

Women, Money, and the Law : Nineteenth- Century Fiction, Gender, and the Courts. By Joyce W. Warren. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005. 373 pages with index. \$44.95, ISBN 0-87745-953-3.)

So successful has been the miseducation of modern thinkers that it has become customary to treat women, money and the law as foreign entities that are only just finding a meeting place in the 21st century. Joyce W. Warren's¹ book, however, from the very onset breaks up this myth as she successfully proves--by studying actual court cases from the 19th century as well as fictional writing from the same period-- that women were no stranger to money and the law and, more over, that their lives were greatly influenced by these entities centuries ago. Warren's book, then, would seem to play a dual role as it is both informative and reformative.

Warren's thorough and inclusive research that encompasses the fields of Economics, Politics, Law, African-American Studies, Women Studies, History, Geography, Psychology, Sociology and English Literature (Fiction-writing,) not only shows her mastery of the language and principles specific to each field, but reveals a sort of genius that allows her to synthesize, interpret and efficiently present her findings in her own unique style of narrative. This narrative-- which, at times, serves to soften the wealth of dense facts and jargon presented in the book-- helps to make the work even more adaptable and useable as an interdisciplinary text. The book is also a hybrid because it reads like a novel, but provides quotable, proven facts that could appear in any scholarly writing. In fact, it would not be impossible to consider Warren's work as a sort of modern naturalist novel in which the presentation of real historic events (court cases) and literary events (fictional writing) are made into a narrative by the author.

The style of the book, then, not only affects the way the book is received as a whole, but also influences the way the book is used in parts. This is to say that Warren follows a fairly clear structure in which she gives a road map at the beginning of each chapter, presents her findings, and ends each chapter with a summary of the main points. Each chapter, then, is independent and would facilitate the idea of assigned reading for many college courses in various fields. In fact, this book is very reader-friendly in that Warren gives sufficient background about her methodology and the specific approach to each topic in each chapter. That is to say that not having a strong background in a certain field of study is not an impediment to fully appreciating the book.

The book, however, shows great promise as a major text for studies pertaining to literature and law--and any interdisciplinary derivative of these two major fields. This is because the book provides ways in which conclusions about women and society were drawn by relying on the processes of law and literature. For example, it would be interesting to use this book to trace the implications of the words "marriage" and "divorce" as they appear in law and literature. In fact, in *Women, Money and the Law* the words share various meanings as written concepts in law books and as interpreted ideals in the writing of women writers of the 19th century. Warren would also seem to show that literature of any time, like law, is reflective of the political, historical and social atmosphere at the time of its conception. Both literature and law, then, are historical artifacts.

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Women, Law and the Law is, therefore, a book of facts. Warren also does very well at taking an objective approach to her work by noting all sides of each case and argument she presents. Her nine chapters of work are not sensationalist, bitter or reactionary, but are rather enlightening and gently revolutionary.

The first chapter presents the individual 1856 case of Mary F. Trust and her separation from her husband of seventeen years, Joseph W. Trust. The chapter presents the surrounding problems that the woman had to endure and the ways in which she was defined under the law. Warren shows that this woman's ability to continue her process in the courts was due to her independent, financial backing.

Chapter two draws the reader into the heart of the work because it reveals the various types of discourse pertaining to women. According to Warren, legal discourse is the most *restrictive discourse*. Besides the legal discourse, Warren mentions religion (proposing the domesticity of women) and medicine (her nervy instability) and the discourse of economy (her lack of earning potential and her lack of business aptitude.) Warren shows that the idea of a finically independent woman was unnatural.

In chapter three, Warren very cleverly uses five women writers to define the true American renaissance woman. This approach is somewhat of a counter to the approach taken by historian and literary critic Francis Otto Matthiessen in his work *The American Renaissance* (1941.) Matthiessen used five male authors to define his concept of this period in American history. Warren declares her methodology in choosing women, stating that using women writers would better reveal the legal and economic inequalities among women of the time, issues that would not have been as evident in the works of male authors. Through a close study of these works, including the plight of African American slaves, Warren shows that the American renaissance was not as democratic and optimistic of a time for women as it would seem to be presented in the work of male authors.

Chapters four and six present cases in which women play the role of plaintiffs and defendants, respectively. Warren reveals the role of subjectivity and narrative in the courtroom and reveals her knowledge and mastery of the jargon pertaining to legal discourse. Warren shows that women, despite the attempts to prove her as being incapable of handling money, were fully caught up in legal disputes concerning money. In addition, the women defendant shows cases in which women were brought to court for issues dealing with outstanding debt, foreclosures on mortgages and issues of inheritance. Here, Warren continues to argue that money, in some shape or form, was a part of these women's lives.

Chapter five centers on race relations with the law. Warren once again focuses on four women writers and how they represent the struggle of African American women, proving that African American women, despite their lower social standing, still shared a similar plight to that of other women in terms of their representation in issues of law and money.

In chapter seven Warren focuses on the representation of economics and the law in fictional writings by women. Warren shows that women are linked to economics and the law either by showing their susceptibility and their ignorance or, conversely, through their active involvement in the court as plaintiffs and defendants.

Warren speaks about divorce in chapter nine and immediately links divorce to the moment in which the woman becomes fully aware of the levity of economic issues in her

life. Warren shifts focus to the 21st century and in the final chapter in the book deals with the relatively unpopular, viewed-as-abnormal argument of total economic dependence of women. Warren explores this concept by studying the works of three women writers, showing converging and diverging views on what should be the ideal state of woman in society.

In Warren's epilogue, she continues the argument about women's economic independence in the 21st Century. Warren mentions the existing issues of salary inequalities and the issue of day-care, which is an extremely interesting point and one that probably would not figure into the writing of a male authors. To conclude, Warren, while not being at all pessimistic, would seem to remind the reader of the continuing struggle to rid society of the festering injustices meted out against women.

To add my conclusion to this writing, I would say that I found Warren's work very revealing and refreshing. As a young man seeking to work in academia, Warren's work will serve as a stellar example of diligent, thorough work of a very high standard. And, while *Women, Money and the Law*, is too great to be confined to a single categorization, I believe it represents a new wave in the study of women in society; a study that is ultimately for every reader, regardless of age, gender, race or religion.