Prime, who is described as ”friendly and kind-hearted woman” (LL 245) seems to enjoy some respect in the household, although she has to later suffer from the ”increased duties”, having moved with Emily and Gertrude at Mrs. Warren’s:

(Mrs. Prime:) ”...*I let Mrs. Graham see, right off, that I wouldn’t put up with interference; cooks is privileged to set up for their rights*, and I scared her out o’ my premises pretty quick, I tell yer!..” (LL 246; italics SS)

...Mrs. Prime established as cook in Mrs. Warren’s household, where *all the morning she grumbled at the increase of duty she was here called upon to perform*,... (LL 253; italics SS)

Two servant-girls are mentioned to be in the Graham’s household. Katy is a friendly and sincere Irish girl, who has been in the house for a longer time than Bridget, the housemaid who is ”a newcomer, a remarkably stupid specimen ” (LL 117) and obeys Mrs. Graham’s rules without ever questioning them:

Bridget ought to know better than mind these upstarters...*Our Katy would ha’ known better; but Bridget’s a new comer, like all the rest.* (LL 245; italics SS)

It is especially the servant-girls who probably suffer the most of the unending orders of Mrs. Graham and her two nieces:

(Mrs. Ellis:) ”I declare, Emily, *such an ironing as our girls have got to do to-day! you never saw anything like it! There is no end to*

*the fine clothes Mrs. Graham and those nieces of hers put into our wash.*" (LL 191; italics SS)

As Coontz (1988:217) points out, the existence of young servant girls who would work long hours for little pay was necessary for the prolonged childhood of middle- and upper-class children, and this seems to hold true also in *The Lamplighter*.

Apart from the Grahams' household, there are a few more examples of women working as domestics in someone else's household: Kate McCarty who helps to clean True's and Gerty's household every now and then (LL 27,43) and Jane Miller who comes to help Gertrude when she takes care of Mrs. Sullivan and her sick father (LL 165) However, in these cases they do not work for money but as a return service, on a more equalitarian basis, although in the case of Jane Miller this is not totally clear.

Mintz and Kellogg (1988:89) note that taking in boarders or lodgers was an often used way of adding into the family income in the working-class families, the average of 15 to 20 percent of families having had boarders. The households that took in boarders were most often female-headed and older, whereas the boarders were usually "unmarried men or women between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, of the same ethnic affiliation as the household head". Degler (1980:393-4) points out that also middle-and upper-class families took in boarders, "and sometimes in higher proportions than working-class families". Taking in boarders allowed married women to add to the family income while staying at home and the most likely periods for the families to take in boarders were the periods when they had empty rooms available, especially after the children had grown up, and the periods during which "encountered greater expenses" and, therefore, needed extra income. In addition, there seems to have been an element of social control operating in boarding, boarders being usually younger men and unmarried women.

In *The Lamplighter* there are examples of both working- and middle-class women taking in boarders. Nan Grant, Gertrude's "guardian" at the beginning of the book has boarders in her house:

...the men who lived at Nan Grant's (her son and *two or three boarders*)... (LL 4; italics SS)

In addition to boarding Nan takes in washing and it is implied that her income is not poor:

*She took in washing, and had a few boarders; by means of which she would have earned what might have been an ample support for herself, had it not been for her son,...* (LL 9; italics SS)

Mrs. Warren, Mrs. Arnold's widowed sister also takes in boarders, young women, although the reality of boarding-house keeping is not actually described in the book. Mrs. Warren seems to have higher standards for her boarders than Nan Grant: she does not accept anyone as a boarder without recommendations:

*Mrs. Arnold had a widowed sister, who was in the habit of adding to her moderate income by receiving into her family, as boarders, a few young ladies, who came to the city for purposes of education... Mrs. Warren had fortunately vacant, at this time, a large and cheerful front chamber; and Mrs. Arnold having recommended Gertrude in the warmest manner, suitable terms were agreed upon, and the room immediately placed at her disposal..* (LL 177; italics SS)

It is mentioned above in the context of Nan Grant taking in boarders that she also takes in washing. In addition to taking in boarders, married women could take on so-called "home work", "either of the needle-trade variety, as many widows with small children, and poverty-stricken wives had to do, or some kind of service, such as washing, or running employment agencies" (Degler 1980:393). Mintz and Kellogg (1988:89) note that this kind of work that they call "outwork" was low-paying and popular especially among immigrant women in big cities. Evans (1989:86) further points out that "outwork" made the exploitation of working women easier because "they could not develop the collective consciousness and collective identity that allowed industrial workers to resist".

In *The Lamplighter*, in addition to Nan Grant, who takes in washing, Mrs. Sullivan, who is a widow, probably "outworks":

*She always brought her work with her, which was usually some child's garment that she was making.* (LL 19; italics SS)

There are also a few instances where it comes out that sewing in general: dress-making or millinery could be a possible occupation for women although nothing is mentioned of the wages or the realities of the work:

(Gertrude:) "Mrs. Sullivan says I sew very well, and I *can learn to be a milliner or a dress-maker...*" (LL 91; italics SS)

(Emily:) "... I think you will find plenty of pieces for your rag-bag about the carpet,—*Miss Randolph always scatters so many when she is engaged with her dress-making.*" (LL 100; italics SS)

Coontz (1988:202) notes that especially the position of seamstresses and tailoresses deteriorated because of the cheap labor available, of which women's "outwork" is an example. From the 1830s on the women in these professions got increasingly organized and struck on many occasions.

In addition to teaching, working as a domestic servant, taking in boarders, "outwork" (taking in washing or needlework) or other type of needlework there is one more possible woman's occupation mentioned in the book: upholstery. Upholstery is the former and seemingly satisfying profession of Miss Patty Pace, which is dealt with on p.53 above. Her work as an upholsterer seems to be, however, closely linked to the fact that she is not married: she is free to go to work and live in other people's households.

In conclusion it can be said that the image of working women's reality that comes out in *The Lamplighter* is neither thoroughly positive nor totally negative. Almost all of the most usual and acceptable women's occupations of the period can be found in the book, with the exception that no kind of factory or mill work is mentioned. The image of the reality of schoolteaching *The Lamplighter* presents is actually quite positive although an explanation for this could be that the author has wanted to demonstrate that Gertrude's "ideal" character seems to be most suitable for this kind of work and she, therefore, gets the respect she deserves. The situation of the domestic servants in the book is portrayed as less favorable: although the housekeeper and the cook seem to be generally respected in the household, also they had to suffer from the increased demands and inadequate orders of

the new mistress of the household, Mrs. Graham and her nieces. The servant-girls' position seems to be even worse: they are, for example, expected to iron "heaps" of clothes and they do not have any authority to criticize the orders they get. Married women and widows, both working- and middle-class, also have in *The Lamplighter* the possibility of taking in boarders to support themselves, although the realities of this kind of work are not actually described in the book. Neither is the every-day reality of "outwork" or needlework in general described, they are only mentioned in the book as possible sources of income for women. Upholstery, the former occupation of the spinster Patty Pace, however, is portrayed in quite a positive light: she is respected and has probably enjoyed a good income. This occupation has been, however, possible for her only because of the fact that she is unmarried, and because she is shown to be quite an eccentric character in general, she does not seem to be a plausible example of a typical working woman.

### **3.2.4 Opting out - sickness as a way out**

As it has been pointed out above on p. 45, the contradiction between the attributes of the ideal woman (emotionality, dependence and gentleness) and the ideal mother (strength, self-reliance and efficiency) created tensions in women's lives in the nineteenth century. Married women, especially if they had children, often "complained of isolation, loneliness, and depression". Furthermore, changes in the society caused changes also in women's lives: they now lived longer, married later and less often. In addition, they often worked outside their homes before getting married, if they married at all. Less and less time was spent in the processing of food, cloth and clothing. In spite of all these changes "the family and gender role socialization remained relatively inflexible", and, consequently, many women felt adapting to these changes problematic and experienced anxiety. *Hysteria* may have been for these women an option or tactic of survival, a way to redefine their place in the family. (Smith-Rosenberg 1972:656-9; emphasis added). Mintz and



Kellogg (1988:63) point out that the increasing level of independence young women experienced due to the improvements in education and in the working opportunities and to the relative freedom in courtship was contradictory to the self-sacrificing role of mother and wife. This "latent contradiction between woman's preparation for self-fulfillment and her role as the family's key nurturing figure often resulted in enormous personal tension", which sometimes took the form of "the classic nineteenth-century neurosis of hysteria".

Evans (1989:105) notes that especially middle-class women were especially preoccupied with their own health and that for them illness could be "a socially validated escape from emotional responsibility". Smith-Rosenberg (1972:659), however, observes that hysteria as well as the "normative descriptions of proper womanly behavior" crossed class and geographic barriers. Demos (1986:104) further points out that beginning from the 1850s, partly due to the medical view of menarche as a "moment of special risk and danger", also young girls started to manifest a wide range of medical problems. He also states that "in such clinically certified conditions... a "patient" could find refuge from the conflicting pressures of cultural stereotype, innerlife development, and real-world experience". Chambers-Schiller (1984:159) points out that also in the lives of single women emotionally based illnesses were common. The most critical instances and periods in single women's lives in this sense were the "choice, development, loss or interruption of a vocation" or autonomy in general, "physiological changes associated with aging and emotional changes linked to the loss of female friendship".

According to Smith-Rosenberg (1972:660-76) a typical patient suffering from hysteria was a woman between the ages of 15 and 40, belonging to the urban middle or upper middle class. The typical symptoms of hysteria were nervousness, depression, chronic fatigue, disabling pain or the tendency to tears. "The hysteric fit", the most dramatic symptom of all, was reminiscent of a severe epileptic seizure with possible convulsions and even "death-like trance". Among the medical community of the nineteenth-

century there was seemingly a consensus that many women had a "hysterical personality": they were impressionistic, suggestible, labile and egocentric and often also frigid. The physicians' response to hysteria was "at best ambivalent" an often even punitive towards the hysterical woman because these women could not fulfill their prescribed role as wives and mothers. There were also fears present that these women could only be frauds and sensation-seekers. The commonly expressed view was that hysteria was caused by improper upbringing and environment, the patient having been "petted and spoiled" and not been trained to take care of the duties of a wife and a mother. Consequently, "sound education" and moral training were often recommended as a cure and in many cases the patient had to be removed from her home.

Many nineteenth-century medical writers also associated hysteria with women's very nature and biology. Masturbation and other forms of sexual indulgence were also often pointed out as the causes of hysteria. The physicians felt that to cure hysteria they had to dominate the hysteric's will and to exert control and this often included physical and/or mental punishments such as "suffocating hysterical women until their fits stopped" or "beating them across the face and body with wet towels" or "ridiculing them and exposing them in front of family and friends". If the hysteric patient responded well to the treatment, she was treated with fondness, sympathy and praise: she had been restored to her familial duties.

Smith-Rosenberg (1972:677-8) points out that "hysteric" traits: dependency, emotionality and weakness were actually the same traits that women had been socialized to have. Women were not encouraged to develop physical skill, strength and courage and, consequently, they often had a low evaluation of themselves. It does not, therefore, seem surprising that many women responded to the problems and anxieties they encountered "by regressing towards the childish hyper-femininity of the hysteric". In the form of hysteria nineteenth-century women could also exhibit hostility and aggression, which she could not have otherwise expressed.

In *The Lamplighter* this nineteenth-century female tendency to respond to problems and anxieties by demonstrating physical or mental illnesses comes out clearly. The best example in this sense is probably the character of the saint-like Emily Graham, whose health seems to have been permanently damaged by the terrible incident in which she accidentally lost her sight (see pp. 32-3 above). Emily's emotional response to the news that her loved-one would have died destroys all the hopes of the recovery of her vision:

(Emily:) "... He died...and I, on hearing the news of it, sunk back into a more pitiable malady; and—alas for the encouragement the good doctor had held out of my gradual restoration to sight!—I wept all his hopes away!" (LL 321)

Since this incident Emily's health has been fragile and although her personality seems to be "ideal" (see chapter 4.), she seems to have a continuous tendency to react to stress and anxiety by exhibiting symptoms of a hysteric illness:

Emily was not well this evening. *It was often the case, lately, that headache, unwonted weariness, or a nervous shrinking from noise and excitement, sent her to her own room,* and sometimes led her to seek her couch at an early hour...Gertrude...found her suffering more than usual from what she termed her *her troublesome head.* (LL:231; italics SS)

They went to the sea-side for a few weeks; but the clear and bracing atmosphere brought no strength to the blind girl's feeble frame...*her nervous temperament became so susceptible to that the utmost care was requisite to preserve her from all excitement.* (LL 254; italics SS)

After the canal-boat accident in which Gertrude and Philip (whose real identity is not yet revealed) save Emily's life the state of her health has further deteriorated:

Emily is sitting in her own room...*She is paler than ever, and her face has an anxious, troubled expression.* Every time the door opens, she starts, trembles, a sudden flush overspreads her face, *and twice already during the morning she has suddenly burst into tears.* Every exertion, even that of dressing, seems a labor to her; she cannot listen to Gertrude's reading, but will constantly interrupt her, to ask questions concerning the burning boat, her own and others' rescue, and every circumstance connected with the terrible

scene of agony and death. *Her nervous system is evidently fearfully shattered*, and Gertrude looks at her and weeps, and wonders to see how her wonted calmness and composure have forsaken her. (LL 333; italics SS)

At the end of the book Emily hints that her health is so poor that she might die in the near future:

”...I feel many a warning that I cannot be very long for earth...”  
(LL 420)

Even Gertrude, who is generally quite strong and self-reliant, manifests symptoms of what seem like a psychosomatic illness after seeing Willie, whom she is in love with, together with Isabel. The fact that Willie does not come to meet her further aggravates her pain:

There was no summons to the parlor, however, and by noon the feverish excitement of alternate expectation and disappointment had brought a deep blush into her face, and *she experienced, what was very unusual, symptoms of a severe headache*. (LL 302; italics SS)

Furthermore, Gertrude faints when she hears people talking about Willie and Isabel as a couple:

*...Her head swam round, and she would have fallen but for the firm support of Mr. Phillips [Philip, Gertrude’s father as it is revealed later], who held her arm so tightly that though he felt, the rest could not see, how she trembled...the death-like pallor of her countenance*. (LL 306; italics SS)

*...The next morning found her once more yielding to depressed spirits...* (LL309; italics SS)

Furthermore, in the beginning of chapter XXVI, Gertrude, who feels exhausted because she has taken care of Mrs. Sullivan and her sick father, almost falls ill seriously:

*For a week after Mrs. Sullivan was laid in her grave, Dr. Jeremy was apprehensive for a severe illness for Gertrude*. But, after struggling with her dangerous symptoms for several days, she rallied, and, though *still pale and worn by care and anxiety*, was able to resume her classes at school, and make arrangements for providing herself with another home. (LL 174; italics SS)

The reactions of Kitty Ray after she has heard that Ben Bruce does not really love her but has only tried to arouse the jealousy of Gertrude reflect also the "typical" hysterical behavior, almost a "hysterical fit":

Kitty sprung suddenly from her recumbent posture, threw herself into Gertrude's arms, laid her head upon her shoulder, and, though she did not, could not weep, *shook and trembled with an agitation which was perfectly uncontrollable*. Her hand, which grasped Gertrude's, was *fearfully cold; her eyes seemed fixed*; and occasionally, at intervals, the same *hysterical sound* which had at first betrayed her in her hiding-place alarmed her young protector, *to whom she clung as if seized with sudden fear*. (LL 236; italics SS)

Also Isabel Clinton's behavior during the fire on the canal-boat illustrates well the female tendency to react to problems by losing control, by becoming hysterical:

Gertrude...found herself grasped by Isabel Clinton, kneeling upon the platform, and *frantic with terror*, was clinging so closely to her as utterly disable them both; at the same time *shrieking, in pitiable tones*, "O, Gertrude! Gertrude! save me!" Gertrude tried to lift her up, but she was immovable; and, *without making the slightest effort to help herself*, was *madly winding Gertrude's travelling-dress around her person*, as if for a protection from the flames... the frightened girl would cling more wildly to her companion in danger, at the same time praying, with *piercing shrieks*, that she would help and save her. (LL 328-9; italics SS)

The consequences that the duties of taking care of others can cause are illustrated in chapters XX-XXIII in which Mrs. Sullivan falls ill after the depart of her son Willie to India. Now she has to take care alone of her old and invalid father, with the consequence that she takes no care of herself:

(Gertrude:) "... But I do, Emily, feel dreadfully anxious about her... there is something the matter with her, and I fear it is more serious than she allows, for she looks very pale, and has, as I know, had several alarming ill turns lately...*she takes no care of herself...*" (LL 132; italics SS)

...within the last few days, *her increased debility, and one or two sudden attacks of faintness*, had awakened all, and more than all Gertrude's former fears... (LL 152; italics SS)

Also in the case of Mrs. Sullivan a woman's mental state is clearly reflected in her physical health, which is so poor that she is going to die soon:

...any unusual agitation of mind would often occasion an attack of faintness in Mrs. Sullivan... (LL 159)

Dr. Jeremy's worst fears were all confirmed, and, *her disease still further aggravated by the anxiety and agitation which attended her father's sickness and death, Mrs. Sullivan was rapidly passing away.* (LL 168; italics SS)

After Mrs. Sullivan has had her dream about Willie surrounded by dangers and temptations and saved by the loving guidance of his mother's spirit (see above p. 48), she feels certain that Willie will survive and becomes more serene and tranquil in the face of death. Now she is ready to die:

"... I now believe that Willie's living mother might be powerless to turn him from temptation and evil; but the spirit of that mother will be mighty still, and in the thought that *she, in her home beyond the skies, is ever watching around his path, and striving to lead him in the straight and narrow way, he may find a truer shield from danger, a firmer rest to his tempted soul, than she could have been while on earth. Now, O Father, I can say, from the depths of my heart, 'Thy will, not mine, be done!'*"

From that time until her death, which took place about a month afterward, *Mrs. Sullivan's mind remained in a state of perfect resignation and tranquillity...* (LL 173; italics SS)

As Baym (1978:169) points out, Mrs. Sullivan's death is required as a price of her crucial influence on her son's life. It could be further concluded that a mother's mental and physical health was seen at the period as being totally in the service of her children's needs.

In conclusion it can be said that in *The Lamplighter* most of the female characters tend to react to problems and anxieties by exhibiting symptoms of mental and physical illnesses, which seems to have been more or less typical of the nineteenth-century women, partly due to the image of the ideal woman as weak and emotional. This applies especially to Emily, whose health becomes permanently injured after the accident after which she eventually loses her sight, having cried and worried over the fate of her dear Philip. Furthermore, the canal-boat accident seems to have had a fatal effect on her mental health, and, consequently, on her physical health. She tends to

respond to everything that disturbs her by getting a headache or by becoming extremely tired or nervous. In a few occasions the same kind of symptoms are also displayed by Gertrude, who, for example, gets a headache and almost faints because she wonders whether Willie still loves her. Furthermore, the reactions of Kitty Ray, who has been badly deceived, resemble the "hysterical fit" and so does Isabel's behavior during the fire on the canal-boat. In the case of Mrs. Sullivan, the fact that she has troubles taking care of her old and sick father together with the fact that she seems to take no care of herself, seem to contribute to her illness and death. Furthermore, once she believes that her "mission" has been accomplished, that Willie will remember and obey her teachings and warnings after her death, she feels ready to die. The female tendency to react to problems and stress with mental and/or bodily symptoms of illness seems to be related in *The Lamplighter* to the importance of self-control, a quality of an ideal woman. This issue will be examined more deeply in chapter 4.3.

In this chapter, chapter three, the picture *The Lamplighter* gives about the mid-nineteenth-century female reality has been dealt with, and it can be concluded that it reflects more or less the problems women faced at the time. Orphanhood is the fate of many girls, and they are usually in a subordinate position in families, which tend to favor their sons, if there are any. In the novel it is implied that many women married, were expected to marry or had to marry for money and position, although this was generally condemned. Once a woman marries, she is quite dependent on her husband, who may treat her badly or die suddenly, leaving his family without an income. Also the reality of motherhood is demanding because a mother is responsible for the upbringing and morality of her children, especially of sons. Although schoolteaching, for instance, has been depicted in quite a positive light in the novel, it is clear that working women could face different kinds of troubles, and especially the position of servants could be difficult. The novel also reflects the nineteenth-century female tendency to resort to illness or hysteria as a way to cope in difficult situations in life.

#### 4. THE "IDEAL" WOMAN IN *THE LAMPLIGHTER*

Walker Howe (1976:25) notes that "creating character", combining for example self-reliance, self-discipline and responsibility, was the ideal goal of the Victorian educators although, in fact, "the person of character always remained more of an ideal than a reality". As Kelley (1979:436,440; emphasis added) points out, this "character" shows also in the works of the female writers of the mid-nineteenth-century whom she calls "the sentimentalists". "The sentimentalists" generally presented in their works a *female archetype*: "a strong, commanding, central figure in the home; a supportive and guiding redeemer for husband; a model and teacher of rectitude for children; and a reformer and servant to an American society judged to be in dire need of regeneration". This "*ideal woman*" is superior in character; she is strong, active and independent and her mission in life is to serve her family and community. Baym (1978:1,19,35; emphasis added) points out that all these novels tell basically a single tale: a tale of a *heroine*, "a young girl who is deprived of the supports she had rightly or wrongly depended on to sustain her throughout life and is faced with the necessity of winning her own way in the world". According to Baym the message is that the problems the heroine meets and the unreasonable expectations the heroine has can awaken in her the *inner possibilities*, and at the same time as she develops in character, the world's attitude toward her changes accordingly. The authors, therefore, saw that women's false self-perception accounted more than any other factor for women's degraded and dependent position in society. The heroines in these novels have to develop their capacity to survive and surmount their troubles because women were forced to depend on themselves.

In *The Lamplighter*, there are in a way two heroines: Gertrude and Emily, of whom Gertrude is, however, more central. Gertrude is what Baym (1978:35-6; emphasis added) calls a "*flawed heroine*", who has to develop her character to become "flawless". Emily, on the other hand, appears to be a "*flawless heroine*", if one considers her ideal character. However, Emily,



who because of her poor health and fragility is quite dependent of the others' help, may not, after all, be flawless. Moreover, as indicated in the end of the book that Emily is probably going to die soon, she does not seem to make as plausible a heroine and role-model as Gertrude. Furthermore, Welter (1966:162) notes that deaths of beautiful women were "cherished in fiction", these women being represented as "the innocent victim, suffering without sin, too pure and good for this world but too weak and passive to resist its evil forces". The best refuge for such delicate creatures was thought to be the warmth and safety of their homes. Emily appears to fit this description very well. Consequently, in this chapter Gertrude is taken to be the first and foremost heroine of the book, whose "ideal" character will be taken under special scrutiny. In fact, Gertrude is referred to in the end of the novel as the "living ideal" (LL 358) and as "a model to her sex" (LL 358), a fact which further supports the idea that she is portrayed as an ideal woman. In addition, the purpose is to compare the qualities she possesses to the qualities of a "True Woman", the ideal image of the cult of domesticity. In addition, it will be shown how the heroine's "ideal" qualities help her to overcome her problems. However, as there are many other female characters in the book who seem to be "ideal" in many ways, including Emily and Mrs. Sullivan, for example, they will also be referred to when considered appropriate. The processes and ways through which the heroine becomes "ideal" will be studied in the fifth chapter.

#### **4.1 Piety and submission to God**

Welter (1966:152-4,161-2) names the four cardinal virtues of a True Woman: piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Of these four virtues *piety* "was the core of woman's virtue, the source of her strength". Women were considered to be naturally susceptible to religion and their task would be to bring "erring men back to Christ". *Submission* in face of God, fortune and man was expected of women. However, submission was not considered to be something a woman could choose, it was "her lot". Religion was especially valued as it did not take women away from her "proper sphere",

her home. Religion could also be a kind of tranquilizer for young girls, who might have many kinds of "undefined longings". Consequently, women's education aimed at making young women religious, and they were warned "not to let their literary or intellectual pursuits to take them away from God".

According to Evans (1989:72-3) the second Great Awakening in the beginning of the nineteenth century, in which women participated in great numbers, "presented a distinctly feminized religion to its followers". The ideas of infant damnation and of some people being "the elect" were set aside and universal salvation was preached. Anyone could be saved if she/he searched for grace and experienced personal conversion. The qualities of Christ became reminiscent of the feminine ideal: "loving, forgiving, suffering, and sacrificing for others". The notion of women's moral superiority was enforced because of this link to Christianity, and now women could, to an extent, act on their beliefs without the approval of male authorities.

In *The Lamplighter* the equation of an ideal woman to Christ is the most clearly visible the "superior" character of the Christ-like Emily:

None could live in familiar intercourse with Emily, listen to her words, observe *the radiance of her heavenly smile*, and breathe in *the pure atmosphere that environed her very being*, and not carry away with them *the love of virtue and holiness*, if not something of their essence. She was *so unselfish, so patient*, notwithstanding her privations... *the pure heart and superior mind of Emily...* (LL 240; italics SS)

... then would Emily, from the secret fountains of *her largely-illuminated nature*, speak out such truths of the inner life as made it *seem that she alone were blessed with the true light*, and that all the seeing world sat in comparative darkness. (LL 253; italics SS)

(Willie:) "... a *divine light* was shed upon her [Gertrude's] life by one [Emily] who, herself sitting in darkness, *casts a halo forth from her own spirit to illumine those of all who are blessed with her presence...*" (LL 350; italics SS)

The pious and Christ-like character of Emily is reflected also in her appearance: her face is described as an "angel face" (LL 22) and as a "soul-

illuminated face" (LL 398), and she has "a halo not of earth" (LL 396). This general tendency in the novel to equate a person's appearance with her virtue and character will be dealt with more deeply in chapter 4.4.

Moreover, the fact that Emily, who has suffered a lot, is going to die, makes her resemble Christ. Emily's and woman's mission in general the novel presents will be dealt with more deeply later on in chapters 4.5 and 6.

In *The Lamplighter* submission to God's will is shown to be necessary for the ideal woman because it is the only way to survive and to be happy in a world full of troubles:

"Miss Emily," said she [Gertrude], "I begin to think *everybody has trouble.*"

...

"*It is the lot of humanity,* Gertrude, and we must not expect it to be otherwise."

"*Then who can be happy, Miss Emily?*"

"*Those only, my child, who have learned submission; those who, in the severest afflictions, see the hand of a loving Father, and, obedient to his will, kiss the chastening rod.*"

"It is very hard, Miss Emily."

"It is hard, my child, and therefore few in this world can rightly be called happy; but, even in the midst of our distress, we can look to God in faith and love, we may, when the world is dark around, experience a peace that is a foretaste of heaven."

And Emily was right... (LL 104; italics SS)

It could be claimed that the submission to God that *The Lamplighter* demands raises from the reasons of practicality or necessity rather than from the domestic idea of women as "naturally" submissive. It could be said that submission is a kind of *survival strategy* in the novel. Moreover, faith or grace seems to be something for which a woman herself is responsible, although, as it will be pointed out in chapter 6., the "tutoring" and example of other women are important in this sense. Masculine clerical institutions are rarely mentioned in the book, and for example going to the church or knowing all the doctrines by heart does not appear to be vital. Instead, what matters is personal faith in God, which is also reflected in a person's (man's as well as woman's) behavior toward others. In this sense *The Lamplighter* seems to reflect the central tenets of the second Great Awakening:

True had a *humble, loving heart, and a child-like faith*; he had enjoyed but little religious instruction, but he earnestly endeavored to live up to the light he had. *Perhaps, in his faithful practice of the Christian virtues, and especially in his obedience to the great law of Christian charity, he more nearly approached to the spirit of his Divine Master than many who, by daily reading and study, are far more familiar with Christian doctrines.* (LL 41; italics SS)

(Gertrude:) "... I know of no religion but that of the heart." (LL 305)

As one can judge from the extracts above, submission is shown in the novel to be important for and expected of men, too, and not only for women. The following extract in which Willie's efforts to learn submission after the deaths of his grandfather and mother illustrates this point further:

... he had taken to heart his mother's last entreaty and prayer for a submissive disposition on his part; and that, although deeply afflicted, he was schooling himself to patience and resignation. (LL 200)

In *The Lamplighter* both of the heroines, Gertrude and Emily, gain strength from their belief in God in the trials of their lives. Cott (1977:140) notes that for many women religion became a way of asserting themselves and a way of relying on an authority beyond men. For example, faith in God helps Gertrude to carry on her hard work taking care of Mrs. Sullivan and her father, despite the fact that Mr. Graham had opposed her plans:

Her trials and cares are multiplying... she thanks God that she is here; that she had the resolution to forsake pleasure and ease, and *in spite of her own weakness and man's wrath*, to place herself in the front of life's battle, and bravely wait its issues. *She thanks God she knows where to look for help*; that the bitter sorrows of her childhood and early youth left her not without a witness of His love who can turn darkness into light, and that *no weight can now overshadow her whose gloom is now illumined by rays from the throne of God.* (LL 164; italics SS)

Emily had found consolation and happiness in religion after the depression she suffered from after losing her vision and, as she believed, her loved one, Philip:

"In the eyes of the world I am still the unfortunate blind girl; one who, by her sad fate, is cut off from every enjoyment; but so great is the awakening I have experienced, that to me it is far

otherwise,—and I am ready to exclaim, like him who in old time experinced his Saviour’s healing power, ‘Once I was blind, but now I see!’” (LL 321)

The previous example that describes Emily’s ”enlightenment” illustrates well the belief promoted in *The Lamplighter* that trials and suffering perfect a human being. In fact, this belief, as Baym (1978:36) notes, was in general very typical of the Victorian era. There are other good examples of this belief in *The Lamplighter*, which will be dealt with in the chapters above.

To sum up the ideas presented above it can be said that the view *The Lamplighter* gives of women’s religion and piety differs to an extent from the central ideas of True Womanhood. Submission to God’s will seems to be more a matter of personal choice and strategy than something ”innate” in women. Furthermore, submission does not seem to be something that is demanded of women only; also men need to learn it. Woman (as well and man) herself is responsible for her faith and can gain strength to carry out her own plans regardless of man’s orders. In general, women seem to gain strength and consolation from their faith in the novel. However, the typical analogy of the period between Christ and the ideal woman comes out also in *The Lamplighter*, especially in the character of Emily.

In the next chapters it will be shown that a woman’s faith and piety is reflected in general in her actions and character. Especially the notions of duty and self-sacrifice are related to this theme.

#### **4.2 Duty and self-sacrifice**

Duty and self-sacrifice are qualities that seem to be central in the personality of the ideal woman in *The Lamplighter*, reflecting the fervent piety of the person in question. As Kelley (1984:292-3) notes, although piety was at the time seen as a most private experience involving inner conviction, the way in which one served God was not private at all. ”One served God by lovingly and actively serving others”, and this interaction was to be selfless. Kelley (1979:439) further points out that submission to God’s will ”did not imply passivity” and that ”selflessness did not mean simple self-denial”,

meaning that self-sacrifice was valued only because it made it possible to actively and honestly serve others.

#### 4.2.1 Duty beyond all else

Walker Howe (1976:21,24;emphasis added) points out that in the Victorian ideology there was in general a tone of seriousness which was reflected in the importance of *duty* and virtue in as well in a private person's personality and conduct as in the politics, for example. These beliefs were rooted in the "assumption of the objectivity and universality of moral principles". The ideal "product" of the Victorian culture would have been a "*person who no longer needs reminding of his duties*, who would have internalized a *powerful sense of obligation* and could then safely be left to his own volitions". According to Welter (1966:157,162) the duty of a True Woman was in short "to save the world", to bring men back to God.

In *The Lamplighter* the idea that an ideal woman should always have a  *motive* for her actions, rooted in her moral (religious) principles, comes out clearly in the novel:

(Gertrude:) "By no means. I trust I am not difficult to to influence when there is *a sufficient motive*." (LL 136; italics SS)

The incident in which Gertrude does not obey Mr. Graham's rules (pp. 28-9 above) because she, according to her own moral principles, feels it to be her *duty* to go and help her friends, illustrates well the importance of moral principles and a sense duty as the foundation of a person's actions:

(Emily:) "...You are in *the path of duty*, Gertrude, and *will be rewarded by the approbation of your own conscience*, if in no other way." (LL 135; italics SS)

"O, Mr. Graham!" said Gertrude, earnestly, "*it is not a matter of preference or choice*, except as I feel it to be a *duty*." (LL 140; italics SS)

"Shall I then decide to give up my teaching, go to the south, and leave dear Mrs. Sullivan to suffer, perhaps to die, while I am away? No, that is impossible. *I will never be such a traitor to my own heart, and my sense of right*; sorry as I shall be to offend Mr.

Graham, I must not allow fear of his anger to turn me from *my duty*." (LL 144; italics SS)

Baym (1978:167) interprets this scene so that Gertrude justifies "inclination as duty", and, therefore, feels free to do what she wants. However, Gertrude's self-sacrificing and hard service at Mrs. Sullivan's later on seems to prove that she really feels it to be her duty to help her, and, therefore, it is difficult to find evidence that would back up Baym's claim.

In the context of the above-mentioned scene, in which Gertrude does what she feels to be the right thing to do, it becomes clear that a woman's sense of duty, based on moral principles, is more important than anything else. As Welter (1966:158-160) notes, True Women were considered to be submissive to men, this order being "fixed in Heaven". In *The Lamplighter* this seems to be true only partially: if a woman's sense of duty is contradictory to a man's wishes and demands, this duty will win, although "a right woman" does not actually enjoy confronting men:

(Gertrude:) "*I always considered it my duty to submit to him, until, at last, a higher duty compelled me to do otherwise.*"  
 "And then, my dear," said Mrs. Jeremy, "I daresay *it pained you to displease him; and that is a right woman's feeling,...*" (LL 157; italics SS)

In general, there are not many examples in the novel in which a woman is clearly submissive to a man. In fact, the image of ideal marriage (see below p. 104) seems to be more or less egalitarian.

What are then the duties of the ideal woman according to *The Lamplighter*? The most important duties of an ideal woman in the novel appear to be the same as the duties of a True Woman according to Welter (1966:157,162): bringing men, sons and husbands, (back) to God. The place that seems ideal for this purpose is also in *The Lamplighter* the home, the "cradle" of woman's domestic influence. This theme of woman's domesticity and her task of bringing men to God are dealt with in a separate chapter, chapter 4.6. Another important task and duty of an ideal woman is to raise and educate young girls to become like herself. This task and

process is examined in chapter 6. In general being useful and helpful seems to be greatly valued in the novel. To all these women's functions is linked also another important quality of an ideal woman that is described in the following chapter: self-sacrifice.

#### 4.2.2 Self-sacrifice

Female self-sacrifice was central in the nineteenth-century domesticity. Self-sacrifice was essential for woman to be able to perform all her often demanding duties, and she was supposed to find self-fulfillment in it. Self-sacrifice, among the other ideal female characteristics: sensibility, grace, and compliance was "pseudo-scientifically catalogued" under a general title "heart". (Cott 1977:78,161)

In *The Lamplighter* the ideal woman's "heart" seems to be connected mostly with the ideal quality of *self-sacrifice*, this quality, as the others, being "born" from the faith in God:

It was that love, fortified and illumined by a higher light, which came in time to sanctify it, that gave her, while yet a mere girl, *a woman's strength of heart and self-denial...* (LL 34; italics SS)

(Emily to Gertrude:) "... for I see in *the sacrifice* you are making of yourself *one of the noblest and most important traits of character a woman can possess...*" (LL 134; italics SS)

There are various instances in the novel in which Gertrude demonstrates admirable self-sacrifice, the first of them probably being True's illness during which Gertrude, who is just a young girl, takes care of him:

Little did those who wondered, as day after day they watched the invalid and his childish guardian, at *the patience and self-sacrifice of the devoted girl...* (LL 88; italics SS)

Baym (1978:166) does not see this as an instance of feminine self-sacrifice at all but as a reversal of power relations: "Trueman Flint has become Gerty's child". It is true that Gertrude seems to enjoy her new responsible position; she feels "fervent and noble satisfaction" being able to be "the sustaining power" (LL 88). However, she really seems to want to do everything she can for her friend and loving guardian, and it appears to be a



somewhat simplified interpretation to see this instance as a mere reversal of power relations:

Little did they realize *the joy* it was to her to sustain and support her beloved friend... *She lived for True now*; she might almost be said to live in him, so wholly were her thoughts bent on promoting his happiness, prolonging and blessing her days. (LL 88)

Gertrude's ultimate act of self-sacrifice is when she during the fire on the canal-boat risks her life to save Isabel's life:

And now a new and heroic resolution took possession of the mind of Gertrude. *One of them could be saved*; for Mr. Phillips [Philip, Emily's loved-one as it is revealed later] was within a few rods of the wreck. *It should be Isabel!* She had called on her for protection, and it should not be denied her! Moreover, Willie loved Isabel. Willie would weep her loss and that must not be... (LL329; italics SS)

Baym (1995:xxvii) states that this Gertrude's "deed of inspired heroism" actually "shatters the constraints of domesticity" because this kind of heroic deeds were not expected of women but of men. Baym also points out that Emily calls Gertrude "noble" when she hears of what she has done (LL 417). Baym claims that this word "has been carefully chosen for its masculine aura". It appears to be true that Gertrude's behavior, saving heroically a two persons' lives (Emily's and Isabel's), is not typical of the nineteenth-century ideal feminine behavior but the motivation behind it still seems to be feminine: ultimate self-sacrifice, Gertrude believing that Willie loves Isabel. Furthermore, the adjective "noble" is commonly used in the novel to describe the character and behavior of "ideal" women; Netta Gryseworth, for example, is described as "a noble... girl" (LL 290) and Willie describes Gertrude's "heart" as "noble" (LL 349) and, therefore, it seems a bit surprising that Baym sees it as something very radical in this context.

It is constantly implied in the novel that women (and men) who act self-sacrificingly usually get their *reward* and, therefore, self-sacrifice appears not to be totally free of self-centered interests. For example, when Mr. Clinton hears that Gertrude has saved her daughter, he gladly hands Willie

over to Gertrude, although he may have had hopes for the union of Willie and Isabel:

”I am glad,” said Mr. Clinton, placing his hands upon those of Willie and Gertrude, which were still clasped together, ”that *the noble and self-sacrificing girl*, whom I have no words to thank, and no power repay, has reaped *a worthy reward* in the love of one of the few men with whom a fond father may venture wholly to trust the happiness of his child.” (LL 418; italics SS)

In addition to Gertrude’s acts of self-sacrifice, the life of Mrs. Sullivan seems to be a good example of feminine self-sacrifice, the welfare of her son always being on the first place (see above p. 47).

It is a general tendency in *The Lamplighter* to at least *expect* the same qualities of men that are expected of women and self-sacrifice is no exception in this sense. Mr. Bruce, whose personality in general appears to be imperfect in many ways, knows nothing of self-sacrifice:

Self-sacrifice, too, was a thing of which he had no experience, and with which, as seen in others, he felt no sympathy. (LL 226-7)

Philp Amory, Gertrude’s father and Emily’s beloved, on the other hand, is shown to be self-sacrificing, a quality which is appreciated in a man as well:

(Gertrude in a letter to her father:) ”... gladly would I hail the sweet duty of consoling the sorrows of *one so self-sacrificing*, so kind, so generous...” (LL 337; italics SS)

In conclusion it can be said that self-sacrifice, an important quality of a True Woman, seems to be important for and expected of the women in *The Lamplighter*, a fact of which Gertrude’s many acts of self-sacrifice as well as Mrs. Sullivan’s character are good examples of. However, feminine self-sacrifice does not appear to be totally ”selfless”, as a woman can gain satisfaction and concrete rewards from her ”selfless” actions. Moreover, self-sacrifice appears to be expected of and valued in men, also.

#### **4.3 Self-control**

According to Walker Howe (1976:18) ”bourgeois self-control” was a vital part of the American Victorian ideal personality, who was to be self-

governing. Mintz and Kellogg (1988:45,59) note that self-control or self-discipline was expected of a good citizen. Women, as wives and mothers, were believed to "have a special talent of instilling self-control", self-control being one of the feminine "virtues". Rothman (1982:417) points out that especially in the domain of sexuality women were believed to be able to restrain both her own feelings as well as the desires of her suitor, her powers of self-control being greater. Welter (1966:154-5) observes that sexual *purity* was seen as a natural quality in a True Woman and it was a woman's duty "to maintain her virtue", because men, who were more sensual, would try to assault it.

In *The Lamplighter* the necessity of self-control in an ideal woman seems to be tied to her submission to God and fortune. Self-control, as submission, seems to be practical and necessary for a woman in the novel to overcome her problems and duties. "Irritable temper" seems to be one of the greatest flaws in a woman's character and also Gertrude has to learn to control her temper:

... spirited, sudden and violent, she had made herself feared, as well as disliked... (LL 5)  
 ... Gerty's greatest fault lay in a proud and easily-roused temper... (LL 73)

Emily, who takes care of Gertrude's moral upbringing and education (see below chapter 6.), sees the "taming" of Gertrude's temper as one of her most important tasks. This question is especially important to Emily probably because she has had to suffer herself from the consequences of easily-roused temper:

... she had felt, in many a year of darkness and bereavement, in many an hour of fearful struggle, in many a pang of despair, *how a temper like that which Gerty had this day show [sic] might, in one moment of its fearful reign, cast a blight upon lifetime*, and write in fearful lines the mournful requiem of earthly joy. And so she prayed to Heaven that night for strength to keep her resolve, and aid in fulfilling her undying purpose, to *cure the child of her dark infirmity*. (LL 63; italics SS)

Self-control, in the same way as submission to God and fortune (see above pp. 74-5), seems to be in the novel something a woman has to learn to survive in the world full of troubles and trials:

With the recollection, however,... that hers is the hand that must soothe the pillow of the invalid, and minister to all her wants, *the stern necessity of self-control,—a necessity to which Gertrude has long since learned to submit...* (LL 164; italics SS)

The Victorian view of trials as "perfecting" (see above p.77) comes out in the novel also in the context of Gertrude's temper. Emily tells Gertrude that being able to bear injustice without losing self-control would be the highest aim:

"But you must remember, my dear, that there is no merit in being patient and good-tempered, when there is nothing to irritate you. I want you to learn to bear even injustice, without losing your self-control..." (LL 99)

Gertrude's greatest trial as to her powers of self-control is the jealous housekeeper Mrs. Ellis, who, among other things, has told the maid to throw away Gertrude's "treasures", a few old items that she had kept as a reminder of True, for example. When Gertrude finds out what has happened she first intends to go and face her "enemy", but finally manages to control her emotions:

Once or twice she lifted her head, and seemed on the point of rising and going to face her enemy. But each time something came across her mind and detained her. It was not fear... Whatever it might be, it was something that had, on the whole, a soothing influence... A wonderful composure stole into Gertrude's heart, and, ere she had sat there many minutes, she felt "the grace that brings peace succeed to the passions that produce trouble." *She had conquered; she had achieved the greatest of earth's victories, a victory over herself.* (LL 117; italics SS)

After this "victory over herself" Gertrude is changed, she learns to control her emotions, a fact that brings her rewards. Mrs. Ellis, for example, "experienced a stinging consciousness of the fact that Gertrude had shown a superiority to herself in point of forbearance" (LL 118), and she learns little by little to appreciate Gertrude's good qualities. After this "trial" Gertrude's

self-control is put under test in many occasions but in all of them she manages to control her emotions. The events during which she sees Willie with Isabel and suspects that they are in love with each other try her abilities of self-control. In the presence of other people, she manages to maintain self-control. However, in the privacy of her room she allows her emotions to surge:

There was but one thing for her to do, however; *to call up all her self-command*, bring pride even to her aid, and endeavor, in any event, to *behave with serenity and composure*. (LL 300; italics SS)

Not until the still hours of the night, when Emily appeared to be soundly sleeping by her side, did she venture for an instant to loosen the iron bands of restraint which she had imposed upon herself; but then, the barrier removed, the pent-up torrent of her grief burst forth without check or hindrance. (LL 312)

Although Gertrude manages to maintain her self-control in the presence of other people, excluding Emily to whom she finally tells about her worries (LL 313), the rigid necessity of self-control seems to affect her physical health: she suffers from headache and "depressed spirits", for example (see p. 68 above). In general, it seems a bit strange that Emily, who teaches Gertrude self-control among other things, seems to react to problems by manifesting signs of depression and headache (see p. 67 above). It could be concluded that rigid self-control may not, after all, be an utterly positive thing, because the repressed emotions and feelings have to find an outlet somewhere. In the novel this outlet seems to be the woman's body and also her mental health: the women in the novel become "hysterical" (see chapter 3.2.4).

Self-control as well as submission and self-sacrifice is in the novel a quality which is appreciated and useful in men also, and not just in women:

(Philip:) "... and a growing capability of self control, rendered my mode of life far less obnoxious to me than it had once been." (LL 372)

There are no clear references to the necessity of a woman's sexual purity and/or self-control or to sexuality in general in *The Lamplighter*, although what seem to be erotic tones for the modern reader can be found in the

description of Gertrude's and Emily's relationship (see below pp.123-4). Elbert (1987:82) points out that in general "most of the nineteenth-century domestic novels evaded the problem of adolescent female sexuality by separating it from...domesticity". Elbert suggests as a reason for this that the female writers "reinforced attitudes already established in the lives to their female readers, who at that time were asserting increasing control over their fertility". Because there are no hints to sexual desires, thought or acts in the book and because the heroine(s) of the book are depicted as pious and "ideal", the reader gets the impression that sexuality has no part in the women's lives in the novel. "Purity", one of the central tenets of True Womanhood, is mentioned in the book, but it is not clear whether the author has meant specifically sexual purity:

... almost majestic expression which *purity of soul* imparted to her [Gertrude's] yet childish features... (LL 359; italics SS)

There is, however, at least one scene in the novel in which it is alluded that an ideal male-female relationship is quite innocent and child-like: the scene in which Emily and Philip meet each other after a many years' separation. This scene is also interesting because in it the rules of self-control and proper behavior seem no longer to apply:

The conventional rules, the enforced restrictions, which often set limits to the outbursts of natural feeling, had no existence for one so wholly the child of nature as Emily. She and Philip had loved each other in the childhood... and *as children they met again*. (LL 395; italics SS)

It may be that the author has stressed the fact that Emily and Philip "meet as children again" exactly to avoid the allusion that their meeting, which is very emotional in nature, would have any sexual tones.

To sum up this chapter it can be stated that self-control, in the same way as submission to God and fortune, seems to be in *The Lamplighter* more or less necessary and even useful for a woman in the trials of her life. Self-control appears to be something that an "ideal" woman must *learn*; it does not seem to be innate in a woman character, as the ideology of domesticity seems to suggest. Moreover, only by encountering various trials in which a

woman's (Gertrude's) self-control is tested does she learn to control herself "perfectly". However, although self-control can help a woman to survive and even bring her rewards, it seems to tax a woman's strength so that she develops what appear to be psychosomatic symptoms, for example headache in the case of Gertrude. In addition, self-control is valued in men also. As to the question of the sexual purity and/or self-control of the ideal woman, *The Lamplighter* seems to evade these questions: there are no clear references to sexuality in the novel. The "ideal" woman, however, seems to be so "pure" and virtuous in many ways that the reader gets the impression that she has no sexual feelings. In the context of Emily and Philip's meeting after many years it is especially emphasized that their love is child-like and not sexual.

#### **4.4 Sincerity, simplicity and modesty**

Halttunen (1982:5,33-4,56-9; emphasis added) points out that *a fear of hypocrisy* was great in the USA in the period between 1820 and 1860 largely because in the new industrializing world young men (and women) who left their homes to earn their own living in the cities could be easily deceived by strangers, "the confidence men" and "the painted" women, whose motives were selfish and immoral. In the 1830s a cult of *sincerity* "was emerging as the highest ideal of the sentimental middle-class culture that would dominate Victorian America". This cult of sincerity found an outlet in the "popular sentimental fiction of nineteenth-century America". According to the cult of sincerity private experience was morally superior to public life, and the intensity of the private experience was measured in its emotional intensity or sensibility. Women were seen as being superior in sensibility, as the "creatures of the heart", whereas men were thought to be "creatures of the mind", moved by their reason. Because of this superior sensibility of women, they were considered to be *innately more sincere than men*: women were believed to be "transparent" and incapable of disguising their feelings. Women, being more sensible and sincere than men, had the

responsibility to preserve home, their realm as an area of sensibility and sincerity, free of deceit and corruption of "the world". By their example in the family and in the presence of other people, they were to influence the morality of the nation.

This cult of sincerity, and the view of an "ideal" woman as sincere, is reflected also in *The Lamplighter* in which sincerity appears to be one of the qualities of the "ideal" woman. For example, Gertrude is constantly praised for her sincerity, which seems to be inborn in her despite her shortcomings in the beginning of the story:

... the child, whose very nature was the very reverse of deceptive... that very fault carried with it its usual accompaniment of *frankness and sincerity*... she could always depend on her [Gertrude's] word... (LL 73; italics SS)

She was high-spirited,—he had sometimes thought her wilful,—but *never* mean or false. (LL 251; italics original)

Gertrude's sincerity is reflected in her behavior toward others: for her true politeness, for example, has to be spontaneous and sincere. In this sense the novel reflects "the essence of the sentimental ideal of true courtesy" that was seen to be "the sincere expression of right feelings" (Halttunen 1982:118). In the following extract Gertrude's "rule for politeness" is "backed up" by Miss Patty Pace:

"What is that?" said Mr. Graham; "let us know, Fanny, what is Gertrude's rule for politeness."

...

"You must cultivate your heart... you must cultivate your heart."

...

(Patty Pace:) "Miss Gertrude's remark is undeniably a verity," said she. "*The only politeness which is trustworthy is the spontaneous offering of the heart...*" (LL 212-3; italics SS)

It is interesting to note that "heart" seems to also in *The Lamplighter* equal sensibility and sincerity, which appear to be innate in women. In this context it also becomes clear that sincerity is valued in men as well as in women, because it is implied that Mr. Graham's politeness, unlike Gertrude's, is not based on sincerity, and, consequently, he feels ashamed:



Mr. Graham bit his lip, and walked away, for *his* politeness was founded on no such rule, and he knew that Gertrude's *was*. (LL 213; italics original)

Gertrude's sincerity is illustrated also in the context of Mr. Bruce's proposal, which Gertrude can not accept because she does not love (or respect) Mr. Bruce:

I would not do you such an injustice as to marry you for your fortune... my affections cannot be bought with gold... (LL 234)

Mr. Bruce appears to be a good example of a deceitful man because he has led Kitty to believe that he loves her, although he has only tried to arouse Gertrude's jealousy. Gertrude, who is clearly superior to Mr. Bruce, chides him for his cruel behavior:

"... it is a dreadful thing to trifle thus with a human heart... Whether Kitty loves you, is not for me to say; but what opinion—alas!—will she have of your sincerity?" (LL 235)

In addition to Gertrude, many other female characters in the novel are shown to be admirably sincere. For example, Kitty Ray's "frank, lively manners" are praised (LL 222) and the Miss Gryseworths, the daughters of the highly esteemed Dr. Gryseworth, seem to base their cordial behavior on sincere feelings:

... Gertrude was charmed with *the lady-like cordiality* with which they both made her acquaintance, and still more with *the amiable and sympathizing attentions* which they paid to Emily. (LL 262; italics SS)

Halttunen (1982:40,67,71,79-81) points out that according to the cult of sincerity "all aspects of manner and appearance were visible outward signs of inner moral qualities", and this seems to be true in *The Lamplighter*, also. In the examples above it has been shown that in the novel true politeness raises from sincere feelings. In addition to a woman's behavior, her inner qualities were expected to show in her appearance in general, as in the case of the Christ-like Emily (see above pp. 74-5). True womanly

beauty, for example, was seen as "the outward expression of a virtuous mind and heart".

Women's dress posed problems in this sense, because the fussy and ornamental style of the romantic dress, popular in the 1820s and 1830, was hardly "transparent" and created to enhance woman's "inner" beauty. The purpose of the so-called *sentimental dress* was to "enhance woman's sincerity", its style being "simple in line and ornament". The overall effect generated by sentimental dress "was one of demure self-effacement". Furthermore, as to the behavior of an "ideal" woman, all forms of the theatrical affectation and attention-seeking of the "romantic woman" were condemned as forms of hypocrisy. The life of fashion, associated with the "fashionable excesses of the Old World aristocracy", was seen to threaten the "Republican" sincerity and, therefore, American society in general.

All these ideals of sincerity, simplicity and modesty in women's appearance and behavior can be found in *The Lamplighter*. For example, the ideal woman (Emily) "never wears anything showy or conspicuous" (LL 229) and is, like Gertrude, "unconscious... of possessing any attractions at all" (LL 129). Moreover, Gertrude is "superior to coquetry... insensible to flattery" (LL 201-2) and has "never went to a fashionable party" (LL 228).

In general, *The Lamplighter* appears to promote the view that being a real "lady" is not at all linked to one's family or wealth but to a woman's inner qualities. Actually, as it will be pointed out in chapter 5., being born in a wealthy family is seen as a hindrance for the development of a "virtuous" character. In fact, Gertrude, whose background is very humble, seems to be the embodiment of a "perfect lady":

Gertrude... had a fairy lightness of step, a grace of movement and a dignity of bearing, which impressed them all with the conviction that she was no beggar in spirit, whatever might be her birth or fortune,—and all were in the invariable habit of addressing her as *Miss Gertrude*. (LL 108; italics original)

(Fanny:) "...She's *the most perfect lady I ever saw*, and mother says she has beautiful manners, and I must take pattern by her." (LL 194; italics SS)

The dress and other accessories of the ideal woman are in *The Lamplighter* simple and of good taste:

A young lady [Emily]... *attired with great simplicity*, wearing a dark-brown cloak, and a bonnet of the same color, relieved by some light-blue about the face... (LL 51; italics SS)

Her *neat dress* of spotted muslin fits close to her throat, and her *simple black mantle* does not conceal the roundness of her taper waist . (LL 129; italics SS)

The sentimental ideal of dress as enhancing woman's inner beauty and sincerity comes out especially clear in the following extract in which Emily's dress is described:

*The exquisite and refined taste which always made Emily's dress an index to the soft purity of her character* was never more strikingly developed than when she wore, as on the present occasion, a flowing robe of white cashmere, fastened at the waist with a silken girdle, and with full, drapery sleeves, whose lining and border of snowy silk could have only been rivalled by the delicate hand and wrist which had escaped from beneath their [sic] folds... (LL 394; italics SS)

In the case of the self-sacrificing Mrs. Sullivan, Willie's loving mother, the simplicity of her dress seems to be especially vital:

She [Gertrude] felt that Mrs. Sullivan, attired in anything that was not *simple, neat and sober-looking*, would altogether lose her identity... (LL 47)

The reference for "losing identity" further testifies of how clearly a woman's dress and her character and personality were equated at the mid-nineteenth-century.

According to Halttunen (1982:83) a woman's face "was the most transparent area of the body...". A woman's character and feelings "were revealed in her smile, in her complexion, and especially in her eyes", and even the shape of one's nose revealed one's character. The idea of a woman's face as "a mirror of her soul" can be found in *The Lamplighter*, also. As it has been pointed out in chapter 4.1, Emily's pious and even Christ-like character shows in her "angel face" (LL 22) or "soul-illuminated face" (LL 398). The first of the two following extracts illustrates the "ideal"

female face, with small and regular features and good complexion, whereas the second extract shows how Gertrude's "transparent" face and expressions allows all her good qualities and emotions to surface:

Her [Emily's] features were small and regular; her complexion clear,... long lashes nearly swept her cheek... (LL 51)

But there are faces whose ever-varying expression one loves to watch,—*tell-tale faces, that speak the truth and proclaim the sentiment within*; faces that now light up with intelligence, now beam with mirth, now sadden at the sad tale of sorrow, now burn with a holy indignation for that which the soul abhors, and now, again, are sanctified by the divine presence, when the heart turns away from the world and itself, and looks upward in the spirit of devotion. *Such a face was Gertrude's.* (LL 129; italics SS)

The importance of eyes in mirroring a woman's character is illustrated in the following extract:

(Madam Gryseworth of Gertrude:) "... when her feelings are suddenly touched, and the tears start into her eyes, and *her whole soul shines out through them!*" (LL 290; italics SS)

Halttunen (1982:86) notes that also a woman's hairstyle was supposed, according to the sentimental ideal, to be simple and to enhance her personality, and this was the case also with the bonnet, the simple oval-shaped hat that focused the attention on the face by framing it. Both of these aspects of an "ideal" woman's appearance are illustrated in *The Lamplighter*:

... her light-brown hair was *most neatly and carefully arranged.* (LL 52; italics SS)

...  
Gerty presented herself *bonneted and equipped* for those walks...(LL 89; italics SS)

...  
... she took up *a white sun-bonnet*, the same she had worn in the morning ... (LL 217; italics SS)

In conclusion it can be stated that the cult of sincerity, which was born out of the fear of hypocrisy in the industrializing USA, is reflected also in *The Lamplighter*. Women were, according to this ideology, naturally more "transparent" and sincere than men, and this seems to be true also in *The*

*Lamplighter*, in which Gertrude is from her early childhood portrayed as sincere, a quality which seems to be especially valued in women and in men, also. According to the cult of sincerity a person's behavior was to be based on sincere feelings, and this appears to be also the view that *The Lamplighter* promotes. Gertrude's politeness is based on true feelings of the "heart", whereas Mr. Graham's, for example, is not. Throughout the story Gertrude maintains her sincerity, as in the context of Ben Bruce's proposal, which she can not accept. Moreover, Gertrude chides Ben for his having deceived Kitty and, therefore, shows her superiority. In addition to Gertrude, many other female characters seem to manifest admirable sincerity.

The emphasis on a woman's sincerity was reflected in the mid-nineteenth-century also in her appearance and behavior in general. Also in *The Lamplighter* "ideal" women dress in simple gowns and accessories, which allow their character to show. "Ideal" women are not vain but modest, and are hardly conscious of their appearance; they are the "real ladies". In addition to dress, a woman's face, her features, eyes and expressions, were believed to mirror her "soul", and this applies also to *The Lamplighter*, a fact of which Emily's "soul-illuminated face" and Gertrude's "tell-tale" face, for example, stand as evidence.

#### **4.5 Intelligence**

Welter (1966:154,166) points out that in the mid-nineteenth-century USA women "were warned not to let their literary or intellectual pursuits to take them away from God", woman's duty being to "bring men back to God". As it has been pointed out above on p.34, women's education was in the nineteenth-century based on the utilitarian idea that women, as mothers and the guardians of the nation's morality, needed to be educated (Cott 1977:120). As Coontz (1988:222-3) points out, women were not believed to have the mental or physical capacities a thorough education demanded. Dr. Charles Meigs, who taught gynecology to future doctors, for example, stated in 1847 that woman "has a head almost too small for intellect and just big enough for love". Women were usually equalled with "the heart", whereas

men with "the head": the reason and the intellect. As Cott (1977:115-7) notes, women were only rarely taught "intellectually demanding" subjects, they being considered unnecessary and too difficult for them.

As to the question of women's intellect and education *The Lamplighter* seems to offer a somewhat radical view. In Gertrude, who becomes an "ideal" woman seems to be no less intelligent and clever than boys or men, in general, as the two following extracts concerning Gertrude's studies show:

She had been to school steadily all winter, and *had moved as rapidly as most intelligent children do*, who are first given the opportunity to learn at an age when, full of ambition, the mind is most fertile and capable of progress. (LL 65-6; italics SS)

To his surprise, however, she not only discovered a wonderful determination, but *a decided talent for language*; and, as Emily furnished her with books similar to Willie's, *she kept pace with him, oftentimes translating more during the week than he could find time to do*. (LL 72; italics SS)

Furthermore, in addition to her success in language studies, Gertrude progresses quickly in her reading skills, even to the extent that she has become a better reader than adults generally are:

... the little girl had attained to a greater degree of excellence in this accomplishment than is common among grown people. She read understandingly, and her accent and intonations were so admirable, that Emily found rare pleasure in listening to her. (LL 70)

Gertrude's reading skills are praised in many occasions in the novel, for example in the occasion in which Emily and Fanny enjoy listening to Gertrude reading Hamlet aloud (LL 194) and in the scene mentioned above (p. 36) in which Kitty and Isabel, whose education has probably been poor, are incapable of reading a newspaper aloud to Mr. Graham understandably and Gertrude has to be called for (LL 209).

In addition to languages and reading Gertrude is taught by Emily, who is her new "surrogate mother" and teacher (see chapter 6. below), subjects that "stretch" her intellectual capacity, a view that seems to be quite modern:

Emily, in her choice of books, did not confine herself to such as come strictly within a child's comprehension. *She judged, rightly,*

*that a girl of such keen intelligence as Gerty was naturally endowed with would suffer nothing by occasionally encountering what was beyond her comprehension; but, that, on the contrary, the very effort she would be called upon to make would enlarge her capacity, to be incentive for her genius.* So history, biography, and books of travels, were perused by Gerty at an age when most children's literary pursuits are confined to stories and pictures. (LL 70; italics SS)

Moreover, Gertrude herself seems to enjoy the most books that require her to make intellectual efforts:

Her special favorite was *a little work on astronomy*, which puzzled her more than all the rest put together, but which delighted her in the same proportion; for it made some things clear, and all the rest, though a mystery still, was to her *a beautiful mystery, and one which she fully meant some time to explore to the uttermost.* (LL 71; italics SS)

However, also according to *The Lamplighter* "the heart" must not be forgotten: "the head", one's intellectual capacities, and "the heart", one's feelings, are shown to be both equally important. Furthermore, intellectual pursuits are shown to be almost useless and very hard without the ambition that rises from one's feelings:

*Awaken a child's ambition*, and implant in her a taste for literature, and more is gained than by years of school-room drudgery, where *the heart works not in unison with the head.* (LL 71; italics SS)

Also the following extract illustrates the view presented in the novel that both intellectuality as well as virtuous character are important for the "ideal" woman:

(Willie of Gertrude:) "... the excellent teacher, Miss Browne,...I overheard her commenting to a lady upon *Gertrude's wonderful promise in person as well as mind.* (LL 359; italics SS)

Anyhow, it is interesting to note that the word "ambition" is used in the context of Gertrude's studies because intellectual ambitions were not usually encouraged in women. Instead, they were often seen as a threat to the "domestic dream" (Welter 1966:166). The novel actually seems to promote a view that the possibility to be *independent* is important for a young woman: the object of Gertrude's education is, according to Emily "to make

her independent of all the world” (LL 140), a view that seems to be quite radical.

Gertrude seems to gain respect from the people around her because of her intellectual capacities, among her other qualities. She is valued and respected in her work as a teacher and is able to live independently, to earn her own living (see above p. 57), and what seems to be important, also men, both young and old, appreciate her abilities. Willie, for example, praises Gertrude’s ”cultivated mind” and her ”aristocracy of true refinement, knowledge” (LL 358). Furthermore, Mr. Graham thinks that Gertrude is ”a smart girl” and ”an intelligent girl” (LL 108) and enjoys listening to Gertrude reading aloud (see the extract on p.36). Even in the company of educated older men, including her friend Dr. Jeremy, Gertrude gains respect and enjoys the conversation in which she does not appear to be inferior:

... and Gertrude, who always got on famously with elderly men, and whom the doctor loved dearly to draw out, contributed not a little to the mirth and good-humor of the company by *her playful and amusing sallies, and the quickness of repartee* with which she responded to the adroit, puzzling, and sometimes ironical questions and jokes of *an old-bachelor physician, who, from the first, took woderful fancy to her.* (LL 256; italics SS)

*In the circle of high-bred, polished, literary and talented persons whom Madam Gryseworth drew about her, and into which Dr. Jeremy’s party were at once admitted as honored members, Gertrude found much that was congenial to her cultivated and superior taste, and she herself soon came to be appreciated and admired as she deserved.* (LL 286; italics SS)

In the same way as the other admirable qualities of Gertrude, also her intelligence shows in her appearance: she has ”large, intelligent eyes” (LL 359) and her face occasionally ”lights up with intelligence” (LL 129).

Furthermore, Gertrude’s best female friends, Emily and the Miss Gryseworths, seem to equally intelligent. It is stated that Emily, for example, is ”fond of books”, and has been ”an excellent student” (LL 316-7). The Miss Gryseworths, Netta and Ellen, the daughters of Dr. Gryseworth



whom Gertrude meets and befriends during her and her friends' journey, are "intelligent-looking girls" (LL 262), intelligence being the quality that pleases Gertrude especially, in addition to their sincerity and cordiality (see above p. 89). It is also implied that Emily and Gertrude had other "intelligent" friends, with whom they, for example, go and attend lectures:

... in their intercourse with a small but intelligent circle of friends... they read, walked and communed... attended lectures, concerts, and galleries of art. (LL 253)

Gertrude seems also to enjoy and know a lot about art, as the following extract reveals:

...Gertrude, with glowing eyes and a face radiant with enthusiasm, described with minuteness and accuracy the subject of the pieces, the manner in which the artist had expressed in his work the original conception of his mind... (LL 253)

In addition to her intellectual abilities, Gertrude does not appear to embody the physically delicate and passive female ideal of the time (Halttunen 1982:79): she is described as "bright, erect, and strong with youth and health" and as "a fit protector" for Emily (LL 261). As a proof of Gertrude's physical abilities can be mentioned the fact that she, urged by her friend Dr. Jeremy, becomes "skillful in the use of reins" (LL 125), in other words, she learns to drive a carriage well, a skill that is described as "not always particularly desirable in a lady" (LL 125). This accomplishment, however, brings happiness to the lives of both herself and the "invalid" Emily, who declares that "Gertrude's learning to drive had proved one of the greatest sources of happiness she had known for years" (LL126).

To summarize this chapter it can be stated that *The Lamplighter* seems to present a view of women's intellectuality that would have probably been considered somewhat radical in the nineteenth century USA. In the novel Gertrude, the "ideal" girl (and later woman), is described as no less intelligent than the male characters, she proceeds quickly and successfully in her studies and even gains respect from the men around her on the grounds of her intellectual abilities and skills. She enjoys the company of her equally intelligent, as it appears, female friends, with whom she reads and goes to

attend lectures, for example. Also, her intelligence shows in her appearance, as her other good qualities. Moreover, Gertrude seems to be physically strong and capable, whereas the female ideal of the time was delicate and passive.

#### 4.5 Marriage and domesticity

In the preceding chapter it has been shown that *The Lamplighter* presents quite a radical view of the "ideal" woman's intellectual abilities. In this chapter, *domesticity*, the central quality of a True Woman (Welter 1966:162), the mid-nineteenth-century American female ideal will be taken under special scrutiny.

Although *The Lamplighter* seems to appreciate a woman's intellectuality to a great extent, and although it is demonstrated in the novel that a woman can earn her own living, if she has the qualities for it as Gertrude, for example, has for being a good teacher and Patty Pace for being a popular upholsterer, marriage and domesticity seem to be the ultimate goals and even rewards of the ideal women in the novel. Furthermore, the most important functions and duties of the "ideal" woman are connected with marriage and domesticity.

In *The Lamplighter* marriage is above all portrayed as a kind of *ultimate reward* that the heroine and the ideal woman, Gertrude, gets at the end. The following extract is from a scene in which all the misunderstandings between Gertrude and Willie are cleared, and the reader is told that the care of Willie is going to be transferred from the "spirit" of Willie's mother to Gertrude, his future wife, who, in this way, gets her reward for all her virtues and good deeds in life:

... who [Gertrude] by long and patient continuance in well-doing, had earned so full a recompense, so *all-sufficient a reward*.. (LL 410-11; italics SS)

Also, Mr. Clinton's, Willie's employer and Isabel's father's, line at the end of the book (see also above p.82) illustrates the view of marriage as a reward for the "ideal" woman:

”... that the noble and self-sacrificing girl, whom I have no words to thank, and no power to repay, has reped *worthy a reward* in the love of one of the few men with whom a fond father may venture to trust the happiness of his child.” (LL 418; italics SS)

Also Kitty Ray who is ”educated” by Emily and Gertrude gets her reward in the form of a good husband. In addition to getting a good husband, she becomes immediately a mother, namely to the little orphan girl Gracie, who is her husband’s niece (see also p.122):

Kitty... explained to Gertrude ...that *she was engaged*,—had been engaged for a week, *to the best man in the world*...

”... I was so vain and silly, you know, and liked folks that were not worth liking, and did n’t care much for anybody’s comfort but my own; and *if you had n’t taught me to be something better than that*, and set me a good example, which I’ve tried to follow ever since, *he never would have thought of looking at me, much less loving me*, and believing I should be a fit mother for little Gracie...” (LL 414-5; italics SS)

According to Mussell (1981:xi-xiii) *The Lamplighter* is the best example of the nineteenth-century ”romantic novel” in which the basic assumption is from the start that the ”necessary, preordained, and basic goal for any woman is to achieve a satisfying, mature, and all-fulfilling marriage.” Mussell also shares the view presented above by stating that ”the novel confirms her [Gertrude’s] virtue at the end by allowing her to marry the young hero...”. Also, Dobson (1986:225-6) mentions that the heroines in the mid-nineteenth-century women’s novels usually get their reward at the end in the form of marriage and the ”opportunity to retire from the larger arena of the world, where she has proven herself so very succesful, and to dedicate all her impressive energies to the service of one... individual.”. Dobson states the heroine thus progresses ”from individuality to self-renunciation, from energy to stasis”, this ”progress” reflecting the pattern of living and aspiration that social authority prescribed for women . This description and analysis of Dobson of the mid-nineteenth-century women’s novels seems to apply to *The Lamplighter* quite well. Both Gertrude and Emily, the second heroine, ”retire” from the world to their domestic idylls which are described almost as a part of nature, far from ”the world”. It is to be noted that the

following descriptions of the two domestic idylls are the last scenes of the novel:

It was indeed a glorious night... Leaning on Willie's shoulder, Gertrude stood gazing until the full circle was visible in a space of clear and cloudless ether. Neither of them spoke, but their hearts throbbed with the same emotion... Willie, glancing round the well-lit, warm and pleasantly-furnished parlor of his own and Gertrude's home, and resting his eyes, at last, upon the beloved one by his side, whose beaming face but reflected back his own happiness... (LL 419)

And when the grass turned green, and the flowers sent up their fragrance, and the birds sang in the branches, and the spring gales blew soft and made a gentle ripple on the water, Emily came to live on the hill-side with Philip... (LL 420)

In these domestic idylls the woman's task is also in *The Lamplighter* to bring men to God and to keep them there, a view totally consistent with the cult of domesticity and the cult of True Womanhood (see above pp. 6 and 38, for example). In the case of Gertrude and Willie, it is implied that Gertrude will continue Willie's mother's, Mrs. Sullivan's, work in looking after and taking care of Willie and his morality:

... and that the soul of the gentle mother...who, by the lessons she had given her child in his boyhood, the warnings spoken to him in his later years, and the ministering guidance of her disembodied spirit, had fitted him for the struggle with the temptations, sustained him through its trials, and *restored him triumphant to the sweet friend of his infancy*,—who shall say that, even now, she hovered not over them with parted wings, realizing the joy prefigured in that dreamy vision which pictured to her sight the union between the son and daughter of her love, when the one, shielded from every danger, and snatched from the power of temptation, *should be restored to the arms of the other*, who, by long and patient continuance in well-doing... (LL 410-11; italics SS)

In the case of Emily and his beloved Philip, Emily's "function" is even more clearly to bring the much-suffered and disillusioned Philip "back to God", a task in which she obviously succeeds:

And is the long-wandering, much-suffering, and deeply-sorrowing exile happy now? He is; but his peace springs not from his beautiful home, his wide possessions, an honorable repute among his fellow-men, or even the love of the gentle Emily.

All these are blessings that he well knows how to prize; but *his world-tried soul has found a deeper anchor yet,—a surer refuge from the tempest and the storm; for, through the power of a living faith, he has laid hold on eternal life. The blind girl's prayers are answered; her last, best work is done; she has cast a ray from her blessed spirit into his darkened soul;* and, should her call to depart soon come, she will leave behind one to follow in her footsteps, fulfill her charities, and do good on earth, until such time as he be summoned to join her again in heaven. (LL 421; italics SS)

In the latter extract it is implied that Emily is now ready to die because her mission has been carried out, Philip has found religion. In this sense the scene reminds the reader of the scene in which Mrs. Sullivan feels ready to die, because she feels sure that her mission: guiding her son Willie has been (and will be) accomplished (see above pp. 48 and 70). These two scenes clearly illustrate the belief that a woman's primary task and function in life was to take care of the morality of men, of the morality of their sons and husbands.

As it has been stated above, the domestic idyll of home seems to be also in *The Lamplighter* the ideal location in which a woman can carry out her mission of taking care of the men's morality. According to Welter (1966:162-172) "True Women" women were expected to be "naturally" home-loving and to know how to keep house and carry out different domestic tasks. These ideas of women as "domestic creatures" come out also in *The Lamplighter* rather clearly. In the novel "ideal" women always prefer domestic tranquillity to "the world". The peacefulness and tranquillity of Emily's and Gertrude's room, for example, is constantly contrasted in the novel to the "gay company" that is often entertained in the parlor by Mrs. Graham and her nieces:

A bright wood-fire burned upon the hearth; a couch was drawn up beside it, on which Emily was sitting; and Gertrude's little rocking-chair occupied the opposite corner.. the perfect neatness and order in the apartment, the placid, beautiful face of Emily, and the radiant expression of Gertrude's countenance... *proved such a charming contrast to the scenes presented in the other parts of the house...* (LL 249; italics SS)

Baym (1995:xxiv) notes that "in Mrs. Graham's parlor, the home is becoming an outpost of the world and thereby losing all its moral force". The heroines, instead, have not lost their morality: Emily, who usually gets a headache from loud voices and excitement, and also Gertrude always prefer their "cosy" room to the parlor in which company is entertained:

In the parlor there was company from the city... it contrasted with the peace of the quiet room...

"You had better go down, Gertrude," said Emily; "they appear to be enjoying themselves..."

"O, no, dear Emily!" said Gertrude; "I prefer to stay with you; they are nearly all strangers to me."

"As you please, my dear; but don't let me keep you from the young people."

"You can never keep me with you, dear Emily, longer than I wish to stay; there is no society I love so well." And so she staid [sic], and they resumed their pleasant conversation, which, though harmonious and calm, was not without its playfulness and occasional gleams of wit. (LL196)

Moreover, as it will be pointed out in chapter 6., Emily's and Gertrude's quiet room is the exact location where Gertrude's and later Kitty's moral education takes place. In addition to Emily and Gertrude, also Mrs. Jeremy, the friendly wife of Dr. Jeremy prefers staying at home to everything else:

... his wife [Mrs. Jeremy] , too, loved home so much better than any other place, that she was loth to start for parts unknown... (LL 255)

Besides being home-loving in general, the "ideal" women in the novel always take care of the neatness of the house. Gertrude, for example, learns to be "quite a clever little housekeeper" (LL 27), a fact that brings happiness to the people she takes care of during the story. Moreover, Mrs. Sullivan, who teaches Gertrude how to "keep house", actually equals neatness in the house with a person's *inward peace*:

Now, Mrs. Sullivan was the soul of neatness. Her rooms were like wax-work... No one could meet her old father, or her young son, even in their working dress, without perceiving at once the evidence of a careful daughter and mother's handiwork... *She really pitied those whose home was such a mass of confusion; felt sure that they could not be happy; and inwardly determined, as soon as Gerty got well, to exert herself in the cause of cleanliness and order, which was in her eyes the cause of virtue and happiness,*

*so completely did she identify outward neatness and purity with inward peace.* (LL 25; italics SS)

True's statement after Gertrude has (with the help of Mrs. Sullivan) cleaned up his messy apartment and prepared him a meal illustrates well the view that women "make homes complete and men happy:

"Mrs. Sullivan's a clever woman, sartain, and *they've made my old house here complete*, and Gertry's gettin' to be like the apple of my eye, and *I'm as happy a man as—*" (LL 28; italics SS)

In Willie's justifications to Philip Amory concerning his decision to marry Gertrude, who has no money or status, it comes out clearly that the "ideal" woman was associated with the home, as its "presiding spirit":

"... the thought of a *peaceful, happy home, blessed by a presiding spirit* so formed for confidence, love, and a communion that time can never dissolve..." (LL 359; italics SS)

As it has been pointed out above on p.39, true spiritual love was ideally to be the basis of a marriage at the mid-nineteenth-century USA (Seidman 1991:60). However, as Cott (1977:76-7) observes, many women (and men) married for economic reasons. These marriages were often condemned in public, and this is the case also with *The Lamplighter*, as it has been shown above on pp. 39-40. The belief that true love should be the basis for marriage comes out clearly in the novel. Kelley (1984:271; emphasis added) points out that in the works of the literary domestics wives and husbands "were wedded in *mutual respect* and perfect harmony". These issues of *respect* and *mutuality* are significant in "true love" in the novel. Gertrude, for example, can not accept Mr. Bruce's proposal because she does not respect or love him (see above p.89), and she teaches Kitty how important respect is in love:

(Gertrude to Kitty:)"...you will soon cease to care for a person whom you no longer *respect*." (LL 238; italics SS)

In the case of Willie and Gertrude, for example, Willie's respect and love for Gertrude is strengthened by her self-sacrificing service at his mother's and

grandfather's home during their illnesses, as the following extract of Willie's letter reveals:

The three closely-written pages were almost wholly devoted to the fervent and earnest expressions of gratitude to Gertrude for the active kindness and love which had cheered and comforted the last days of his much-regretted friends. He prayed that Heaven would bless her, and reward her disinterested and self-denying efforts, and closed with saying, "You are all there is left to me, Gertrude. *If I loved you before, my heart is now bound to you by ties stronger than those of earth*; my hopes, my labors, my prayers, all are for you. God grant we may some day meet again!" (LL 201; italics SS)

The importance of mutual affection is illustrated in the following extract:

And now, with heart pressed to heart, they pour in each other's ear the tale of *a mutual affection*, planted in infancy, nourished in youth, fostered and strengthened amid separation and absence, and *perfected through trial*, to bless and sanctify every year of their after life." (LL 409; italics SS)

Also, in the previous extract the Victorian belief in the perfecting function of life's trials comes out again (see also pp.77 and 84); this time it is love that is perfected through separations and misunderstandings. Mutual respect and love being the ideal basis for love and marriage, the ideal marriage of *The Lamplighter* appears to be quite equal. However, as the heroines of the novel, Gertrude and Emily, do not get married until at the end of the novel, there is actually no description of the everyday reality of the ideal marriage. There is, however, one married couple in the novel whose marriage is portrayed in a positive light: the Jeremys. The Jeremys, who are described as "the warm-hearted couple" (LL 175) always speak in a very warm and spontaneous way to each other:

"Come, wife," said the doctor, checking himself in his merriment; "don't you forestall my communication. I want to tell the story myself. I don't suppose," continued he, turning towards Gertrude, "you've lived five years at Mr. Graham's, without finding out what a cantankerous, opinionative, obstinate hulk he is?" "Doctor!" said Mrs. Jeremy, reprovingly, and shaking her head at him.

...

"Well, you ought to have known better, Dr. Jerry," said his kind-hearted wife, "then to have attacked a man so on his weak point.." (LL 154-7)



Although true love and respect are, according to *The Lamplighter*, to be the basis for marriage, the *marriage proposal* itself is described as "the highest honor" a woman can be paid:

She felt, as every *true woman* must under similar consequences, that her gratitude and consideration were due to the man who, however little she might esteem him, had paid her *the highest honor*... (LL 233; italics SS)

It is also interesting to see the expression "true woman" in the extract: this expression further testifies of the existence of a certain female ideal in the mind of the author. The expression is also the same that Welter (1966) uses in her article of ideal womanhood. In addition, the idea of "the highest honor" can also be taken as a further proof of the great importance of marriage in the mid-nineteenth-century United States and also in *The Lamplighter*.

To sum up the facts and ideas presented in this chapter it could be said that the theme of domesticity is very central in *The Lamplighter*. Marriage seems to be in *The Lamplighter* the ultimate reward for an "ideal" woman, although it may not be the only possible choice. Moreover, as the cult of domesticity "prescribed", a woman's (wife's and mother's) primary function in the novel seems to be "bringing men back to God", taking care of their morality and virtue. Marriage seems to enable the "ideal" women, Gertrude and Emily, to "retire" from the world to their domestic idylls, which are described in a glorifying tone at end the novel. In addition, "ideal" women in the novel take care of the neatness in the house and are, in general, home and peace-loving. Furthermore, mutual love and respect are shown in the novel to be the basis of a good marriage, whereas "commercial marriages" are despised. However important love and respect are shown to be in the making of the marriage decision, the marriage proposal itself is depicted as "the highest honor" a woman can be paid, a fact that further testifies of the importance to marriage at the time.

To summarize all the qualities of the ideal woman in *The Lamplighter*, it can be stated that *piety*, one of the four main qualities of a True Woman, appears to be essential also for the "ideal" woman in the novel. However, the novel seems to promote a view that submission to God's will is more a matter of personal choice and strategy than something innate in women, although the typical analogy of the period between Christ and the "ideal" woman comes out also in the novel. Furthermore, the "ideal" women in the novel do not need the help of masculine clerical institutions to "find God", and, moreover, they may even find strength in their faith in a way that helps them to resist unjust male authority.

*Duty* and *self-sacrifice* are qualities of the "ideal" woman that reflect her piety, her inner moral principles. A woman's sense of duty rises from her values and moral principles that guide her behavior, and the duties that are important to her surpass everything else, including her willingness to submit to a man's will. In order to perform the often demanding duties, the "ideal" woman needs to be self-sacrificing, a quality that is shown to be actually beneficial to her because in the novel self-sacrificing women get their reward sooner or later, for example in the form of a man's love.

*Self-control*, which was in general greatly valued in the Victorian era and believed to be "naturally" a female quality, seems to be in *The Lamplighter* more like a practical necessity, in the same way as the submission to God's will. In the novel "ideal" women have to learn self-control to solve the troubles in their lives. Self-control, in the same way as submission to God is not shown to be innate in women, contrary to the ideas of the cult of domesticity. A woman's self-control is tested in various trials, which are, in general, portrayed as occasions to perfect one's character, a typical Victorian idea. However successfully the "ideal" woman manages to control her emotions and behavior, this rigid self-control seems to take its toll on her physical and mental well-being: she may "disguise" her feelings in the form of physical symptoms, for example. As to the question of sexual self-control and *purity* (one of the qualities of a True Woman), the novel

seems to more or less avoid these subjects. The nonexistence of references to sexuality, however, creates an impression of sexual purity.

*Sincerity*, a quality greatly valued in the rapidly urbanizing mid-nineteenth-century USA, is one of the most important qualities of the "ideal" woman in the novel, a fact that reflects the idea of women as naturally "transparent" and sincere. In *The Lamplighter* a woman's sincerity is reflected in her behavior towards others, which must always be based on sincere feelings, and also in her simple and modest appearance that allows her ideal character to show. Even her features, especially eyes, reveal her character.

As to the "ideal" woman's *intelligence*, which was seen at the time as a threat to women's domestic functions, the novel seems to offer quite a radical view. Gertrude, an "ideal" woman in the novel, is portrayed as no less intelligent than males, and she is actually respected by men because of her intellectual abilities. Moreover, she can earn her own living for example by teaching and thus be independent. The "ideal" woman in the novel enjoys the company of her equally intellectual friends, and also her intelligence, in the same way as her other qualities, is reflected in her appearance. Furthermore, she appears to be physically strong and capable, a quality that was not the prevailing feminine ideal of the time.

Although a woman's intelligence and her ability to support herself is valued greatly in the novel, *marriage* appears to be her ultimate reward and goal. Marriage enables the "ideal" woman to retire to her domestic "idyll", away from "the world", and her most important function, taking care of her husband's (and possibly son's) piety and morality, is carried out at home, a view consistent with the cults of domesticity and True Womanhood. Furthermore, the "ideal" woman in the novel always takes care of the neatness in the house and prefers to stay in her peaceful home; she does not enjoy being in "the gay company". In short, she is "the presiding spirit" (LL 359) in the home; *domesticity* is characteristic of her. As to the basis of marriage, mutual love and respect are shown to be vital, as the popular ideology of the time also prescribed. In love, as in other areas of life,

separations and trials in general can only "perfect" the feeling. There is hardly any description of the everyday reality of the ideal marriage and of the roles of a wife and a husband because both of the heroines do not get married until the end of the novel. However, the basis of marriage seems to be more or less equal, mutual love and respect being the basis. In addition, also the fact that the marriage proposal is described as "the highest honor" (LL 233) to a woman shows how central marriage was seen to be.

It must be noted that in general *The Lamplighter* seems to promote the view that men should have the same "ideal" qualities as the women have: submission to God, self-sacrifice, self-control and sincerity, for example. In many occasions in the novel women are, in general, shown to be superior to men in these areas, although there are male characters in the novel who have some or all of these qualities (for example Willie). Consequently, it could be stated that the mid-nineteenth-century domestic idea of women's moral superiority (see above pp. 6-7) shows in *The Lamplighter*.

In this chapter the qualities and functions of the "ideal" woman have been studied and it has been shown that her ultimate and the most important function in the novel is to take care of the men's morality. In the next chapter two different types of women are presented that are in many respects almost total opposites of the "ideal" woman and seem to act as warning examples in the novel.

## **5. THE WARNING EXAMPLES: THE "IGNORANT" AND THE "BELLE"**

Baym (1978:28) notes that in the works of the mid-nineteenth-century American female writers the more or less virtuous heroine is contrasted to two other feminine types: "the passive woman", who is "incompetent, ignorant, cowed, emotionally and intellectually underdeveloped" and the "modern" woman, the so-called "belle", who has given herself to the marketplace values.

Both these two types seem to exist in *The Lamplighter* although "the passive woman", Nan Grant, is in this case more ignorant and ill-natured than actually passive. Nan Grant, Gertrude's guardian at the beginning of the novel, is described as a "vixen, virago, scold, or anything else that conveys the same idea" (LL 49). As one can conclude from these "nicknames", Nan's greatest fault is in her bad temper: she is constantly fighting with someone:

"Yes," said Gerty, "that's Nan."

"What's she doing?"

"O, she's fighting with Miss Birch; she does most [sic] always with somebody..." (LL 49)

Nan also treats Gertrude in a violent and brutal way:

At this moment Nan Grant came to the door, saw what had happened, and commenced pulling the child into the house, amidst *blows, threats and profane and brutal language...* Gerty was *scolded, beaten, deprived of the crust* which she usually got for her supper, and *shut up in her dark attic for the night.* (LL 3; italics SS)

In general, Nan does not know how to raise children: she does not send Gertrude to school and does not try to find her anything to do and even her motives of taking care of Gertrude seem quite obscure. Nan's behavior towards Gertrude is described in more detail above in chapter 3.1.1. At the end of chapter II some light is shed on Nan's background, and the reader is told that her husband Ben has been at sea for many years, having fled his coarse and violent wife, and that Stephen, her son, is as ill-natured as Nan and, moreover, deceitful even towards his mother:

Nan was a Scotchwoman, no longer young, and with a temper which, never good, became worse and worse as she grew older... Her husband was a carpenter by trade; but *she had made his home so uncomfortable, that for years he had followed the sea...* she earned what might have been an ample support for herself, had it not been for *her son, an unruly, disorderly young man, spoilt in early life by his mother's uneven temperament and management,* and who, though a skilful workman when he chose to be industrious, *always squandered his own and a large part of his mother's earnings.* (LL 9; italics SS)

When Philip (Gertrude's father) tells Gertrude the story of his life, Gertrude finds out that Stephen Grant, Nan's son, has tried to rob and kill him during his journey to California. It appears that due to her horrible temperament, Nan has failed in all the important tasks of a woman: her husband does not want to be at home, her son has become a criminal due to his mother's improper upbringing and example, and, in addition, also Gertrude has become bad-tempered, a trait that she must learn to overcome to become "ideal". As Baym (1995:xxi) points out, Nan's "ideological function" in the novel appears to be exactly "to justify the argument that temperament must be controlled".

As to the "belle", especially Isabel and also her aunt (Mrs. Graham) seem to be perfect examples of this type of woman. As Kelley (1984:313-4) observes, and as it has been pointed out above on pages 87 and 90, the mid-nineteenth-century domestic writers "derided the nouveau riche who aped the fashionable life of aristocratic Europe". Especially the "woman of fashion was to be condemned because she gave the lie to the moral justification of the woman's being". She stood as evidence that women were in fact narcissistic and pampered and led lives that were idle, unproductive, and without redeeming value, that women were simply men's playthings. As Halttunen (1982:67-9) notes and as it has already been pointed out above in chapter 4.4, the cult of sincerity in the 1840s and 1850s condemned "artificial", fashionable manners and looks because they were not "sincere". Women of fashion, "the painted women", were seen as especially dangerous because they were believed to exercise "an incalculable influence over the manners of an entire age".

In the novel Isabel is probably the best example of "the belle", which is actually also her nickname. The expression "vain daughters of fashion" is also used in the novel (eg. LL 202) of her kind of women. Isabel's character seems to be almost a total opposite to Gertrude's "ideal" character. She is "dreadfully selfish" (LL 228), as Kitty describes her, and she firmly believes that she is superior to all others:

*An appearance of conscious superiority which distinguished her, and the independent air with which she tapped against the doorstep with her little foot, might safely be attributed, then, to her conviction that Belle Clinton, the beauty and the heiress, was looking vastly well... (LL 188; italics SS)*

As has been pointed out above on p.24, Isabel has become what she is because of the improper upbringing under the care of servants and later of her aunt. Belle's selfishness is reflected in her behavior towards other: she often makes nasty remarks of the people she does not like, for example of Gertrude and Emily, and she easily feels jealous if someone else is getting the attention instead of herself. For example, jealous of the bond between Gertrude and Willie and of the friendship between Gertrude and Kitty, she makes Mrs. Graham believe that Gertrude, whose "ideal" character she has always hated, had destroyed Kitty's and Ben Bruce's friendship:

*Little did Gertrude imagine, while she was striving most disinterestedly to promote the welfare and happiness of Kitty, who had thrown herself upon her love and care, the jealousy and ill-will she was exciting in others. Isabel, who had never liked one whose whose tone of action and life was a continual reproach to her own vanity and selfishness, and who saw in her the additional crime of being the favorite of a youth of whose boyhood she herself retained a sentimental recollection, was ready and eager to seize the earliest opportunity of rendering her odious in the eyes of Mrs. Graham... her resentment and anger excited still further by the growing friendship of which her own coldness and unkindness to Kitty served only to strengthen and confirm, she hastened to communicate to Mrs. Graham her suspicion that Gertrude had, for purposes of her own, made a difficulty between Bruce and Kitty.... (LL 241; italics SS)*

Isabel and her aunt, who also feels jealous of the attention Emily gets from her father, league together and plot against Emily and Gertrude (see above p.26): they, for example, make them sleep in the same room and tell the servants to ignore their wishes. Being so selfish, Isabel cannot understand true devotion and self-sacrifice at all as the following extract, in which Kitty and Isabel see Gertrude on the street with old and sick True, shows:

*"She's got handsome eyes," answered Belle. "I don't see anything else that looks interesting about her. I wonder, if she don't hate to have to walk in the street with that old grandfather; trudging along*

so slow, with the sun shining right in her face, and her leaning on her arm, and shaking so he can hardly stand on his feet! *I would't do it for anything.*" (LL 87; italics SS)

It is revealed later on in the book that Isabel has even left her sick father in the care of a hired nurse and gone herself to enjoy the "gay company", which is the kind of behavior that Willie cannot understand or accept:

...her [Isabel's] excellent father...was, at that very time, amid all the noise and discomfort of a crowded watering-place, hovering between life and death, and *I was disgusted at the heartlessness which voluntarily left the fondest of parents deprived of all female tending* to the charge of a hired nurse, and an unskillful though willing youth like myself. (LL 408-9; italics SS)

The fear of fashionable life as the destroyer of women's "natural" qualities and domestic functions is further illustrated in the following quotations from Willie's lines:

"It was only gradually that I recovered from the dazzling, blinding effect which the glitter and show of Fashion imposed upon the clearness of my perceptions. My suspicions of its falsehood and vanity were based upon instances of selfishness, folly and cold-heartedness, which, one after another, came to my knowledge... *Especially I was astonished at the effect of an uninterrupted pursuit of pleasure upon the sensibilities, the tempers, and the domestic affections, of women...*" (LL 357-8; italics SS)

Also "the siren" in Mrs. Sullivan's dream (see the extract on p.48) is a good example of a fashionable woman despised in the novel. Instead of taking care of one's parents, spouse and friends, the "belles" in the novel always prefer to be in the company of other people like herself. For example, Widow Holbrook, who becomes the new Mrs. Graham, is told to be "the greatest hand for company that I ever saw" (LL 181), a circumstance that brings troubles for his husband's as well as other peace-loving people's lives. Mr. Graham is said to like "a quiet life" and it is stated that, having married widow Holbrook, "he's lost his chance of that,—poor man!.." (LL 181) Furthermore, the new Mrs. Graham does not seem to have a clue of how to keep house, a circumstance of which especially the servants have to suffer (see pp. 59-60 above). Isabel, Mrs. Graham's niece, seems also to be totally addicted to being surrounded by people admiring her: "Isabel, who



could neither endure with patience excessive heat or want of society, grew more irritable and fretful than ever” (LL 223). She is always delighted if there is a possibility to “show off” her beauty: “The prospect of a gay assembly and an opportunity for display revived Isabel’s drooping spirits and energy.” (LL 228). Moreover, being so vain, she enjoys tremendously the flatteries she receives:

... a gay group of fashionables made their appearance, talking and laughing too loud, as it seemed to Gertrude, to be well-bred; and conspicuous among them was Miss Clinton, whose companions were evidently making her the subject of a great deal of wit and pleasantry, by which, although she feigned to be teased and half-offended, she smiling, blushing face gave evidence that she felt flattered and pleased. (LL 322)

The company that Mrs. Graham and Isabel entertain in the parlor of the Graham’s mansion is many times contrasted to the domestic and peaceful atmosphere of Gertrude and Emily’s room (see above p. 101), and only when Mrs. Graham and her niece are not at home is there a peace again:

... the repose and seclusion of his household is rendered complete and secure by the temporary absence of its bustling, excitable mistress, whom he has left behind him in New York... Emily and Gertrude, too, are closely associated with those good old times... he shall see them at dinner; a cosy, comfortable dinner,... which no noisy, intruding upstarts will venture to interrupt or disturb. (LL 331)

In addition to all their other negative qualities, Isabel and her aunt have no self-control: they are easily irritable, coarse and loud. Mrs. Graham, for example, is said to be “a coarse, noisy, dashing person” (LL 179) and she has “abrupt manner and loud tones” (LL 331). Isabel, whom Willie criticizes, among other things, of “ill-concealed petulance” (LL 410) gets offended very easily, and also shows it, as the following examples show: “...but it would not do to joke with Belle any longer; she was seriously offended, and took no pains to conceal the fact” (LL 193). In an incident in which Isabel has, for example, taken Gertrude’s tasteful hat without permission, believing it to be Emily’s, and made fun of Gertrude’s “bad taste”, she gets humiliated by Fanny, who takes Gertrude’s hat from her and

reveals the truth. Isabel, who cannot stand being embarrassed in the eyes of her admirers, gets mad at Fanny:

Belle's eyes flashed angrily. "What do you mean?" said she, "you saucy little creature! Give me that hat,"... A few moments of embarrassment and anger to Belle... Belle did not recover her temper for the evening.... (LL 221-2)

The selfishness, vanity and proudness of Isabel and her aunt is also reflected in their appearance, in the same way the positive qualities of Gertrude and Emily are in their looks. Whereas Gertrude and Emily dress in simple and modest dresses, which are of good taste and allow their character to show, the "belles" enjoy the attention they get by wearing showy dresses. Widow Holbrook (the new Mrs. Graham) "dresses up a good deal" (LL 167) and is described as "a handsome, showy woman" (LL 179). Isabel, who has "learned to appreciate at more than their true value the outward attractions she possessed" (LL 188), is said to be "a showily-dressed young lady" (LL 292), and she has "a coquettish desire to display and unusually fine head of hair" (LL 129). Furthermore, contrary to Gertrude, Isabel is not very intelligent; she is said to be "mentally rather obtuse" (LL 250).

In the end of the book Isabel gets what she deserves, in a way, because Willie loves the "ideal" Gertrude and not the selfish Isabel. The following extract of Willie's lines to Gertrude explain his choice:

"...Had Isabel possessed the beauty of a Venus and the wisdom of a Minerva, I could not have forgotten *how little happiness there could be with one who, while devoting herself to the pursuit of pleasure, had become dead to the holiest of duties*. Could I see her flee from the bed-side of her father to engage in the frivolities and drink in the flatteries of an idle crowd,—or, when unwillingly summoned thither, shrink from the toils and the watchings imposed by his feebleness,—and still imagine that such a woman could bless and adorn a fireside? *Could I fail to contrast her unfeeling neglect, ill-concealed petulance, flagrant levity and irreverence of spirit, with the sweet and loving devotion, the saintly patience, and the deep and fervent piety of my own Gertrude?*..." (LL 410; italics SS)

The function of Isabel in the novel seems to be, on one hand, to act as a warning example of the dangers of improper upbringing and fashionable life

and, on the other hand, to help to emphasize the ideal qualities of Gertrude because Isabel is in all respects a total opposite to Gertrude.

In conclusion one could say that both the uncivilized Nan, who belongs to lower classes, and the selfish Isabel and her aunt, who belong to "the so-called aristocracy" (LL 357), are warning examples of women in the novel. They all are women who cannot fulfill the important female (domestic) functions, taking care of their home, family and of the morality of their husband and future generations, because of their flawed character. Consequently, the "ideal" womanhood and lifestyle promoted in *The Lamplighter* appear to be more or less middle-class. The following extract illustrates further this critique of the lifestyles of both the lower and the upper classes in the novel:

(Willie:) "...As long as one class is distinguished by education and refined manners, and another is marked by ignorance and vulgarity, and there must, in the nature of things, be a deviding line between the two, which neither, perhaps, would desire to overstep. But this barrier is not Fashion... I have seen more ignorance, more ill-breeding, more meanness, and more immorality, in the so-called aristocracy of our country, than I should have believed it possible would be tolerated here..." (LL 357)

In this chapter and in the preceding chapter (chapter 4) two main categories of women in *The Lamplighter* have been presented: the "ideal" woman, who succeeds in life thanks to her good qualities, and the "flawed" woman, who is incapable of carrying out the most important female functions. The next chapter is devoted to the study of the process through which a young girl in the novel can become an "ideal" woman; a process in which the influence of already "ideal" woman is vital.

## **6. EDUCATION AND SISTERHOOD AS THE SOLUTION**

As it has been pointed out above on various instances (eg. on chapter 3.2.1), the idea of the importance of women's moral influence in the molding of the character of the future generations was central in the cult of domesticity. The idea of republican motherhood that was born in the eighteenth century

was reinforced by "the renewed religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening that gripped much of the country from the late 1790s to the 1850s". Furthermore, "the ideals of the Christian wife, mother, and teacher gave repeated urgency to women's education". Especially teaching and educating women to be teachers was now a central element in the functionings of all the religious groups. (Miller Solomon 1985:15.) Evans (1989:73) notes that the second Great Awakening "presented a distinctly feminized religion to its followers". Now women could together with the ministers "reassert moral values through the process of conversion" in the rapidly expanding capitalist society, for example by praying in the public. Moreover, women actively sought the conversion of others, believing in the possibility of universal salvation instead of "Calvinist" predestination. The idea of infant damnation gradually disappeared. In addition, Christ now appeared as "the epitome of feminine virtue: loving, forgiving, suffering, and sacrificing for others" and, consequently, the ideas of women's moral superiority and influence were reinforced.

Mintz and Kellogg (1988:47,55,58-9) observe that linked to the ideas of women's moral influence was the prevailing Lockean idea of the child's mind as a *tabula rasa* and also Rousseau's conception of children as "naturally social and affectionate". Now the primary goal of child rearing was "to develop a child's conscience and self-government", whereas it had earlier been to restrain children, who were believed to be innately sinful. The techniques of childrearing changed, too. The formation of character was thought to be "best achieved not through physical punishment of rigorous instruction in moral and religious precepts, but by *emotional nurture, parental love, and the force of parental example*", techniques in which women were believed to be especially gifted. *Persuasion* and *rewards* had now replaced coercion and punishments as the preferred methods of child rearing, and women were seen to have a special talent of instilling self-control and obedience in a loving and affectionate atmosphere.

In chapter 4 it has been shown that *The Lamplighter* presents a certain kind of feminine ideal, the "ideal" woman, who is, for example, pious, self-

sacrificing, self-controlling and sincere. The process though which a girl in the novel can become "ideal" reflects all the above-mentioned aspects and beliefs related to women's moral influence and child rearing. Gertrude, the principal heroine of the novel, needs to be raised and educated with care, a fact that "ideal" Emily, Gertrude's "surrogate mother", immediately notices:

The excitable but interesting child took no less strong a hold upon Miss Graham's feelings. *The latter saw at once how totally neglected the little one had been, and the importance of her being educated and trained with care*, lest early abuse, acting upon an impetuous disposition should prove destructive to *a nature capable of the best attainments*. (LL 56; italics SS)

The extract above also illustrates the belief adopted from Rousseau and from the ideology of the second Great Awakening, the belief in a child's "natural goodness", which was totally opposed to the earlier ideas of children's innate sinfulness. A child, who is "naturally" capable of goodness is shown to be greatly influenced by the treatment and example she receives from the people around her, and if this treatment is bad, the effects on the child's character are also negative. The following "plant metaphor" illustrates this idea further:

The plant that for years has grown distorted, and dwelling in a barren spot, deprived of light and nourishment, withered its leaves and blighted in its fruit, cannot at once recover from so cruel a blast. Transplanted in another soil. it must be directed in the right course, nourished with care and warmed with Heaven's light, ere it can recover from the shock occasioned by its early neglect... So with little Gerty;—a new direction must be given to her ideas, new nourishment to her mind, new light to her soul, ere the higher purposes for which she was created could be accomplished in her. (LL 35)

To bring out the best in a child that has been treated badly, she (or he) needs to be educated and trained with care, a task that Emily, an "ideal" woman, sees as her duty:

Why did she [Emily] pray so earnestly for new strength and heavenly aid?... And so she prayed to Heaven that night for strength to keep *her firm resolve*, and aid in fulfilling *her undying purpose*, to cure that child of her dark infirmity. (LL 63; italics SS)

In short, has Emily been true to *her self-imposed trust, her high resolve, to soften the heart and instruct the soul of the little ignorant one?* Has Gerty learned religion? Has she found out God... (LL 72; italics SS)

Emily is, in fact, described as "an earthly messenger" chosen by God "to lead his child [Gertrude] into everlasting peace" (LL 67). This, together with the general Christ-like character and appearance of Emily (see above pp.74-5), seems to exemplify the religious beliefs of the second Great Awakening, according to which the tasks of Christ and the "ideal" women were more or less equated.

In the following extract Emily, who helps True, the friendly old lamplighter, to take care of Gerty, seems to have a special influence on her, an influence that True, no matter how much he loves Gerty, is unable to exert. This extract seems to illustrate especially well the mid-nineteenth-century belief that women were superior to men in child-rearing:

Gerty had not been to school since the day of her battle with the great girls. All True's persuasions had failed, she would not go. But *Emily understood the child's nature so much better than True did, and urged upon her so much more forcible motives than the old man had thought of employing, that she succeeded where he had failed.* (LL 65; italics SS)

What are then the preferred techniques of child rearing and "creating character" in *The Lamplighter*? Emotional nurture, parental love and example, which were also the ideal techniques of the time (see the page above), seem to be also the central "strategies" that are used in the novel:

Sunday afternoon Gerty always spent with Emily, in Emily's own room, listening to her sweet voice, and, *half-unconsciously, imbibing a portion of her sweet spirit. Emily preached no sermons, nor did she weary the child with exhortations and precepts.* Indeed, it did not occur to Gertry that she went there to be taught anything; but *simply and gradually the blind girl imparted light to the child's dark soul, and the truths that make for virtue, the lessons that are divine, were implanted in her so naturally...* she felt, as she looked back into the past, that on those blessed Sabbaths, sitting on her cricket at Emily's knee, she had received into her heart the first beams of that immortal light that never could be quenched. (LL 67; italics SS)

The previous extract seems to suggest that simply being in the presence of a pious woman would leave its mark on a child's character. In addition to the mere presence and example of an "ideal" woman, she may teach a child some lessons concerning for example the virtues of sincerity and self-control. In the book this is often done in the form of stories, which can be seen as a form of gentle persuasion valued at the time. Furthermore, it is shown to be important that these lessons do not cause anxiety in the child:

... story after story, of little girls who never told lies, boys who always obeyed to their parents, or, more frequently still, of the child who knew how to keep her temper... Emily knew the weight such tales often carried with them to the hearts of children, and most carefully and judiciously did she select books for Gerty. (LL 66)

Because faith in God and piety are in the novel the cornerstones of the ideal female character (see chapter 4.1), lessons concerning God are also essential in the upbringing of children:

"If you wish to become good and be forgiven, you must forgive others."  
Gerty said nothing.  
"Do you not wish God to forgive and love you?"  
...  
"Will he love me, and let me some time go to heaven?"  
"Yes, if you try to be good, and love everybody" (LL 62)

As Baym (1995:xix; emphasis added) points out, *The Lamplighter* presents a view that "enlightenment is a gradual educative process", and, in this sense, rejects the central tenet of the "Evangelicalism increasingly prominent in American religious life". According to the Evangelical view (the ideology of the second Great Awakening) the *act of conversion* was central and essential. Also the following example illustrates well the process-like, educative nature of "finding God":

*Has Gerty learned religion? Has she found out God, and begun to walk patiently in that path which is lit by a holy light, and leads to rest?*  
*She had begun; and though her footsteps often falter, though she sometimes quite turns aside...gives the rein to her old irritability and ill-temper, she is yet but a child, and there is the strongest*

foundation for hopefulness in the sincerity of her good intentions, and the depth of her contrition when wrong has had the mastery. *Emily has spared no pains in teaching her where to place her strong reliance*, and Gerty has already learned to look to higher aid than Emily's and to lean on a mightier arm. (LL 73; italics SS)

The importance of "higher motives" behind a person's behavior and actions (see above p.78) is something that Emily understands to be important to Gertrude:

... to provide for all contingencies, and to make the heart right as well as the life, *it was necessary to inspire her with a higher motive than merely pleasing* either of these friends; and, *in teaching her the spirit of her Divine Master, Emily was making her powerful to do and to suffer, to bear and to forbear*, when, depending on herself, she should be left to her own guidance alone. (LL 73; italics SS)

The example above seems also to illustrate the idea discussed above (p. 75) of religion and submission to God's will as a practical strategy of survival for the ideal woman.

In addition to religious and moral education Emily supervises Gertrude's formal education: she encourages her in her intellectual pursuits (see above pp. 35 and 94-5), which were not generally expected and accepted of women at the period.

In chapter XV True has fallen ill and he discusses Gertrude's future with Emily, who promises to take care of her. True praises Emily for having made Gertrude "one of the lambs of Christ, a handmaiden of the Lord" (LL 91), and, although there are still many trials for Gertrude to come which "perfect" her character (see above pp. 84-5), the foundations of her ideal character seem to be laid. Gertrude, who was previously called Emily's "protégée" (LL 70) is now her "adopted darling" (LL 147) or "adopted child" (LL 252 and 389). However, even if Emily still advises Gertrude in many matters, their relationship seems to change into a relationship of equals, of two adults who are good friends. In fact, one could almost say that their roles become reversed because it is now Gertrude who is the "guardian" of Emily and not vice versa:



As she perceived Miss Graham coming to meet her, she quickened her pace, and, joining her near the door-step, where a path turning to the right led into the garden, *passed her arm affectionately over Emily's shoulder, in a manner which the latter's blindness, and Gertrude's superior height and ability to act as a guide, had of late rendered usual*, and, turning into the walk which led from the house, said, while *she drew the shawl closer around her blind friend...* (LL 129; italics SS)

... it was no wonder they attracted attention; the one [Gertrude] so bright, erect, and strong with youth and health, the *she seemed a fit protector for the other* [Emily], who, in her sweet and gentle helplessness, leaned upon her so trustingly. (LL 261; italics SS)

In addition to acting as Emily's guide and taking care of her instant physical needs for example during her illnesses, Gertrude does her best to defend her friend against the tyranny of the new Mrs. Graham and her malicious niece Isabel:

Her malicious persecutors... now made their attack in another quarter; and Emily, the sweet, lovely, unoffending Emily, became the object against whom they aimed many of their shafts of unkindness and ill-will... Many a stroke was warded off by Gertrude; many a neglect atoned for, before it could be felt... (LL 242)

Now that Gertrude has become "ideal", too, she and Emily seem to have a shared purpose in educating other young girls, for example Kitty to be like themselves. Kitty, who has been deceived by Ben Bruce (see above pp.24 and 89), needs a protector and adviser:

(Gertrude:) "Let him see that, with all her softness, Kitty Ray is strong and brave; that she has ceased to believe in his flattery, and values his professions at just what they are worth."  
 "Will you help me, Gertrude? You are my best friend; you took my part and told him how wicked he had been to me. May I come to you for comfort when I can't make believe happy any longer to him, and my aunt, and Isabel?"  
 Gertrude's fervent embrace was assurance enough of her cooperation and sympathy. (LL 238)

Kitty, who now spends a lot of time in the company of Gertrude and the Christ-like Emily in Emily's room, their "domestic haven" (see above p.

101), gradually develops into an "ideal" woman herself due to her friends and counsellors' good influence:

... and at once there, seated by the side of Gertrude, learning from her some little art of needle-work, listening to an agreeable book, or Emily's more agreeable conversation, Kitty passed hours that were never forgotten, so peaceful were they, so serene, so totally unlike any she had ever spent before. *Nor did they fail to leave a lasting impression upon her, for the benefit of her mind and heart... In her constant intercourse with the pure heart and superior mind of Emily, and her still more familiar intercourse with the one who had sat at her feet and learned of her, Kitty ibided an elevation of thought and worthiness of aim quite foreign to her quondam character... The foolish child... now developed the first germs of her better nature, which, expanding in later years, and thorough other influences, transformed the gay, fluttering, vain child of fashion, into the useful, estimable and lovely woman.* (LL 240; italics SS)

Also Kitty, who is now "ideal", gets her "reward" at the end of the book in the form of a good husband and an orphan step-daughter Gracie (see above p. 99), and now its Kitty's turn to raise and educate Gracie, a task in which she will succeed well:

Kitty was charmed with the coincidence, and Gertrude, as she remarked *the happy transformation which had already been effected in the countenance and dress of the little girl who had been so sadly in want of female superintendence*, felt an added conviction of the wisdom of the young clergyman's choice. (LL 415; italics SS)

The sisterly relationship of Gertrude and Emily seems to illustrate well the mid-nineteenth-century sororal ideal of female friendship. Lasser (1988:160-5,180) notes that with the separation of spheres at the time of the cult of domesticity women felt that they belonged together and developed intense "homosocial bonds" that could provide emotional nurture and help to soften the "often harsh realities of isolation in daily life". Because the lives of many women were increasingly uncertain and mobile in the quickly changing society and because they had to live away from their sisters and families, female friends became in a way their "fictive kin", who could bring stability into their lives. Women often used sororal terms to describe their friendships due to its special female nature and due to the idealization of the

relationships of natal sisters. Because there was basically no awareness, or fear, of the possibility of female-female sexual relationships in the mid-nineteenth-century USA, these female friendships could also "encompass the erotic". Chambers-Schiller (1984:124-5) notes that "female friends and kin played a prominent role in women's intellectual development": women received confirmation and encouragement from other women, and they, for example, founded female reading circles. Cott (1977:168,181-2,186) observes that as a consequence of the separations of spheres women could develop "truly reciprocal relationships only with other women", and the model of Christian sisterhood born during the second Great Awakening only strengthened these friendships. The belief was that "sisterhood" could "cross earthly barriers of wealth and station" and could even "confute death, in eternity". Friendship was often seen as "sacred and separate from the world", and it was the subject of self-conscious conversations and reflections, for example in letters. Women were believed to be able to help other women the best way, and, consequently, many middle- and upper-class women founded institutions for example to aid poor widows and female orphans.

In *The Lamplighter* the relationship of Gertrude and Emily appears to reflect many of these features of mid-nineteenth-century female friendship. For example, female friends, "fictive kin", can in the novel totally correspond to real kinship as regards to the persons' closeness: "... tie of kindred blood is not always needed to bind heart to heart in closest bonds of sympathy and affection" (LL 141) Gertrude and Emily seem to understand each other perfectly, even without words, and they live their life "in a beautiful world of their own" (LL 254), preferring the "domestic haven" of their room to anything else (see above p. 101). The following extracts illustrate well the "oneness" that Gertrude and Emily feel:

(Gertrude:) "... our happiness has for years been almost wholly in each other, and when one has suffered, the other has suffered also..." (LL 185)

"Emily, darling," said she, as they stood together in a rustic arbor, commanding the most striking prospect both of the river and the

shore, "it looks like you; you ought to live here, and be the priestess of such a temple!" and, locking her hand in in that of Emily, she poured in her attentive ear the holy and elevated sentiments to which the time and the place gave birth. *To pour out her thoughts to Emily was like whispering to her own heart, and the reponse to those thoughts was as sure and certain.* (LL 265; italics SS)

The extract immediately above may appear for the modern reader to be quite erotic in its language, and it is quite clear that Gertrude and Emily's relationship includes also sensual elements, which was not yet seen as dangerous in female-female relationships at the time. They enjoy each other's physical touch and closeness as the following example shows:

Gertrude's heart ached with a vain longing to once more pour out her griefs on the bosom of that dear friend, and find in her consolation, encouragement, and support. *She longed to tell her how many times during the winter she had sighed for the gentle touch of the soft hand which was wont to rest so lovingly on her head, the sound of that sweet voice whose very tones were so comforting...* (LL 178; italics SS)

As the example above also shows, Gertrude and Emily find consolation and support in each other, and they would do almost anything to promote each other's happiness as the following line of Gertrude shows: "nothing that I do for *Emily's* sake can be called a sacrifice; it is my greatest pleasure" (LL 185; italics original). It has been mentioned before (on pp. 29 and 78) that Emily backs Gertrude up against Mr. Graham in Gertrude's decision to go and take care of Mrs. Sullivan and her old father, and also that Gertrude acts as a guide and protector to Emily, who is blind and feeble. Moreover, Gertrude "acts as eyes" for the blind Emily:

...Miss Graham found that in Gertrude's observing eyes, and her feeling and glowing descriptions of everything that came within their gaze, she was herself renewing her acquaintance with the outside world. (LL 108)

Furthermore, Gertrude tells Emily about her anxieties when she believes that Willie no longer loves her (LL 313), and then Emily tells Gertrude the sad story of herself and Philip Amory (LL 314-321). They find consolation in

each other and shared grief seems to make them even closer to each other than ever:

Emily paused. Gertrude put her arms around her, and they clung closely to each other; grief and sorrow made the union between them dearer than ever. (LL 321)

It has been pointed out above (on pp. 94 and 96-7) that Gertrude and Emily both enjoy reading (Gertrude reads aloud to Emily) and share also other "intellectual" interests such as going to lectures and galleries. In addition to educating young girls to become like themselves, Gertrude and Emily, the "ideal" women, also help other people in need of financial or emotional support: "They lived not for themselves alone; the poor blessed them, the sorrowful came to their sympathy..." (LL 254).

At the end of the book it is stated that "the sweet tie" between Gertrude and Emily "had gained strength with every succeeding year" (LL 402), and Gertrude is still said to be Emily's "greatest treasure" (LL 420) even if they have parted because of Gertrude's marriage. The marriage of Emily and Philip, Gertrude's father seems to crown their friendship in a way: "fictive kin" has now changed into "real" kin. Lasser (1988:172) actually points out that "closeness between young women and their fictive sisters' families" often lead to marriages, and this way "the lifelong mutual commitments to emotional nurture and loyal support were, in a sense, reconfirmed, and perhaps their passion was even, in a symbolic sense, consummated, by such extensions for the bonds created through elective sisterhood".

In conclusion it can be stated that in *The Lamplighter* Gertrude, a young girl, can become "ideal" only through a process of moral education which is carried out by an already "ideal" woman, Emily. As the cult of domesticity demanded, "ideal" women "naturally" notice the needs of young girls and take it as their duty to take care of the necessary instruction. The techniques used in this education seem to be the same as the generally preferred methods at the period: love, good example and "gentle" lessons for example in the form of stories. The "ideal" woman also takes care of the young girl's intellectual education.

This teacher-pupil or mother-child relationship gradually changes into a friendship as the girl develops into an "ideal" woman, and now the two "ideal" women share the task of educating other young girls, in addition to their primary task, which appears to be taking care of men's morality (see above pp. 100-101). The friendship of Gertrude and Emily reflects the centrality and importance of female friendships in the lives of mid-nineteenth-century American women: they seem to be almost "as one", and they understand each other perfectly. They support each other and also other people in the trials and troubles of their lives and also share intellectual interests. Furthermore, there appears to be an erotic element in their relationship as well: they enjoy each other's touch and physical closeness. The marriage of Gertrude's father Philip to Emily "adds the finishing touch" to their friendship: they have now become "real kin".

## 7. CONCLUSION

Maria Susanna Cummins's *The Lamplighter* (1854) belongs to the tradition of "domestic fiction", written by women between 1820 and 1870 in the USA. This period was the bloom of the cult of domesticity, which separated strictly the the roles of men and women in the society and glorified the meaning of home. Home was now seen as a place where women were to instill morality in their husbands and children, a task in which "True Women" were thought to be naturally talented. Some scholars have seen "domestic fiction" as a simply a conformist and conservative manifestation of the cult of domesticity, whereas others have found in it marks of female dissatisfaction or even rebellion, and this is why it makes an especially interesting topic of study. In the present study the purpose has been to examine the picture *The Lamplighter* gives about the reality of the mid-nineteenth-century American white women living in the northeastern USA and to compare it to the existing knowledge about the topic. Furthermore, the purpose has also been to find out how the then prevailing feminine

ideals come out in the novel. The hypothesis was that the novel gives a not solely positive image of the mid-nineteenth-century female reality, but actually brings out the problems women faced in their lives. This hypothesis turned out to be quite correct, as it has been shown above.

The image *The Lamplighter* gives of the lives of young girls in the mid-nineteenth-century USA is not a very rosy one. Orphanhood (or semi-orphanhood) was the fate of many girls at the time, and so is the case also in the novel. Both lower- and upper-class orphans in the novel are in the mercy of their caretakers, who are often shown to be incompetent to raise and educate them properly. Both Gertrude, the heroine of the novel, and Isabel, who could be said to be a kind of an anti-heroine, have had to suffer from improper upbringing, even though they initially belong to different classes of society. Even if a girl's parents (or one of them) are alive, or she has a seemingly decent guardian, her position in the family is more or less subordinate and dependent, a circumstance that corresponds to reality: as long as daughters stayed unmarried they were considered to be under the control of their parents or guardians, whose decisions they had to obey. This could cause clashes between the parents and the children, and this is the case also in the novel, for example in the incident in which Gertrude refuses to obey Mr. Graham's orders. In the novel it also comes out that parents or guardians could decide on the girls' education, which could be quite superficial, or affect the choice of their daughters' future husbands, as Mr. Graham has done in the context of Emily and Philip's relationship. Furthermore, sons were usually given the priority in the families, as is the case with Fanny and her brother Ben.

The possibilities the women in the novel have in their lives have been studied in chapter 3.2. The picture *The Lamplighter* conveys of the realities of marriage and motherhood, which were glorified in the cult of domesticity and expected of all women, is not very positive. Although "true love" was to be the basis of marriage, it appears that many women and men actually married, were expected to marry or had to marry for money and status, a fact that is clearly condemned in the novel. Moreover, once married, the wives

were often unable to protect their rights if the husband was irresponsible as in the case of Aunt Sarah in the novel. In the case of widowhood women were often left without money or a source of income, and, consequently, had to return to their parents as Mrs. Sullivan has had to, or find a new husband, as Philip's mother had done. Motherhood was also a source of great anxieties and fears for many women because mothers were expected to raise daughters and especially sons to be self-governing and virtuous so that they could survive in the corrupt world full of temptations, which is illustrated well in the novel in the context of Mrs. Sullivan worrying over the fate of her son Willie. Especially Mrs. Sullivan's dream vision reflects the mother's fear of world's dangers and temptations and a belief in the mother's influence on her son.

Although wife- and motherhood were seen in the mid-nineteenth-century as the central functions of women, not all women married. The reasons could be the circumstances or their own unwillingness. Although these "old maids" gained more prestige during the antebellum era, they were often seen as somehow abnormal and deviant, and their lives were restricted by the constant demands of parents and relatives. In *The Lamplighter* the character of Patty Pace, the eccentric spinster, seems to reflect this belief that unmarried women were somehow deviant. However, being single, Patty Pace has been able to earn a good living and seems to enjoy her life in general, although she regrets not having married, a fact that probably reflects the centrality of marriage in the lives of women. Anyhow, the character of Patty Pace does not appear to offer a plausible role-model in the way that Gertrude, the heroine, does; she is simply a peculiar and a bit funny individual in the novel.

The picture *The Lamplighter* conveys of working women's life appears to be partly positive, partly negative. Almost all possible and acceptable female occupations of the period can be found in the novel, factory or mill work being an exception in this sense. Teaching is portrayed in the novel in quite a positive light, and Gertrude even gets a good salary, which was often not the case with female teachers. Domestic servants seem to be in a less



favorable position although the housekeeper and the cook seem to have some prestige in the household. Especially the servant girls' situation appears to be difficult: they have the most work to do and little, if any, authority. Taking in boarders and needlework or other kind of "outwork" are also shown to be possible for women in the novel, although the reality of this kind of work is not described. Patty Pace's, the spinster's, former profession, upholstery, is portrayed in a fairly positive light although her success in the job appears to have been linked to the fact that she is a single woman.

There appears to have been still another kind of possibility for the mid-nineteenth-century women to cope in their more or less complicated lives: resorting to sickness or "hysteria", hysteric traits being actually more or less the same traits that were encouraged in young women at the period. This tendency to react to problems and stress by demonstrating symptoms of some form of illness, mental or physical, also comes out in *The Lamplighter*. The character of Emily Graham is probably the best example in this sense: her health deteriorates permanently after a few especially shocking experiences and she tends to respond to disturbances by getting a headache, or becoming nervous or extremely tired. Gertrude also exhibits the same kind of symptoms on a few stressful occasions, and both Kitty and Isabel appear to experience something that resembles more or less the "hysteric fit". In addition, the mentally and physically hard work of taking care of her sick father appears to contribute to the fact that Mrs. Sullivan becomes fatally ill, and once she feels that she has accomplished her mission in life, taking care of Willie's well-being and morality, she dies.

Like most of the novels written by women in the USA in the mid-nineteenth-century, *The Lamplighter* offers a model of an "ideal" woman, a woman who can overcome the troubles and trials in her life thanks to her "ideal" qualities. The characters of both Emily and Gertrude seem to be "ideal", but Gertrude, the heroine of the book, appears to be a more plausible model since the saint-like Emily is very fragile and dependent, and it is implied that she will die in near future. The main qualities of the "ideal"

women in the novel are *piety and submission to God, a sense of duty, self-sacrifice, self-control, sincerity, intelligence and domesticity*. Although most of these qualities are basically more or less the same as the qualities of a True Woman, the feminine ideal of the cult of domesticity, some of them are seen in the novel in a different kind of light.

Piety and submission to God and self-control, for example, are not portrayed as innate female qualities; rather, they are basically depicted as necessary female strategies of survival, which have to be learned and which are strengthened in life's trials. Moreover, the women in the novel find God without the help of masculine clerical institutions, and their faith in God may even help them to confront unjust male authority, which may be disobeyed if a woman's sense of duty says so. Self-sacrifice is also shown in the novel to be something that eventually brings a woman rewards and happiness in life. Sincerity appears to be an innate quality that is reflected in an "ideal" woman's simple and modest appearance, in the same way as all her other good qualities. The novel seems to value a woman's intelligence greatly, although women's intellectual pursuits were at the time usually seen as a threat. The "ideal" women in the novel are no less intelligent than male characters, and they also get respect due to their intellectual abilities that can also help the ideal woman to earn her own living, to be independent. Furthermore, a woman's physical strength is valued in the novel whereas it was not generally appreciated at the period. Despite the appreciation of a woman's intellectual abilities, marriage appears to be her ultimate reward and goal in life. The "ideal" woman is portrayed as "the presiding spirit" in her neat and comfortable home, from which she carries out her most important function in life: taking care of her husband's (and possibly son's) morality. In this respect the view promoted in *The Lamplighter* appears to be fully consistent with the ideas of the cult of domesticity. The basis of marriage in the novel is to be mutual love and respect, which was also the general opinion of the time. In general it can be stated that the novel appears to support the then prevailing view of women's moral superiority

because in all the above-mentioned qualities, which are basically also demanded of men, the "ideal" women appear to be superior to most men.

There are also in *The Lamplighter*, as in other works of mid-nineteenth-century female writers, a few warning examples of women who are unable to carry out the most important female function in life: that of taking care of the morality of men and the future generations. These failed women can be divided in two groups: the "ignorant" and the "belle". The "ignorant" in the novel is Nan Grant, who is coarse, uneducated and violent, and totally incapable of raising children, a fact of which her corrupted son bears witness. Moreover, Gertrude has adopted her bad temperament, a trait which she must overcome in her life. The function of Nan Grant in the novel appears to be exactly to justify the argument that self-control is necessary. Good examples of the "belle" are the rich and beautiful Isabel, and also her aunt widow Holbrook, who becomes Mrs. Graham. These women are self-centered, worship money and believe to be superior to all others. The "belle" loves to be surrounded by an admiring company with the consequence that she does not even bother to take care of her parents and relatives. The "belle" is unable to control her behavior which is generally very bad because she is loud and coarse, and mean towards the people she does not like. Furthermore, she becomes easily jealous if someone else gets attention. Her vanity is also reflected in her appearance: she prefers showy dresses and hairdos. Moreover, the "belle" is not very intelligent. The function of the "belle" in the novel seems to be to emphasize the importance of proper moral upbringing and also to act as an opposite of the "ideal" woman, whose ideal qualities become thus further stressed. Considering both these two types of failed women, *The Lamplighter* appears to promote the view that the "middle range" in society is the best.

In *The Lamplighter* a girl can become an "ideal" woman only through a process of moral education carried out by other "ideal" women. The "ideal" women in the novel always notice the needs of young girls and see it as their duty to improve their character, a process in which love, good example and "gentle" lessons play a central role. These methods were also the generally

preferred ones at the time and the role of "morally superior" women in the education of future generations was also seen as vital. In the novel this mother-child or teacher-pupil relationship develops gradually into a female friendship which seems to reflect the centrality of female friendships in the lives of the mid-nineteenth-century American women. The female friends in the novel appear to understand each other perfectly, they support each other and share their interests in life. They also enjoy each other's physical proximity and touch, which was not yet seen at the time as something threatening or sexual at all.

In the light of the above-mentioned findings concerning the mid-nineteenth-century female reality and the ideals for femininity in the USA as reflected in *The Lamplighter*, one must state that the results of this study largely resemble the views and interpretations presented by Mary P. Ryan, Mary Kelley and Joanne Dobson (see above pp. 11-12). All these scholars share the view that the "domestic fiction" written by women in the mid-nineteenth-century USA has a twofold message: on one hand it glorifies the values of the cult of domesticity and the idea of women's moral superiority, on the other hand there is an undercurrent of female dissatisfaction in these novels, brought forth by a sense of injustice that many women experienced in their lives. In the case of *The Lamplighter* it seems to be practically impossible to find out how consciously and intentionally the author has dealt with these questions because very little is known of her. It would also be interesting to study the other novels of Maria Susanna Cummins too see if they contain the same kind of views, or to compare her works to those of the other mid-nineteenth-century female writers. Further, it might be rewarding to examine the works of the male authors of the period to see what kind of picture they give of the female reality and ideals of the time.

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